

# *Early Modern Women*

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

*Volume I, 2006*



*Editors*

Jane Donawerth  
Adele Seeff  
Diane Wolfthal

*Book Review Editor*  
Karen Nelson

*Editorial Assistant*  
Meg Pearson

*Artistic Director*  
Richard Chapman

CENTER FOR RENAISSANCE & BAROQUE STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK  
ARIZONA CENTER FOR MEDIEVAL & RENAISSANCE STUDIES  
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY, TEMPE

*Volume I Editorial Board, 2002-2006*

|                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Jane Couchman     | Margaret Mikesell |
| Jane Donawerth    | Naomi Miller      |
| Nancy Gutierrez   | Karen Nelson      |
| Margaret Hannay   | Adele Seeff       |
| Mary Ellen Lamb   | Diane Wolfthal    |
| Amy Leonard       | Susanne Woods     |
| Carole Levin      | Naomi Yavneh      |
| Sara H. Mendelson |                   |

*Editorial Advisors, 2002–2006*

Julia Marciari Alexander, Susan Dwyer Amussen, Linda Austern, Cristelle Baskins, Judith Bennett, Pamela Benson, Sheila Cavanagh, Elizabeth Cohen, Nicola Courtwright, Margaret Ezell, Valeria Finucci, Carole Fricke, Amy Froide, Mary Garrard, Elizabeth Hageman, Joan E. Hartman, Wendy Heller, Margaret Hunt, Ann Rosalind Jones, Gwynne Kennedy, Andrea Knox, Natasha Korda, Tomasin K. LaMay, Elizabeth Lehfelddt, Pamela Long, Phyllis Mack, Katherine McIver, Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, Lori Humphrey Newcomb, Lena Cowen Orlin, Mary Elizabeth Perry, Patricia Philipppy, Anne Lake Prescott, Albert Rabil Jr., Phyllis Rackin, Magdalena S. Sanchez, Deanna Shemek, Bruce Smith, Hilda Smith, Sara Jayne Steen, Mihoko Suzuki, Betty S. Travitsky, Retha Warnicke, Elspeth Whitney, Abby Zanger, Georgianna Ziegler

## Acknowledgements

*Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* is sponsored by the Center for Renaissance & Baroque Studies of the University of Maryland, where the daily business of collecting, reviewing, editing, designing, and hand-wringing takes place. Our thanks go to the Director of the Center, Adele Seeff (in her other role), for her tireless oversight and relentless search for funding. We appreciate the support of the Dean of Arts and Humanities, James F. Harris, from the beginning, and the aid of the chairs of English, Charles Caramello and Gary Hamilton, and the chair of Women's Studies, Bonnie Thornton Dill. *EMWJ* is also now a joint project with the Arizona Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies at Arizona State University, who oversee printing and distribution of the journal. Our gratitude especially goes to Robert Bjork, Director of the Arizona Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, for his mediation between institutions and his sound advice.

*EMWJ* is guided by its Editorial Advisors made up of the Planning Committee of the "Attending to Early Modern Women" Symposium and the officers and committee chairs of the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women. Elected members from both groups join with the editors to form the Editorial Board that makes decisions on article acceptance and reviewing standards. Our gratitude goes to all these hard-working scholars who yet find time to help guide the journal: their names are listed above. In addition, we are grateful to the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women for its financial contribution. We also thank the Sixteenth Century Studies conference for its crucial support.

A great debt is owed to many people. Our fervent thanks go to Lourdes Maria Alvarez, Susan Dwyer Amussen, Linda Austern, Cristelle Baskins, Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Elaine Beilin, Marvin Breslow, Hervé Campagne, Kent Cartwright, Sheila Cavanagh, Elizabeth Cohen, Theresa Coletti, Jane Couchman, Pamala S. Deane, Barbara Diefendorf, Susan Dinan, Michele A. Eastman, Joseph Falvo, Katie Field, Sheila ffolliott, Erika Gaffney, Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, Sharon Groves, Nancy Gutierrez,

Elizabeth Hageman, Margaret Hannay, Joan E. Hartman, Wendy Heller, Franklin Hildy, Donna Hamilton, Sharon Jansen, Ann Rosalind Jones, Erin Kelly, Anamaria Kothe, Mary Ellen Lamb, Elizabeth Lehfelddt, Amy Leonard, Jacqueline Letzter, Carole Levin, Allison Levy, Yelena Luckert, Barbara Ann McCahill, Sara H. Mendelson, Margaret Mikesell, Naomi Miller, Claire G. Moses, Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, Debra Nails, Lena Cowen Orlin, Mary Elizabeth Perry, Patricia Philipppy, Anne Lake Prescott, Albert Rabil, Jr., Margaret Rice, Irene Sanchez, Magdalena S. Sanchez, Brandie Siegfried, Martha Skeeters, Hilda Smith, Sara Jayne Steen, Mihoko Suzuki, Betty S. Travitsky, Valerie Wayne, Elissa Weaver, Wendy Weise, Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, Richard Wexler, Gerhild Scholz Williams, Diane Wolfthal (in her former role as President of EMW), Susanne Woods, Naomi Yavneh, and Georgianna Ziegler.

# Contents

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Letter from the Editors .....                            | 1 |
| JANE DONAWERTH, ADELE SEEFF, AND DIANE WOLFTHAL, EDITORS |   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 'High Housewifery': the Duties and Letters of Barbara Gamage Sidney,<br>Countess of Leicester ..... | 7 |
| MARGARET P. HANNAY  |   |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <i>Bocche Inutili</i> : Incorporating Pisa in the Florentine Imaginary ..... | 37 |
| CRISTELLE L. BASKINS   |    |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Maladies up Her Sleeve? Clerical Interpretation of a Suffering Female<br>Body in Counter-Reformation Spain ..... | 69 |
| SUSAN LANINGHAM  |    |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Suppressing Women Philosophers: The Case of the Early<br>Modern Canon ..... | 99 |
| JOHN J. CONLEY, SJ  |    |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something<br>Ermine: Elizabeth I's Coronation Robes and Mothers' Legacies in<br>Early Modern England ..... | 115 |
| ELIZABETH MAZZOLA  |     |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| A Renaissance Woman (Still) Adrift in the World ..... | 137 |
| MERRY E. WIESNER-HANKS                                |     |

## Book Reviews

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Wendy Heller, <i>Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in<br/>Seventeenth-Century Venice</i> ..... | 159 |
| SARAH F. WILLIAMS   |     |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Amy Leonard, <i>Nails in the Wall: Catholic Nuns in<br/>Reformation Germany</i> ..... | 162 |
| REBECCA CLARK NYKWEST   |     |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Maria Bogucka, <i>Women in Early Modern Polish Society, Against the European Background</i> .....                          | 165 |
| ELIZABETH DRIVER   |     |
| Nancy Bradley Warren, <i>Women of God and Arms: Female Spirituality and Political Conflict, 1380–1600</i> .....            | 168 |
| SUSAN DINAN  |     |
| Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb, editors, <i>Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400–1700: Form and Persuasion</i> .....           | 171 |
| ERIN A. SADLACK  |     |
| Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin, editors, <i>Women Players in England, 1500–1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage</i> ..... | 175 |
| MEG PEARSON  |     |
| Contributors .....   | 179 |

## Letter from the Editors

*Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* is the first annual journal devoted solely to the study of women and gender in the early modern period, that is, from 1400 to 1700. The journal is an outgrowth of dedicated work by scholars in many fields during the past three decades.

To begin our first volume, we wish to acknowledge our debt to the past by recounting the history of the several communities from which the journal has developed, and to offer our vision for what our new journal might accomplish. Dedicating a journal to the study of gender and to the history, literature, and arts of early modern women is no small accomplishment: it signals a significant step toward reformulating the questions we are all “allowed” to ask. As Natalie Zemon Davis suggested in the second volume of the “Attending” proceedings, establishing a field of early modern women’s studies has allowed us to complicate our vision, to see not only “hierarchies, exclusions, and dominations” balanced by “resourcefulness and resistance,” but also “the practices of the middle ground, the multiple tongues of complicity, coping, arguing, and exchange, out of which sometimes, like a metamorphosis, a new moment is born” (35-6).

During the 1980s, several key colloquia initiated conversations across disciplines on the subject of early modern women and consolidated the scholarship on Renaissance women that had burgeoned in the previous decade. Beginning with a 1976 Modern Language Association (MLA) session on feminist interpretations of Shakespeare, Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely collected essays that were published in 1980 as *The Woman’s Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* by the University of Illinois Press. Two years later, Yale University con-

vened “Renaissance Women/Renaissance Men: Studies in the Creation of Culture and Society,” and in 1983 the Newberry Library hosted “Changing Perspectives on Women in the Renaissance.” Both of these conferences resulted in ground-breaking publications—*Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers and published in 1986 by the University of Chicago Press; and *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, edited by Mary Beth Rose and published in 1986 by Syracuse University Press. At that same time, at both the Patristic, Medieval, and Renaissance Conference and the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, sessions were devoted to the topics of early modern women’s history and literature, and these sessions, too, resulted in collections of essays: Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson edited papers from the 1984 PMR Conference for *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, published in 1987 by Wayne State University Press; and Jean R. Brink, Allison P. Coudert, and Maryanne C. Horowitz edited papers from the 1987 Sixteenth Century Conference for *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Volume XII in *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, published in 1989 by the Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers. In 1988 the Renaissance Society of America included a plenary discussion on Renaissance women, and by this point many history and art history conferences also included panels or papers on Renaissance women. While this list of colloquia and volumes by no means exhausts the scholarly work and discussion of the 1980s, it does give a sense of the breadth and growth of discovery that engaged scholars across disciplines and regions.

Also in the 1980s, several ongoing groups formed in the United States to discuss early modern women. Beginning with the Folger Colloquium on “Women in the Renaissance,” which met from 1984 to 1988, three further groups emerged: one in New York (at CUNY from 1987 on), one in New England (at Harvard University from 1987 on), and one in Washington, D. C. (at the National Museum of Women in the Arts from 1989 to 1994). In 1989, all three discussion groups united to host a forum at the MLA meeting, resulting in a special volume of essays in *Women’s Studies* in 1991 (vol. 19, no. 2), “Women in the Renaissance: An Interdisciplinary Forum,” edited by Ann Rosalind Jones and Betty S. Travitsky.



These disparate efforts resulted in the desire for a lasting forum, and on November 8-10, 1990, "Attending to Women in Early Modern England" was held. This offspring of the MLA forum was planned by members of the New York and Washington, D.C., discussion groups and was supported and hosted by the Center for Renaissance & Baroque Studies at the University of Maryland. A triennial, interdisciplinary, and comparative discussion of early modern women had found a home. There have been four more "Attending to Early Modern Women" symposia sponsored by the Center for Renaissance & Baroque Studies—in 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2003—and one is planned for 2006, "Attending to Early Modern Women—and Men," at which our new journal will be inaugurated. Four volumes of the conference proceedings have been published by University of Delaware Press: *Attending to Early Modern Women in England* (1994), edited by Betty S. Travitsky and Adele Seeff; *Attending to Early Modern Women* (1998), edited by Susan D. Amussen and Adele Seeff; *Crossing Boundaries: Attending to Early Modern Women* (2000), edited by Jane Donawerth and Adele Seeff; and *Culture and Change: Attending to Early Modern Women* (2003), edited by Margaret Mikesell and Adele Seeff. A fifth volume will be in print by the time you read this letter—*Structures and Subjectivities: Attending to Early Modern Women*, edited by Joan E. Hartman and Adele Seeff.

The Washington, New York, and Boston discussion groups, together with the "Attending to Early Modern Women" Planning Committee, led the way in organizing a professional society. In Autumn 1992, Georgianna Ziegler, Elizabeth Hageman, and Margaret Hannay began discussing the possibility of a wider organization that would include those who had been unable to participate in the discussion groups, that would encourage younger scholars in the field, and that would circulate calls for papers and information on conferences. Planning continued at the 1993 conference on "Women and the Arts in the Renaissance: Women and Power" at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and, in that same year, the Constitution and By-laws of the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women (SSEMW) were approved. An inaugural celebration, sponsored by the Center for Renaissance & Baroque Studies at the University of Maryland, was held on April 23, 1994, at the close of the "Attending to

Early Modern Women” Symposium. The Society for the Study of Early Modern Women has grown through the years so that now it is affiliated with most major national conferences in the field, supports graduate student travel to its meetings, and gives annual awards for best essay, best edition or translation, best collaboration, and best book in the field. The society has also nurtured the journal.

The evolution of the discussion groups in the 1980s to a triennial conference in the 1990s, and a professional society in that same decade lacked one thing: a journal. That deficiency has led us to harness the resources of the Center for Renaissance & Baroque Studies at the University of Maryland (once again), the goodwill and consultation of the “Attending to Early Modern Women” Planning Committee and of the Executive Committee of the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women, and the publishing resources of the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Arizona State University. This first volume of *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* is the happy outcome.

As the first annual journal devoted solely to the study of women and gender in the early modern period, *EMWJ* will be as inclusive as possible, encouraging submissions from junior and senior scholars that will appeal to readers across disciplinary and geographical boundaries. In this volume and in volumes to come, we will publish essays from the fields of art history, cultural studies, history, history of philosophy, history of science, history of sexuality, literature, music, politics, religion, and theater, and essays that focus on the full panoply of global regions, including Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. We also hope to offer a spectrum of historical and theoretical methodologies, including—but not limited to—cultural studies, anthropology, semiotics, ideological critique, and social history. We especially encourage original essays that interrogate received ideas, adopt new approaches, introduce previously unknown texts or images, and address critically important issues that will be of interest to a broad range of scholars.

Our goal is to build on past accomplishments in the field of feminist and gender studies while also pointing the way to the future. We hope to serve as a bridge to the next generation of scholars and, consequently, are inviting junior scholars to write in-depth reviews of recent books, DVDs,

and videos, as well as to submit their own essays. Through *EMWJ* we will search for what binds us together as scholars interested in women and gender, but we will not hesitate to explore intellectual disagreements within our community. For this reason, we plan in future issues to include review essays that focus on a topic central to the field.

In "A Woman's Liberation," Ursula K. Le Guin's protagonist recognizes, from her study of history, "that any freedom has been made, not given" (*Four Ways to Forgiveness* [New York: HarperPrism, 1995] 172). Our desire is that *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* will serve as a forum for the free exchange of ideas, and that the pages in this and future issues will engage your attention, spark new ideas, challenge your assumptions, and strengthen your commitment to understanding early modern women and gender. Such a vision will only be realized if we share a commitment to this intellectual endeavor and work together to fulfill its promise. We invite you to join with us as readers, authors, and reviewers.

JANE DONAWERTH, ADELE SEEFF, AND  
DIANE WOLFTHAL, EDITORS



## **‘High Housewifery’: the Duties and Letters of Barbara Gamage Sidney, Countess of Leicester**

MARGARET P. HANNAY

Barbara Gamage Sidney, Countess of Leicester, is probably best known today for Ben Jonson’s description of her as “noble, fruitful, [and] chaste” and his praise of her “high housewifery” in his poem “To Penshurst,” a celebration of the Sidney family and their country estate.<sup>1</sup> Because Barbara Sidney does indeed seem to have fulfilled the role of ideal aristocratic wife, mother, and household manager, an examination of her duties and a reconstruction of some of her missing letters can give us insight into the daily life and responsibilities of an early modern woman of the upper social ranks. Her relations to her large household, her role in educating her children, her administration of the family estate, and her interaction with her husband’s career and finances seem to have been typical of early modern women associated with court circles, although there would obviously be national, local, and individual variations in experience across Britain and Europe. Her experience continues to resonate today, for many of her concerns echo our own involvement with work and family.

Barbara Sidney makes a particularly rewarding study because of the rich archival sources preserved by the Sidney family over many generations—account books, estate papers, genealogical records, and a wealth of correspondence. Thus, even though she undertook no significant role in the religion, politics, or literary culture of her day, we have more documentation for her life than we have for many more renowned figures. Unlike her sister-in-law, Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, or her daughter Lady Mary Wroth, she did not circulate poems in manuscript, and she never appeared in print. She did not think of herself as a writer,

to our knowledge, and her side of her extensive correspondence with her husband Robert Sidney, first Earl of Leicester, has been lost—while she saved at least 332 letters that he wrote to her. We know that she wrote approximately as often as he did, since he so frequently refers to her letters. We also have the lively and detailed letters of Robert Sidney's trusted friend and agent Rowland Whyte, who sent Sidney extensive reports on family and court matters while Sidney was in the Netherlands on Queen Elizabeth's service; Whyte undoubtedly wrote additional letters, but his surviving letters to Robert (dating from September 1595 through December 1602) fill two volumes.<sup>2</sup> Whyte, Robert's friend as much as servant, accompanied him to university and on his European travels, and he often cared for Robert's family when he was away. For example, his letters give vivid reports of a family epidemic of the measles in autumn 1595 when Barbara was in the final month of pregnancy. Eventually Barbara came down with the measles herself, then went into labor, and finally delivered a son, "a goodly fat boy, but as full of the measles in the face as can be," as Whyte reported.<sup>3</sup> (Little Robert thrived, eventually succeeding his father as the second Earl of Leicester.) Yet we know that Whyte's correspondence, which sometimes presents Barbara's viewpoint, does not constitute her missing replies, because Whyte also mentions letters from Barbara. And, although Wroth sometimes takes her mother's part in letters to her father, Wroth also mentions Barbara's own letters.<sup>4</sup> From this surviving family correspondence we can reconstruct the four major topics of Barbara's missing letters: family, Penshurst, the court, and finances. She wrote most often of her family—her affection for her husband, her desire to be with him, and her concern for his health and safety; her pregnancies, childbirth, and the christenings of their eleven children; household moves from Penshurst to London or to join Robert in the Netherlands; the health, education and marriages of their children; and later visits from their grandchildren. She wrote often of the administration of Penshurst, including building projects, the gardens, problems with servants. She wrote of their court connections, both their entertainment of aristocratic family and friends, and her visits to court to obtain his leave to come home from Flushing. She also wrote frequently about their problematic finances.

So how did her letters disappear? The most frequent explanations for the missing letters have been either that Barbara was illiterate and did not write on her own behalf, or that she was nearly illiterate, and therefore her husband was too ashamed of her letters to keep them. However, he (or later generations) also lost or discarded letters from other women in the family, including his learned and eloquent sister the Countess of Pembroke. So neither of those explanations seems to fit the facts that we have, although we do not have nearly as many facts about Barbara Gamage's early life as we would like. We do not know how she was educated, how much of her early life was spent in Wales, if she ever visited the English court in her youth, or even if she spoke English with a Welsh accent.<sup>5</sup> Daughter and sole legitimate heir of John Gamage of Coity Castle in Glamorganshire and his wife Gwenllian (daughter of Sir Thomas ap Jenkin Powell of Glynogwr), Barbara Gamage came from a cultured and literate Welsh family.<sup>6</sup> Gamage sons were sent to university, her father was celebrated for his activity in promoting Welsh poetry, and famous bards such as Tomas ab Ieuan ap Rhys sang at her home.<sup>7</sup> Women in her family apparently were educated, as well. For example, John Gamage wrote to his wife in 1576 asking her to keep his doings secret, so she presumably was able to read the letter herself rather than have it read to her.<sup>8</sup>

Barbara was apparently bilingual in Welsh and English, and she may well have been fully literate in both languages, although we now suspect that she read English well but did not write it easily, like many Welsh (and English) gentlewomen of her generation.<sup>9</sup> She obviously read letters herself, since Robert sent her an open letter to deliver after she had read it (Letter 82), and, like Barbara's father, he wrote to his wife about matters that he asked her not to share with anyone (167).<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Robert's letters are sometimes intimate enough that it is difficult to imagine them read aloud by a third party. As Ralph Houlbrooke argues, literacy brought a change in tone of letters between husband and wife, allowing them to be "much freer and more intimate," as "the composition of letters became a more personal and private matter."<sup>11</sup>

Barbara's ability to read her husband's letters would not necessarily imply the ability to respond without the aid of a secretary, because reading was usually taught separately from writing. She must have had an accept-

able hand, however, for Robert told her to write to her cousin the Lord Admiral and promised to “set down what you shall say to him” (84). That is, in this sensitive political matter, he would compose her letter, but she should send it in her own hand. As James Daybell notes, business correspondence could be handled by a secretary, but correspondence between relatives or close friends was expected to be in one’s own hand.<sup>12</sup> Robert, as we shall see, also expected her to correspond with Hugh Sanford, the Earl of Pembroke’s secretary, about the dowry for their daughter Mary; she may have employed a secretary to correspond with a secretary, although since these marriage negotiations were a family matter the etiquette was more ambiguous (141). She did use a secretary for routine business matters, as was normative for aristocratic men and women.<sup>13</sup> One surviving letter written in a fluent mixed Italian hand is apparently a scribal copy, since that signature does not match her other signatures.<sup>14</sup>

Assumptions that she was nearly illiterate are based primarily on four pieces of evidence. First there are her awkward signatures, even more awkward after her husband was made Viscount L’Isle and she wrote “B. LiSle” instead of her earlier signature “Bar: Sydney”; her later signature uses the capital “S” in the middle and is printed in a large, scrawling italic hand that does indeed look more drawn than written, as Peter Croft observes.<sup>15</sup> (It is not impossible that she had originally learned a different script, since the italic hand taught by humanists did not become a mark of social class in England until the late sixteenth century.)<sup>16</sup> Second, no literary works by her are extant or referred to by her contemporaries. Third, her daughter Mary Wroth’s *Urania*, in shadowing her as the Queen of Morea, includes her in none of the literary exchanges that constitute so much of that work. Finally, Mr. Bird, the children’s tutor, retorted to her attempts to control him by blaming her “want of education,” as Whyte reported.<sup>17</sup> But Bird’s reproaches might not indicate that she was illiterate. Rather, he was attempting to establish that he was more educated than she—and therefore she had no right to challenge him. The difficult Mr. Bird, who was constantly angling to gain control over the household, later so enraged his pupil William Sidney that Will stabbed him with his penknife in August 1605. (This indiscretion cost young Will his position at court with Prince Henry.) Robert advised Barbara to keep Bird on after that incident for a



few months, but they dismissed him as soon as they could (152).<sup>18</sup> Clearly, Bird was a biased observer whose description of her “want of education” cannot be taken at face value. Thus, although no surviving evidence suggests that she had the humanist education of her husband’s learned sisters, who were taught rhetorical skills in English, French, Italian, and Latin, there is no necessity for concluding that she was entirely unschooled.

Barbara Gamage first enters written records at her father’s death on 8 September 1584, when she became the most sought-after heiress in Britain. She had recently come of age, but her powerful cousins struggled to control her marriage and therefore her large inheritance. (She was considered her father’s sole heir, although John Gamage had apparently considered leaving his estate to his illegitimate sons.) Her cousin Sir Edward Stradling immediately brought her to his home of St. Donats Castle in Glamorganshire, and he took possession of nearby Coity Castle in her name. Her inheritance, probably more than her own beauty and gentle charm, prompted three other cousins to vie for her hand—Thomas Jones of Abermarlis, Sir James Whitney of Whitney, and Herbert Croft of Croft Castle, who was favored by Queen Elizabeth. Another cousin, Sir Walter Raleigh, was incensed that Stradling had ignored three letters from the queen commanding “that you suffer not my kinswoman to be bought and sold in Wales” without Elizabeth’s permission or “the consent or advice” of Raleigh himself and that of yet another powerful cousin at court, Charles Howard, Lord High Admiral.<sup>19</sup> Clearly, Barbara Gamage’s various male relatives seem more concerned with finances (she is “bought and sold”) than with her happiness. Henry Herbert, second Earl of Pembroke, head of the powerful Herbert family in Wales and England, supported another candidate, his young brother-in-law, Sir Robert Sidney. Even though Sir Francis Walsingham had written on behalf of the queen ordering Stradling to bring Barbara to the court and forbidding her to contract a marriage, Walsingham later said that he was delighted to hear that Stradling instead favored young Sidney. (Walsingham also had a stake in this outcome, since Walsingham’s daughter Frances had married Robert’s elder brother Sir Philip Sidney the previous September.) Conveniently, the letter from the queen ordering Stradling to bring Barbara to court before her marriage arrived two hours after her wedding to Robert Sidney at St. Donats on 23

September 1584, in the presence of the Earl of Pembroke, Stradling, and other family members. Such a dramatic coincidence must have been carefully arranged, but the stratagem worked. Walsingham assured Stradling, "there is no fault laid upon you by her Majesty; the marriage being generally well liked of."<sup>20</sup> Robert Sidney's aunt Anne Russell Dudley, Countess of Warwick, seems to be the only relative who wrote with concern for the happiness of the young couple, thanking Stradling for "the great favour . . . showed my nephew Sidney, by whose free consent and furtherance that match was so well made up, which I hope shall be very happy to them both."<sup>21</sup> We have no record of Barbara's own feelings about her marriage, but the couple may have been acquainted, and the marriage may well have been by her consent as well. Certainly the enduring affection expressed in their letters indicates that it was (or quickly became) a love match. Nonetheless, finances were not forgotten. There were the usual legal delays in processing Barbara's inheritance, but on 6 February 1585 an indenture was drawn up granting Barbara and Robert Sidney the lands of her father, which subsequently provided nearly half of their income.<sup>22</sup>

Barbara became a loving wife and mother, and she was also a competent manager. She was certainly well trained, as were the Sidney girls, in household administration, hospitality, and family medicine, but she may not have learned some social skills common to English aristocratic women—needlework, lute playing, court dancing, and archery. We have no evidence Barbara was trained in these areas. No needlework by her survives, for example, nor are there contemporary allusions to her skill to match those of her sister-in-law the Countess of Pembroke.<sup>23</sup> With her Welsh background it is likely that she did share her husband's love of music; in Wroth's *Urania* their avatars the King and Queen of Morea, are depicted enjoying a family concert.<sup>24</sup>

Barbara's correspondence is her only form of written composition mentioned by her contemporaries. Although she composed other family and business letters, the letters she wrote to her husband were by far her most sustained epistolary effort. Even though her side of the correspondence has been lost, we have her husband's replies and the reports of Robert's other correspondents, particularly his trusted henchman Whyte. So, what can we deduce about her hundreds of missing letters? We can

first of all assume that her letters were as affectionate as the ones she received. Did she call him “sweetheart,” as he called her, or some other endearment? Perhaps “my dearest heart” as her daughter-in-law Dorothy Percy Sidney, Countess of Leicester, called her husband?<sup>25</sup> Or “My true love” or “My dearest joy,” as Sir Edward Dering called his wife?<sup>26</sup> She obviously wrote to say how much she missed him, for he frequently mentioned her loving words in his reply, as when he said that he would be home as soon as he could, for “I do no less long to see you than you say you do to see me” (188).

What was her writing style? Here we can make some informed guesses, for she probably used the unadorned plain style that was fashionable for familiar correspondence and that was used by her husband. Robert makes no learned jests or classical allusions, displaying none of the learning so evident in his *Commonplace Books*.<sup>27</sup> Nor does he discuss his reading with her, employ clever word play, or refer to his own poetry. Perhaps those elements were saved for his (now lost) frequent correspondence with his witty and learned sister. Rather, he wrote to his wife in a plain style, focusing primarily on family and personal matters, including occasional court news or gossip. We are probably safe in assuming that is her epistolary style as well. Like her husband, she no doubt supplied a formal inscription on the outside, but used all available writing surface inside, including frequent postscripts written in the left margin. Even if her hand was relatively unpracticed it is unlikely to have been more difficult to read than Robert’s notoriously bad hand, particularly in his later years. (His deteriorating handwriting could be partially attributed to the aging process, either failing eyesight or perhaps an arthritic hand.) Her letters, like her husband’s, would have been sealed with the Sidney pheon, unless she decided (like her daughter Mary Wroth) to retain her own family crest—in Barbara’s case, the Gamage griffin.

And what did she write about? The major themes of her letters, as we might expect, deal with the overlapping spheres of family matters, administration of their estate at Penshurst, court connections, and finances. But another overarching theme is what Gary Schneider has recently termed “epistolary continuity,” which was “perhaps the ‘master theme’ of epistolary communication” in the early modern period.<sup>28</sup> Barbara asked Robert to

write more often, for he sends a letter “lest you chide me for not writing” (128). But he also complained when he did not receive letters regularly from her, on one occasion looking frantically first at Windsor and then at London, “But have not found any word from you,” and on another occasion he said, “I know the wind is the cause, else I should have heard from you how you do. . . . I do long to hear how you and your children do” (145, 86). Sometimes letters arrived in clusters, as when Robert said “the 18th I received 3 letters from you,” and a week later he thanked her for more “kind letters” (121, 122).

Like her husband, she normally used three common strategies for ensuring that no letters had been lost—dating them, telling him which bearer brought them, and, whenever she was not home at Penshurst, giving her location so that the recipient could ascertain how long the letters should take to arrive. For example, on 19 August 1612 Sidney wrote to her from Flushing, saying, “This day at noon Besbedg came hither, having been in much danger at sea. He brought me your letter of the 9 of this month, at the writing whereof you had not received mine by your coachman. Since my landing I have written twice unto you, but the winds have been so contrary, as the last letters were sent by land” (230). This passage establishes that she dated her letters (“your letter of the 9 of this month”), that he had written to her by their coachman, and that his letters were normally sent directly by ship, but on this occasion had to travel overland first because of weather. So, like her husband, Barbara would normally acknowledge each letter by date and/or carrier, strategies that were developed in the sixteenth century to cope with the unreliability of postal service.

Like other correspondents, they were loath to pass up an opportunity to have a letter carried, even if there was little to say. For example, on 9 November 1612, Sidney said, “I will not let this bearer, Ensign Watkins, come unto you without a letter, although I sent unto you this day by your son’s man” (239). Sometimes the bearer could be completely trusted, as when he sent her letters by their daughter Mary Wroth, but sometimes the bearer was unreliable and letters did not arrive in a timely fashion.

Family matters are the most important topic of her letters. The frequent messages carried between Barbara and Robert testified to their affection. She frequently reproached her husband for being away so long—and

sometimes for “breaking faith with her” when he postponed, often repeatedly, his arrival at Penshurst. Robert’s duties as Governor of the English garrison town of Flushing in the Netherlands and later as chamberlain to Queen Anne meant that his time was not his own. “Let not my stay make you think unkindness in me,” he said time and again (15). Or, when she had obviously told him how much she missed him, he replied, “I take it very kindly that you esteem it so great a contentment to be still with me. I esteem it no whit less to have your company but such is the course of my life as I cannot tie myself to mine own home always . . . I trust we shall one day live more together than hitherto we have done” (27). Throughout their thirty-seven years of marriage he continually assured her, “I do long to see you” (65, 133, 263, etc.), but they rarely lived together continuously for more than a few months at a time. Millicent Hay calculated that during his fourteen years of service under Queen Elizabeth (1589–1603) he was in England more than he was in Flushing, so he did not spend enough time at his post to please the queen or enough time at home to please his wife.<sup>29</sup> When he later served as Lord Chamberlain to Queen Anne (1604–19), those duties also frequently kept him apart from his family.

Barbara longed to go with him when he returned to his duties in Flushing, but it was not always possible, given her frequent pregnancies. On 19 May 1594, for example, he wrote from the court at Greenwich, “I am exceeding sorry that I cannot have your company. If you were not as you are I would put you to the trouble to come to me; but considering how near your time you are I would not do it for anything” (42). She wrote repeatedly to say how unhappy she was that they were separated. In answer to one such letter he expressed his relief that she was safely at home: “I thank you for the desire you have to be with me . . . I must and do love you the more for it; and am as sorry to want your company as you are. But every hour more and more I see reason to be glad that I took you not over with me. For this town is full of the bloody flux, and many die of it” (100).<sup>30</sup>

Her unhappiness with his frequent and prolonged absence was part of a larger cultural pattern among the upper classes throughout Britain and Europe. As Lena Cowan Orlin observes, during this period there was an inherent conflict in household roles as men’s work changed, taking

them more often from home.<sup>31</sup> Barbara's father, despite occasional trips to London, no doubt lived primarily at home, undertaking his duties as Lord of Coity and overseeing the lands that constituted his wealth. Her husband, in contrast, was an administrator in the government bureaucracy who was called away from Penshurst for months or even years at a time. Under Queen Elizabeth he had little say in his deployment, and his repeated efforts to find a position in England came to naught until James came to the throne.

While he was gone, Barbara worried about his health and safety, as he did hers. Once she evidently wrote in alarm about hearing of a minor injury, and he had considerable trouble convincing her that he was not seriously hurt, saying, "You do me wrong not to believe me. For I assure you of my word and faith that I have no bone either broken or out of joint, nor other hurt but I am somewhat black and blue about my right eye, and my right hand a little wrenched which made perhaps some alteration in my writing" (77). Because she worried so, he avoided mentioning his role in various military campaigns that he undertook in the Netherlands with Prince Maurice of Nassau.<sup>32</sup> When he was much older and ill at Hampton Court she told him that she was on her way to take care of him, for he replied that he was sorry the news of his slight indisposition "made you think of so troublesome a journey as to come to see me. . . . Believe it, sweetheart, that if I had been ill indeed I would have sent for you" (295). Although he protests that he did not want her to fuss like that, he told Sir John Harington on another occasion, "My wife hath been my doctor, my nurse, my friend, and my sovereign cure."<sup>33</sup> Their correspondence also discussed the various illnesses of their many children, her cold, their son Will's melancholy in one case, and her own melancholy in another.

Births are a major topic in Barbara's letters, since she had eleven children. It seems that nearly every time Robert returned to Penshurst Barbara became pregnant, so Jonson seems to have been quite right about both her chastity and her fruitfulness. Barbara added intimate postscripts alluding to her suspicion that she might again be pregnant. For example, Robert thanks her "for the news you write me in the postscript of your letter," saying "I pray God to give us joy of it" (35). His replies also indicate that she wrote about her coming confinements, asking for his prayers—and,

we may deduce from his protestations, expressing her understandable frustration each time he was not home for the birth. For example, he wrote from Flushing in February 1597 before the birth of their daughter Bridget, "About this time according to your reckoning, you wrote unto me, you should be brought to bed. I send this bearer therefore over to see you from me and to let you know, that since I cannot be by you in your pains, yet that I will heartily pray to God for you, and with great earnestness expect the good news of your delivery" (116). She wrote to ask his opinion on who should stand as godparents for each child, and she expressed her own. Here family responsibilities shaded into political actions, for each christening offered the chance to solidify relationships with those chosen as godparents, and their list included some of the most important figures at court, particularly the Essex circle. The etiquette of such requests demanded an autograph letter, preferably hand delivered. At her request Robert wrote a letter asking Bridget Morison Radcliffe, Countess of Sussex, to be a godmother, telling Barbara, "And if she be in London I would you did deliver it yourself" (131). This might imply that Barbara was uncomfortable writing such formal letters to those above her in the social hierarchy, but it might also imply that Sidney would be the more effective supplicant, since the Countess of Sussex was his cousin. Similarly, Robert asked Barbara to write to her cousin the Lord Admiral, as we have seen, rather than simply writing himself.

Her moves are another major topic of discussion in her letters, for they took her between the spheres of Penshurst, Flushing, and the court, and she had full responsibility for supervision of the servants who were packing and moving her family's clothing, bedding, and even furniture. On one occasion, so as not to insult her cousin the Lord Admiral, she had the logistical problem of having the three oldest children embark in a ship from one port and the four youngest leave simultaneously in a ship from another port. Although they discussed the pros and cons of each move in detail, Robert usually concluded, "do what you shall think best yourself . . . and I shall be best contented" (79).

Educating their large family was a subject of much concern in their letters. Robert and Barbara occasionally disagreed on how the children should be raised. He wanted the children to be sent away to a great house



to be educated and to make connections that would be useful to them at court; she wanted to keep the children home with her. Robert was most concerned that young William was still with the nursemaids when he was nearly seven; instead, he should have been studying Latin with a tutor. Robert was also adamant that she should leave the three older children at home when she went to join him at Flushing in 1597, both because of the "bad air" and because in Flushing "they cannot learn, what they may do in other places" (126). He wanted Mary (aged 9) and Kate (nearly 8) to remain in England at the homes of his Dudley aunts (Katherine Dudley Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, and Anne Russell Dudley, Countess of Warwick), and Will at the home of Sir Charles Morison. He knew that Barbara would object to leaving them, "but you must remember, I have part in them, as well as you, and therefore must have care of them." And, to induce her to obey, he was not above threatening her. The air was too dangerous for their health, he said, "and truly if you do bring them over, if anything happen amiss to any of them, you shall hereafter not have your will more in it." It was enough to terrify any mother, and Whyte let Robert know the distress that his commands were causing his family, saying that young Mary "every time she thinks of it doth fall aweeping, and my Lady when she perceives it doth bear her company."<sup>34</sup> Robert said he did not question Barbara's love as a mother, but feared her "too much fondness" (126). All through April Robert wrote to have her leave the children. First he gave way on the girls, saying, "For the girls, I cannot mislike the care you take of them: but for the boys, you must resolve to let me have my will. For I know better what belongs to a man than you do" (127). But the Countess of Huntingdon pleaded her large debt and said she could not take the children, and Barbara said she could not think where to leave them, so in the end Robert had little choice but to let them all come to Flushing. Robert could command, cajole, or even plead, but in his absence he could not force Barbara to make choices that might be good for their children's future but would take them from her. This difference in the Sidneys' approach to childrearing continues throughout the correspondence, even years later when their sons were enrolled at Oxford but preferred to spend their time at Penshurst or with their newly-married sister Mary Wroth at Durrance or Loughton.



Educating their large family required a significant outlay of funds not only for tutors, but also for the boys' college and European Grand Tour, and for the high cost of maintaining his daughters at court—Mary, Philippa, and then Barbara. (Katherine married quite young and does not seem to have been at court.) Will (and after his death young Robert) would inherit the estate, but Robert and Barbara had to finance marriage portions generous enough to allow all four surviving daughters to marry into wealthy families. The total amount of the dowries ran to some 14,000 pounds, but, because of Robert's complex borrowing and reborrowing with high rates of interest, they actually cost him far more than that amount.<sup>35</sup>

As their daughters grew up, Barbara was deeply involved in marriage negotiations for them, including dealing with Sanford, secretary to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, for his contribution to Mary's dowry, and later working with Mary Wroth to arrange the marriage of the youngest child, Barbara, to one of their neighbors from the extremely wealthy Smythe family—the family that founded the East India Company.<sup>36</sup> Robert seemed to take it as a matter of course that Barbara would handle correspondence about the marriages, as this was often the mother's role.<sup>37</sup> Just after young Mary Sidney's wedding to Robert Wroth, Barbara added a "word of grief" at the end of a letter, and Robert tried to figure out what it was (150). Perhaps Barbara had told him that their daughter Mary was already unhappy with her marriage. In later years Barbara told him about the visits of their grandchildren, and then the death of their daughter Katherine Maunsell's baby. She also wrote of her sorrow at the death of their son William of smallpox and then of their daughter Philippa Hobart in childbirth; Philippa was the eighth of their eleven children to predecease them. Robert replied, "My heart is too full of grief to use many words, especially since your grief must be as much as mine . . . . But God's will be done: and I beseech him that while I live, yourself and those few that be left unto us may be spared" (306).<sup>38</sup>

After the family, the second major topic of Barbara's letters was Penshurst. Running the estate at Penshurst was essentially running a small corporation, and despite the presence of a steward and other household officers, in Robert's absence Barbara had primary responsibility for personnel decisions, purchases, contracts, and construction. Robert frequently sent

Barbara instructions for various household officials, but he also corresponded regularly with these employees. Barbara must have begged him not to make financial decisions with them without consulting her, for he promised that “these business in my absence I must commit unto you: neither indeed will I have anything hereafter dealt in without your knowledge” (104).

Her authority at Penshurst was challenged by some of the upper servants, and she frequently had to appeal for Robert’s approval of her actions. She fired a saucy cook and a servant who seduced the housekeeper’s daughter, and complained about her troubles with the steward Thomas Golding and particularly with his wife, who treated her with disrespect. Disputes between aristocratic husbands and wives often involved the household officers and upper servants, as Alice Friedman notes, for frequently “the mistress’s loss was the officers’ gain,” and, although relations between Robert and Barbara were normally affectionate, there was one occasion when Robert temporarily took Golding’s part against Barbara in a complex dispute involving the children’s governess “Mrs Lucretia,” who also helped Barbara with administrative tasks.<sup>39</sup> Golding had accused Barbara and Lucretia of mismanagement, provoking a scathing letter from Robert that “more grieved her than ever I knew her in my life at anything, and indeed the least unkind word that you send, is to her soul a torment,” Whyte reported. “Only for looking to your profit, she is forced to countenance a man whom she fears will never serve her until he might govern all things at his own will, and [for his] own good.” Barbara was certain that Lucretia had “great wrong done unto her,” and said that without the governess she did not know “how to keep house, or to have her children well governed or taught to work.”<sup>40</sup> Because Whyte took the women’s part—and Robert believed him when he had not believed Barbara—Whyte could later report, “My Lady is very well and was much comforted in the kind letter you sent her last of the 21 of April.”<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have that “kind letter,” or indeed any letters from Robert to Barbara during this period. Perhaps his rebukes were so painful to her that she did not wish to retain any record of the incident.

Robert’s solution for household management was hiring a superior steward. He knew that it was a delicate matter, for Barbara needed to have help supervising the large staff of servants without undercutting her own

authority: "Neither is it any way my meaning to take any authority of the house from you, but all things shall still be commanded by you" (187). Her replies explaining her view of household management would be invaluable, had they survived, but we can surmise that she would have been humiliated if she did not retain final say over the steward.<sup>42</sup>

Another problem with a servant, in this case a man named Rice who seduced the housekeeper's daughter, is worth noting because it has been misread as a reference to Wroth's natural son, named William Herbert after his father. Robert says, "I wrote . . . what my will is touching Rice, and did write the more earnestly because you may see how I do take the matter: not but I know you are careful to do that which is fit and for my honor and contentment, for so I understand from my daughter and others, and therefore I will not say any more of it" (255). Six days later he wrote again about the same incident, "You have done very well in putting Rice away: for it had been too great a shame he should have stayed in the house . . . and as for the housekeeper and his wife, I do not see wherein they should offend if it were not in making their child too wanton" (256). Wroth's only part in this incident is justifying her mother's dismissal of Rice. The confusion about the natural child arose because the *Historical Manuscript Commission Report on the Manuscripts of De L'Isle and Dudley* omitted the first of these letters and much of the second, and then mistranscribed "Rice" as "Will." (Wroth's natural children, Katherine and William Herbert, were apparently born after Barbara's death in 1621).

Barbara's letters also included reports on their building projects. Some of them were relatively small, such as the dovecote and the rabbit warren, but she also supervised the building of the stables, the outer wall, and the long gallery. Robert saw supervising builders as part of housewifery: "I need not send to know how my buildings go forwards. For I am sure you are so good a housewife as you may be put in trust with them" (44). She reported on plumbing problems and discussed the selling of timber, arranged to have cattle put in the more luxuriant pasture at Otford, and supervised the stables and the dispatch of horses and coaches from Penshurst to London or Flushing. The gardens at Penshurst were her particular care, and their abundant fruit gave opportunities for the gift-giving that was such an important part of court life.

She was also, we might say, the procurement officer. Robert's letters frequently mention her requests that he send her from Flushing such items as Rhenish wine, blankets, coats for the children, decorative borders for her gowns, medicines, and a new bed for her lying in. She liked the bed he sent, but the chair and cushions were of inferior quality, as he admitted: "I trust you like the bed I sent you, though I think you do not so well like of the chairs and cushions: and indeed I would they had been somewhat better trimmed" (181). She sent foodstuffs from Penshurst to be distributed at court when he was there. The letters are full of references to her peaches—sent in a greater quantity, he said, than he had friends to give them—as well as her apricots, cherries, plums, and deer from the estate, that were sent to be distributed as gifts to important friends who might favor his suits. When he was abroad, he sent gifts like "12 boar pies unto you, and a piece of hangings for my Lord Rich, and hawks for Sir Ha. Leigh," which she was to distribute accordingly (89). In addition to sending fruit, she was also asked to send trees, as when her daughter Katherine wanted some sent to Wales as a gift for her father-in-law. Gift-giving also extended to purchases. Most of these were handled by Whyte and other agents, but on occasion Barbara herself was responsible, as when she had gloves made for Queen Anne by the queen's own glove maker, Shepharde (145).

The third major topic in the correspondence was their court connections, particularly their entertainment of aristocratic family and friends, and their efforts at court to secure Robert's leave and the estate of Otford. Their primary social group was the titled aristocracy, even long before Robert became Earl of Leicester in 1618. When Barbara was in Flushing in the 1590s she lived in the magnificent Princen Huys, or Prince's House, as Roger Kuin has established.<sup>43</sup> There she became friends with Louise de Coligne, Princess of Orange, who served as godmother to their first son, named William in honor of her assassinated husband, William of Orange. When Barbara was in England, she visited with friends and family members, including her sisters-in-law: Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, at Wilton, Ivychurch, and Baynards Castle in London; Frances Walsingham Sidney (then Countess of Essex) and her mother at the Walsingham home of Barn Elms, or in London at Essex house. Later Barbara was most often host to a distinguished group who loved to come

to Penshurst, especially in summer: her nephews William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery; her niece Elizabeth Sidney Manners, Countess of Rutland; her daughter Mary Wroth's dear friend Susan de Vere Herbert, Countess of Montgomery; and Susan's sisters, Elizabeth de Vere Stanley, Countess of Derby, and Bridget de Vere, Lady Norris (later Countess of Berkshire). Her daughter-in-law Dorothy Percy Sidney, and Dorothy's sister Lucy Percy Hay, Countess of Carlisle, were frequently at Penshurst, and Dorothy also hosted Barbara at Syon house, home of the Percys, Earls of Northumberland. Lady Anne Clifford, then Countess of Dorset, lived nearby at Knole, and recorded one of her visits in her diary, as well as her disappointment on a previous occasion when her husband would not permit her to accompany him to Penshurst.<sup>44</sup> Barbara told Robert about these visits with various friends and relatives, sent on his letters to them and added some of her own. Corresponding with a wide circle of female friends and relatives would have been normative for a woman of her social class in Britain and Europe.<sup>45</sup>

Family letters and visits shaded into business, for Barbara repeatedly went to court to intercede for Robert's leave to come home from Flushing, using her contacts not only with her uncle the Lord Admiral but also with the women in the family—most importantly Robert's sister the Countess of Pembroke, his brother's widow Frances Walsingham, then Countess of Essex, and his formidable aunts the Countesses of Huntington and Warwick. For example, Robert asked her in 1596, "When the Queen comes to Whitehall, I pray solicit my leave to come over" (103). She was there again in November 1599 "with her great belly," to enlist the help of his aunts to intercede with the queen for his return.<sup>46</sup> Barbara wanted Robert at home, and when his leave was repeatedly denied or postponed, she took it very hard, as Rowland Whyte's letters indicate. For example, in June of 1600, while Barbara was visiting the Countess of Pembroke at Baynard's Castle and the sisters-in-law were working together with other friends and relatives for Robert's leave, Whyte reported, "My Lady was for 2 days very ill . . . which I fear me proceeded from a grief she took that after many assured promises made unto her by her honourable friends in Court for your leave to return. She found but uncertain fruit of it, much blaming their unkind and slack dealing with her in it. But they all assure her and

me that the Queen will grant it ere it be long but that they think it not fit to trouble her too often about it."<sup>47</sup> We can easily picture a tense family encounter when Barbara accused her sister-in-law of negligence, while Mary Sidney tried to explain the realities of court politics.

On another occasion when Barbara finally did obtain Robert's leave, Whyte reported that she had kept the queen's original letter safe for him and sent him a copy.<sup>48</sup> She never did become reconciled to his long absences, writing to beg him to apply for leave to come home again as soon as he arrived in Flushing. We might have a little sympathy for Robert, caught between the constant demands of his wife that he come home at once and the demands of his queen that he remain in Flushing, which he called "the grave of my youth and I fear of my fortune."<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, Barbara and Robert remained an effective team. The other matter in which he most often sought her intercession at court was obtaining the estate of Otford. In January of 1600, after some fifteen years of attempts to obtain that estate, the promise was made that if Lady Sidney "did come to court in the absence of her husband and deliver unto the Queen a petition [about Otford]" then the Countess of Pembroke would bring her to the queen.<sup>50</sup> Barbara accordingly took the advice of their Dudley aunts as to the type of present and the time to give it, to induce the queen to hear their suit for Otford.<sup>51</sup> They eventually did obtain that estate and, in later years, leased it to Rowland Whyte.

The fourth major theme of her correspondence, an undercurrent in discussions of family matters, Penshurst, and court connections, is money. From Robert's apologies we can deduce that she repeatedly asked for her household allowance, and he had to reply that he was too short of cash to send it just then. She also worried about the portion of the household money that was held up by the escapades of the corrupt Treasurer at War, Thomas Sherley (81).<sup>52</sup> (Some of Robert's pay went directly to Barbara for the household.) Pawning plate seems to have been their standard way of handling a cash flow problem. For example, he wrote in the midst of a particularly acute financial crisis that if worse comes to worst, "you have plate yet left in the house, and I do not love my plate so well as I love my wife" (121).<sup>53</sup> He frequently apologized for his lack of money, as when he said in 1609 that she had to be content without "many things which are fit

for you," but he promised, "as soon as I can bring my estate into any good order, I will set you out such an allowance as shall beseem my wife, whom I love so well" (187).

The Sidneys were cash poor, but they lived richly. Performing nobility, as Kari McBride notes, was a form of theatre requiring a proper set, costumes, and supporting actors.<sup>54</sup> The Sidneys spent lavishly in all three areas. The set was the country house, the estate that the nobility built or enlarged to attract a visit by the monarch. Largely for this purpose the Sidneys built the long gallery, new stables, and garden walls at Penshurst. Their steward Thomas Golding dissuaded Robert from enlarging the deer park, since the Sidneys needed the rent from that land, and the 400 deer the park could already support "will afford hunting sufficient for your honourable friends whensoever they shall spend part of the season here."<sup>55</sup> Robert told Barbara that she spent far too much on housekeeping, and they absolutely must live within their means. She told him that he spent far too much on his clothes and on his travels. For example, his sheepish replies demonstrate that she had accused him of extravagance when he borrowed 1,000 pounds from the Earl of Essex for a sable cloak and other outfits for his embassy to the king of France (22–24). Robert defended this daunting sum as a necessary investment in his career, believing that the splendor of his dress and retinue would reflect glory on Elizabeth, and that she would therefore be more likely to favor him. He knew what magnificence was, for his father Sir Henry Sidney had lived as Viceroy in his positions as Lord President of both Ireland and Wales. During Robert's youthful travel in Europe, his father had promised that he would give him "such a suit of apparel, as shall beseem your father's son to wear, in any court in Germany."<sup>56</sup> (This was at a time when the court at Dresden was renowned for its clothing, armor, and goldsmiths.)<sup>57</sup> Such extravagant display had become almost a form of gambling, as courtiers wagered vast sums that they would be rewarded at court. Again and again Barbara questioned the necessity for such enormous investments, which he promised would be a step toward a higher position under the queen. Her skepticism was justified, for he never did recoup those expenses or gain Elizabeth's favor, and to pay the debt for his French embassy he eventually sold some of Barbara's lands in Wales.<sup>58</sup>



In later years, when he had gained the favor of King James and served as Lord Chamberlain to Queen Anne, Robert averaged some 400 pounds per year for his ordinary clothes, buying annually sixteen suits, not including larger sums for furs and jewels.<sup>59</sup> He spent far more on clothing than did his wife, who, according to Whyte, spent comparatively little on herself and did not even have a suitable gown for court, for "she bestows it [all] upon her little ones."<sup>60</sup> Dressing the part of the successful courtier was becoming less important, however. As Lisa Celovsky has demonstrated, when the ideal of magnificence was replaced by the masculine ideal of the obedient courtier, such display came to be seen as imprudence.<sup>61</sup>

Equally extravagant was the supporting cast. In any position where he had two servants, his estate agent Thomas Nevitt told him, one would have done.<sup>62</sup> Robert frequently blamed Barbara for keeping an extravagant household and, as we have seen, there was some truth to his reproaches, but most of that expense was for hospitality. The Sidneys entertained on a scale more appropriate to their wealthy visitors than to their own estate. Robert's clear vision of his place in society and consequently how his household should be run is set forth in his discussion of hiring a proper steward: "The steward of a man's house of my quality must both have the spirit and knowledge to command, and experience of all things that belongs to a house, both within doors and without . . . Besides, he must know how to give entertainment to strangers, according to their quality, which is not easily found in one that is not bred where such courses are used" (187).

So it was not that Robert wanted to live less splendidly; he simply wanted to spend less. He knew how a noble house should be administered, but his models were beyond his means. His grandfather William Sidney had been chamberlain to King Edward, his father held court in castles in Dublin and Wales, and Robert himself was in charge of household arrangements for Queen Anne as her Lord Chamberlain. Barbara also knew well that hospitality meant treating company according to their rank. On one of the many occasions when Robert scolded her for spending too much money on the household, this time at their lodging in Baynards Castle, Whyte defended her, saying that they lived very simply except when their nephew William Lord Herbert was there. And "then is he respected as if



yourself were here, both for his diet and his chamber.”<sup>63</sup> On another occasion when Robert had himself come home with company, he protested at the cost when he saw the bills. Yet he was continually urging her to “make much” of his sister, or his brother Thomas, or his niece Elizabeth Sidney Manners, Countess of Rutland, or later, Mary Wroth’s closest friend, Susan De Vere Herbert, Countess of Montgomery. On one occasion he told her that he thought the Earl of Pembroke, the Countess of Montgomery, and other distinguished company would be coming to Penshurst. Then on the next day he scolded her for too much preparation, saying, “The company which I see by your letter you look for doth not come at this time, and therefore you shall not need make any provisions and indeed if you did well mark my letter, I did write doubtfully of it” (158).

Ben Jonson (who may have served briefly as a tutor at Penshurst as Michael Brennan and Noel Kinnamon have recently argued), celebrated Barbara’s reputation as an exemplary hostess when he described an unexpected visit from King James when the family was absent:

what praise was heaped  
 On thy good lady then! who therein reaped  
 The just reward of her high housewifery:  
 To have her linen, plate, and all things nigh  
 When she was far; and not a room but dressed  
 As if it had expected such a guest!<sup>64</sup>

Jonson’s description of the linen, plate, and every room standing ready for unexpected guests, even the king, conjures up a massive amount of work—and expense.<sup>65</sup>

Barbara, as heir of Coity, and Robert, as Lord Chamberlain to Queen Anne, certainly did know how to entertain royalty, but they did not have the resources to finance their lavish hospitality. On one occasion after Robert had given splendid entertainment to various dignitaries, Whyte admonished him “to remember that it is a happiness to be out of debt, and wisdom to spend no more than [one’s] fortune will bear.”<sup>66</sup> Robert later advised Barbara, “But this we must at the last resolve: to keep such a house as we may, not as we would, and our friends must bear with us,

for we must not be undone" (187). It was good advice and, had they both been able to follow it, their financial situation would not have become so precarious. Yet their problems with debt were not unusual for their circle at court. According to Nevitt's summary, their debt of some thirty-five hundred pounds was just a few hundred pounds over their annual income; those debts pale beside those of their nephew William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, who, despite his vast estate, reputedly died some 80,000 pounds in debt.<sup>67</sup>

Except when she was constrained by the requirements of hospitality, Barbara apparently had a good head for finances and advised her husband on fiscal matters. For example, when Robert was confronted with a particularly difficult financial decision, he said, "I would to God my business had been such as I might have brought you thither myself. I thank you for your kind letter and the good advice you give me in it" (22). He often asked her to represent him in business dealings and law cases, as when he said, "My law causes will require some following which when James comes up, I pray you also have care of" (104). (His various lawsuits, primarily against young Robert Dudley over the estate of the Earl of Leicester, cost him at least 5,000 pounds.)<sup>68</sup> And when he wanted to put Leigh Park in fine (a single large payment at the outset of the rental period), she convinced him that it would be more profitable to rent it (bringing in smaller and more regular payments) for he wrote that their servant James "tells me that your desire is that Leigh Park be rather set at rent than at fine: and mine opinion is so likewise, if I be not perhaps forced to make ready money. For it will be a good rent, and the sale of a little land will yield a greater sum" (54, 60). In 1612, he was eager for her to "come up" to meet him in London, adding, "I pray you make all the speed you can." He asked her to hurry because he relied on her judgment and had "diverse business which I stay till your coming" (239). He repeatedly sought her counsel—and sometimes her signature, since many of Robert's assets were originally hers, and he continued to refer to "your lands." Early in their marriage he told her that he wanted to sell some of her Welsh lands to buy lands closer to Penshurst, but if these are the Welsh lands that Nevitt mentions as sold, the money was spent on his debts, so that her jointure lands were never replaced.

Some of her letters justified her own household expenses in answer to Robert's rebukes. He scolded her, on one occasion, for running up a debt of 1,000 pounds for the household that they could ill afford, he said, since he had a debt of over 2,000 pounds in London. Besides, it was coming on Christmas, and that was a tremendous expense for one in his position. Apparently he perceived no irony whatever. He considered his court expenditures as unavoidable business expenses that demanded economies elsewhere, and he evidently still believed that Penshurst itself should be a source of income rather than an expense. But Barbara seems to have been worried about his spending habits, just as he was annoyed by hers, and no doubt her letters contained similar reproaches.

Most of their financial problems were caused by their desire to enact a noble life. Although Robert kept asking Barbara to "play the good housewife" and reduce household expenses, he decided to start collecting art, telling Barbara to take good care of the paintings he sent over, because "they have cost me a good deal of money . . . I look for more out of Holland which I will send over with the Rhenish wine" (106). He also kept more than twenty horses at court, bought six new coaches, and spent large sums on his dogs. The Sidneys had a comfortable income, but not one that equalled Robert's aspirations at court. In earlier days he attempted to keep up with his brother-in-law the Earl of Pembroke as well as the Earl of Essex, and later his constant companions were his nephews, the enormously wealthy Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery. If such company were not a sufficient spur to magnificence, the construction at Knole was near enough to make enlarging the deer park and building a banqueting house seem like necessities, and he hired some of the workmen who had marblized the pillars at Knole. Robert simply could not afford the 2,000 pounds he spent annually to live at court, or the 500 pounds he spent on a costume for a single masque, or the 200 pounds just for diamond buttons. Looking at Nevitt's accounts, one sees that Barbara's household expenses were perhaps the least of their financial problems.

Reading only Robert's letters home, one might deduce that the Sidneys lived in abject poverty, but other family documents paint a somewhat different picture. Letters from their agents, the Penshurst inventories, and Nevitt's summary of his accounts demonstrate that although Robert

and Barbara were always in debt, they lived a cultured life full of books, music, and art.<sup>69</sup> They owned elegant furnishings, tapestries, maps, and paintings purchased in Robert's time on the Continent. The Penshurst library had some 5,000 books.<sup>70</sup> They also set a sumptuous table for their noble friends, including many types of wine and spirits imported from the Continent, and their garden was famous for its beauty as well as its superior fruit. Their lives may have been haunted by debt in their attempt to keep up with their wealthier relatives, but they lived well. And Robert did attain, at long last, the title of Earl of Leicester, thereby equaling his sister and his nephews in rank if not in wealth.

When Jonson praises Barbara in "To Penshurst," he commends not only "her high housewifery," but also her role in educating her children in religion, and in exemplifying with her husband "the mysteries of manners, arms and arts." It is largely because of her contributions that he concludes,

Now, *Penshurst*, they that will proportion thee  
 With other edifices, when they see  
 Those proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else,  
 May say, their lords have built, but thy lord dwells.

For Jonson that word "dwells" evokes an idealized aristocracy living in harmony with nature and with all social classes. He focuses his praise on most of the same topics that comprise Barbara Sidney's correspondence—her love for her husband, her education of their children, her administration of Penshurst, and her hospitality and court connections. However, unlike Barbara, he glosses over the finances that made life at Penshurst possible. We may not have Barbara's letters, but we can deduce many of her comments from Robert's replies and from Rowland Whyte's reports, and we can reconstruct the outline of her daily life from estate records and from Penshurst itself. Visitors to Penshurst can still see the long gallery that was built under Barbara's supervision. Looking at the stone Sidney porcupine and Gamage griffin that she had set into the exterior walls makes her seem very close, especially when one goes to the Solar and looks at her portrait with six of her children, and one with just her eldest, Lady Mary Wroth.

By examining the life of Barbara Gamage Sidney, Countess of Leicester, we can begin to understand what an achievement it was for an upper-class early modern woman to be praised for her “high housewifery.”

## Notes

1. Ben Jonson, “To Penshurst,” *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925–52), 8:96. I am grateful to Noel J. Kinnamon, Michael G. Brennan, and the editors of *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* for their helpful comments on this essay.

2. On Rowland Whyte’s lifelong association with Robert Sidney, see Michael G. Brennan, “‘Your Lordship’s to Do You All Humble Service’: Rowland Whyte’s Correspondence with Robert Sidney, Viscount De L’Isle and first Earl of Leicester,” *Sidney Journal* 21 (2003): 1–37.

3. Rowland Whyte to Robert Sidney, 2 December 1595, De L’Isle and Dudley MSS U1475 C12/35. All manuscript references are to the De L’Isle and Dudley papers at the Centre for Kentish Studies, unless otherwise noted. De L’Isle and Dudley papers are quoted with the kind permission of Viscount De L’Isle, MBE DL. Whyte quotations are from Noel Kinnamon’s transcriptions for *The Correspondence of Rowland Whyte and Robert Sidney, First Earl of Leicester*, ed. Michael G. Brennan, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Margaret P. Hannay (in progress).

4. On Wroth and her father, see Margaret P. Hannay, “‘My Daughter Wroth’: Lady Mary Wroth in the Correspondence of Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester,” *Sidney Journal*, 22 (2004): 47–72. On Wroth and her mother, see Naomi J. Miller, *Changing the Subject: Mary Wroth and the Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), 76–79.

5. John Gamage’s death in London provides evidence that the Gamage family may have lived there for part of the year, as was becoming customary. Thomas Parry, *A History of Welsh Literature*, trans. H. Idris Bell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 177.

6. Millicent V. Hay, *The Life of Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester (1563–1626)* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1984), 171–94; Kate Chedgoy, “The Civility of Early Modern Welsh Women,” *Early Modern Civil Discourses*, ed. Jennifer Richards (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 162–82.

7. Glanmor Williams, ed. *Glamorgan County History* (Cardiff: Glamorgan County History Trust Ltd, 1974), 4:564.

8. James Daybell, “Female Literacy and Social Conventions of Women’s Letter-writing, 1540–1603,” *Early Modern Women’s Letter Writing, 1440–1700*, ed. James Daybell (London: Palgrave, 2001), 70. See also Alan McFarlane on letters between husbands and wives, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction 1300–1840* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 190–98.

9. I am grateful to William Griffith and Nia Powell for this information. David

Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) for largely statistical reasons uses the ability to sign one's name as the marker of literacy, a position challenged by Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1982).

10. All quotations from Robert Sidney's letters to his wife are from *Domestic Politics and Family Absence: The Correspondence (1588–1621) of Robert Sidney, first Earl of Leicester, and Barbara Gamage Sidney, Countess of Leicester*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan (Aldershot, Hants and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); references to this edition are parenthetical by letter number.

11. Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450–1700* (London and New York: Longman, 1984), 101.

12. Daybell, "Female Literacy," 69.

13. On the use of secretaries, see Alan Stewart and Heather Wolfe, *Letterwriting in Renaissance England* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004), 55–77.

14. Barbara Gamage Sidney to John Stamer, 3 January 1597, Huntington Library MS STT 1897. I am grateful to Germaine Warkentin for this reference.

15. Barbara Gamage Sidney's signatures are found in U1475 C1/12; U1500 A13/3; and Cecil Papers 87/138. See also *The Poems of Robert Sidney*, ed. Peter J. Croft (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 74.

16. Jonathan Goldberg, *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 50–54.

17. Whyte to Sidney, 24 January 1599/1600, U1475 C12/208.

18. See also Thomas Golding to Robert Sidney, 25 August 1605, De L'Isle and Dudley MSS U1475 C36/9.

19. Sir Walter Raleigh to Sir Edward Stradling, 26 September 1584, *Stradling Correspondence: A Series of Letters Written in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. John Montgomery Traherne (London: Longmans, 1840), 22.

20. Sir Francis Walsingham to Sir Edward Stradling, 27 September 1584, *Stradling Correspondence*, 30.

21. Anne Russell Dudley, Countess of Warwick, to Sir Edward Stradling, 28 September, *Stradling Correspondence*, 23.

22. De L'Isle and Dudley U1475 T327/8.

23. John Taylor, *The Needles Excellency. A New Booke wherin are divers Admirable Workes wrought with the Needle* (London: James Boler, 1634).

24. Lady Mary Sidney Wroth, *The Second Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, ed. Josephine A. Roberts, completed by Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller (Tempe, AZ: RETS/ACMRS, 1999), 29–31. Note that here Mary Sidney's voice is praised, but not Barbara's. See also Gavin Alexander, "The Musical Sidneys," *John Donne Journal* 25 (2006), forthcoming.

25. Dorothy Percy Sidney, Countess of Leicester, to Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester, 26 September [1636], C82/1. Quotation from Noel Kinnamon's transcription

for our edition, *The Correspondence of Dorothy Percy Sidney, Countess of Leicester and Robert Sidney, second Earl of Leicester*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan (Aldershot, Hants and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, forthcoming).

26. *The Dering Love Letters: A Collection of 17th Century Love Letters Sent by Sir Edward Dering to his Beloved Wife Unton*, ed. Alison Cresswell (Maidstone: Kent County Council Arts and Libraries, 1994), 35.

27. U1475 Z1/1 and Z 1/10. See also Robert Shephard, "The Political Commonplace Books of Sir Robert Sidney," *Sidney Journal* 21 (2003): 1–30.

28. Gary Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500–1700* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 55.

29. Hay, *The Life of Robert Sidney*, 138.

30. The "bloody flux" was dysentery, with bloody discharge from the bowels.

31. Lena Cowan Orlin, "Chronicles of Private Life," *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1500–1600*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 247.

32. For example, his valour in the Siege of Turnhout is described in *A True Discourse of the Overthrow at Turnhout* (1597). See Michael G. Brennan and Noel J. Kinnamon, *A Sidney Chronology 1554–1654* (London: Palgrave, 2003), 151–52.

33. Robert Sidney to Sir John Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, ed. Henry Harington (London, 1769), 1:122.

34. Whyte to Sidney, 4 April 1597, C12/80.

35. Thomas Nevitt, "Memorial," BL MS Addl. 12066, ed. Gavin Alexander and Barbara Ravelhofer, CERES/Sidneiana, 3r, 6v, and 8v. This is Nevitt's detailed summary of Robert Sidney's finances, which Nevitt compiled to justify his stewardship.

36. There were several marriages between Sidneys and Smythes over at least three generations; five years after Barbara's death in 1621 Robert Sidney, first Earl of Leicester, married a rich widow from that same family.

37. Rosemary O'Day, "Tudor and Stuart Women: Their Lives through Their Letters," *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing*, ed. Daybell, 131–33.

38. Barbara's own grief is graphically portrayed in Wroth's descriptions of the deaths of Parselius and Philistella in *Urania*. See *The Second Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, 400–06.

39. Alice T. Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 65.

40. Whyte to Sidney, 19 April 1600, C12/235.

41. Whyte to Sidney, 26 April 1600, C12/237, 250–51.

42. O'Day notes how Lettice Bagot was "humiliated" when her husband removed the management of the household from her and treated her "like a naughty child," "Tudor and Stuart Women: Their Lives through Their Letters," 135.

43. Roger Kuin, "As Durty a Waulk' – The Govenour of Flushing and His Correspondence," paper read at Sixteenth Century Studies Conference, Toronto, 28



October 2004.

44. *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, ed. D. J. H. Clifford (Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1990), 60–61. On this visit see Marion Wynne-Davies, “‘So Much Worth as Lives in You’: Veiled Portraits of the Sidney Women,” *Sidney Journal* 14 (1996): 45–56.

45. Cf. previous generations in Barbara J. Harris, “Sisterhood, Friendship and the Power of English Aristocratic Women, 1450–1550,” *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450–1700*, ed. James Daybell (Aldershot, Hants and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 21–50.

46. Whyte to Sidney, 23 November 1599, C12/28.

47. Whyte to Sidney, 6 June 1600, C12/250.

48. Whyte to Sidney, 22 December 1595, C12/46.

49. Robert Sidney to Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, 24 May 1597, Cecil Papers, 51/25.

50. Whyte to Sidney, 24 January 1599/1600, at Baynards Castle, C12/208.

51. Whyte to Sidney, 9 February [1599/1600], C12/211.

52. See D. W. Davies, *Elizabethans Errant: The Strange Fortunes of Sir Thomas Sherley and His Three Sons As Well in the Dutch Wars as in Muscovy, Morocco, Persia, Spain, and the Indies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967).

53. Cf. Whyte's letter promising that “to Capt. Barker will I deliver your silver vessel which I unpawned. It cost 205 l,” 11 February 1597/8, C12/130.

54. Kari Boyd McBride, *Country House Discourse in Early Modern England: A Cultural Study of Landscape and Legitimacy* (Aldershot, Hants and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 3.

55. Thomas Golding to Robert Sidney, 6 May 1611, U1475, C36/14.

56. Henry Sidney to Robert Sidney, 28 (18?) October 1580, U1500 Z53/26.

57. Cf. Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition on “Princely Splendor: The Dresden Court, 1580–1620,” October 26, 2004–January 30, 2005.

58. Nevitt, “Memorial,” 2r, 3r.

59. Nevitt, “Memorial,” 6r. On the Sidneys and King James VI & I see Michael G. Brennan, *The Sidneys of Penshurst and the Monarchy, 1500–1700* (Aldershot, Hants and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 114–32.

60. Whyte to Sidney, 12 April 1600, C12/233.

61. Lisa Celovsky, “Hospitality as Sidneian Legacy,” paper read at “The Textures of Life at Penshurst Place, 1552–1743,” Colloquium 7–8 July 2003, Penshurst Place, Kent.

62. Nevitt, “Memorial,” 7v.

63. Whyte to Sidney, 19 April 1600, C12/235.

64. Jonson, “To Penshurst,” 8:96.

65. Michael Brennan and Noel J. Kinnamon, “Robert Sidney, ‘Mr. Johnson,’ and the Education of William Sidney at Penshurst,” *Notes and Queries* 50 (2003): 430–37. On “To Penshurst,” see particularly McBride, 114–21; Don E. Wayne, *Penshurst: The Semiotics of the Place and the Poetics of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press,



1984); and Hugh Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths: The Country-House Poem and the Fashioning of the Ideal Community* (Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2000).

66. Whyte to Sidney, 27 September 1600, C12/279.

67. Nevitt, "Memorial," 7v–8; Victor Stater, "William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke," *New DNB*.

68. Nevitt, "Memorial," 6r; see also Brennan, *Sidneys of Penshurst*, 120–21.

69. Germaine Warkentin, "Jonson's Penshurst Reveald? A Penshurst Inventory of 1623," *Sidney Journal* 20 (2002): 1–25.

70. Germaine Warkentin, "The Second Earl of Leicester (1595–1677) and His Library," *The Library* 20 (1998): 325–46; Joseph Black, "The Sidneys and Their Books: Reading the Catalogue (ca. 1665) of the Penshurst Library," paper read at "The Textures of Life at Penshurst Place, 1552–1743," Colloquium 7–8 July 2003, Penshurst Place, Kent.



## ***Bocche Inutili*: Incorporating Pisa in the Florentine Imaginary**

CRISTELLE L. BASKINS

Two pictures, today in Dublin at the National Gallery of Ireland, served originally as the front panels of a pair of fifteenth-century Florentine *cassoni*, or wedding chests, made as containers for the dowry goods of brides.<sup>1</sup> These panels represent the *Conquest of Pisa* in 1406 (figures 1 and 2) and the *Battle of Anghiari* that took place in 1440 (figure 3). No documentation has yet come to light to inform us about the artist or artists responsible for these pictures or the commission to paint them. The style of the panels suggests a date circa 1460. The subject matter and the heraldry represented point to the Capponi family as likely patrons.<sup>2</sup>

*The Conquest of Pisa* features a foreground frieze of soldiers on horseback and on foot, with the tents of their encampment visible along the bottom perimeter of the panel. The city of Florence is seen at the upper left, identified by civic monuments including the Duomo and the tower of the Palazzo della Signoria. Opposite Florence we find a large cityscape of Pisa, including its most famous landmark, the Leaning Tower. *The Conquest of Pisa* represents the climactic entry of Florentine troops through the gate of S. Marco and the replacement of the Pisan standard with the lily of Florence. Located precisely in the middle ground of the composition, just outside the walls of the conquered city, almost lost amid the chaos of battle, are two groups of women and children, the “useless mouths” (*bocche inutili*). Contemporaries writing about the siege of Pisa noted that since food was scarce in the city, the non-combatants were expelled to fend for themselves.<sup>3</sup> Accounts describe how the Florentine soldiers marked these refugee women by cutting off their dresses, brand-



Figure 1. Anon., *Conquest of Pisa* (1406), c.1460, Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland.  
Photo courtesy of National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.

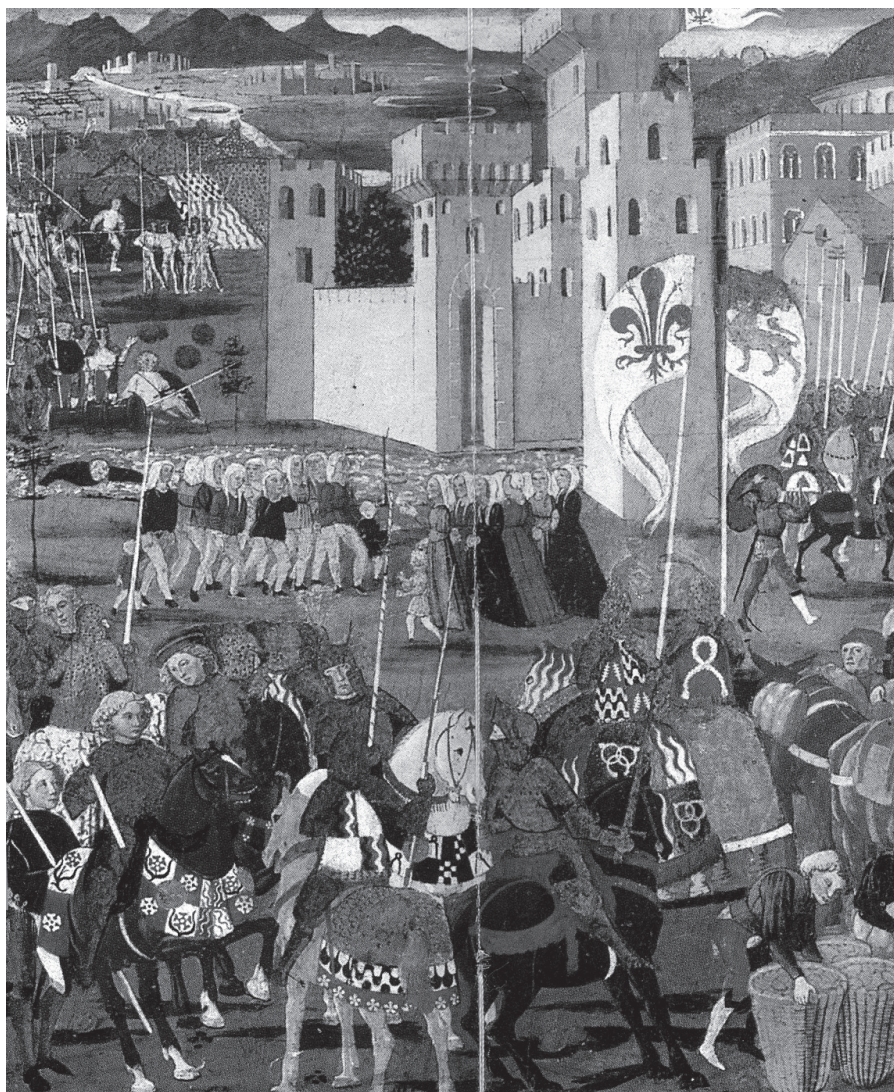


Figure 2. Detail of Figure 1.





Figure 3. Anon., *Battle of Anghiari* (1440), c.1460. Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland.  
Photo courtesy of National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.

ing their cheeks, and slicing away their noses. In the panel, the cropped dresses show up clearly but the other marks are not detectable now given the condition of the panel and the busy details of the composition.

This essay will focus on the *Conquest of Pisa* and the various ways in which Florentines employed gender stereotypes to envision their rival city on the Arno. The Florentines appropriated local Pisan iconography and recast it to justify their territorial aims. My claim is that the women represented outside the walls, separated from their families and subjected to violence from the Florentine army besieging the city, relate to the fantasmatic embodiment of Pisa in the Florentine imaginary. Pisa's leaky orifices and oral excesses, whether they were conceived in terms of flooding, lactation, famine, or cannibalism, belong to a grotesque civic body that elicits disgust and desire, discipline and delight.<sup>4</sup>

As opposed to the dominant, if somewhat caricatured, narrative of Renaissance art history that privileges Florence as the epicenter of a precocious stylistic development fueled by exceptional artists, I will be concentrating on anonymous paintings still characterized by many art historians as *retardataire*, derivative, and decorative.<sup>5</sup> Although they have never been admitted to the canon of Renaissance art, the Pisa and Anghiari panels in Dublin have not gone unnoticed by art historians. They have been discussed primarily as predecessors of the monumental fresco cycle planned for the Sala del Gran Consiglio in the Palazzo della Signoria circa 1500 by the city fathers of a newly republican Florence.<sup>6</sup> There Leonardo da Vinci's *Battle of Anghiari* and Michelangelo's *Cascina*, an incident in the Pisan war of 1364, addressed a male, political elite and attested to the virtuosity of the city's native sons, both artists and soldiers. I am interested not so much in the genealogy of these lost major works, but rather in the framing and function of the fifteenth-century Florentine battle scenes for their private audiences: brides and grooms, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. How did the Pisa and Anghiari *cassone* paintings shape and convey political identities in the domestic sphere?

## Mother of Fraud

What knowledge about Pisa would Florentine viewers have brought to the *Conquest of Pisa* panel? Instead of assuming that the representation of refugee women on the *cassone* panel is merely descriptive, we might instead consider the Pisan self-representations that were available for re-use and adaptation by the victors. We should assume that the images are multiply over-determined. Pisa, the Ghibelline port city whose trading network once stretched to the Levant, North Africa, and Spain, was swallowed up by its landlocked Guelph rival Florence in 1406. But Goro Dati wrote in his *History of Florence from 1280–1405*, that Pisa was the “mouth” of Tuscany.<sup>7</sup> He meant, of course, that the city’s location on the Arno river near the seacoast allowed for the development of overseas trade, import and export, bringing goods to the interior of the region just as the mouth brings food and nourishment to the interior of the body. The Pisan “mouth,” however, could be indiscriminate, voracious, and unpredictable, an organ capable of cultural exchange and contamination.<sup>8</sup> The port city was a hybrid place visited by foreigners whose *lingue* (tongue, language), including Arabic, entered the Pisan vernacular.<sup>9</sup>

The port of Pisa and its river certainly allowed for the circulation of foreign goods, booty, and even language, but the waterways were also prone to flooding and to destruction, like a body’s circulatory system out of control. An overabundance of water resulted in marshy, swampy fields with low yields and high rates of disease. Dante is only one of many hostile voices expressing the hope that “Caprara and Gorgona drift from place, and dam the flooding Arno at its mouth, until it drowns the last of your foul race.”<sup>10</sup> Dante’s dream of annihilation involves the very river that links Pisa and Florence and that periodically inundated them both as well. While Dante’s image of a drowned Pisa indicates Florentine desire for exclusive and proprietary access to the sea, it also reveals anxiety about the destructive power of water out of control.

The two medieval cities had traditionally expressed their civic rivalry through monumental architectural and sculptural complexes. Florence and Pisa each built a cathedral and baptistry ensemble proclaiming that their respective city was the new Rome or the new Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup> The Baptistry



in Florence still features porphyry columns that Pisa sent in 1117 in thanks for Florentine military assistance in the Balearics. Giovanni Villani records in his *Cronica* written circa 1340 that many people believed that the Pisans had deliberately set fire to the columns before sending them, corrupting their gift out of envy.<sup>12</sup> So the porphyry columns, originally looted from Majorca, bore witness not only to the shared political fates of Pisa and Florence but also to their mutual suspicion and ambivalence. A later anonymous Florentine madrigal still condemned Pisa as the “mother of fraud” (*madre di frode*).<sup>13</sup>

Like many cities in late medieval Italy, including Florence, Pisa employed the figure of Charity to advertise her civic virtues. Around 1310 Pisa allied herself with the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII, and the sculptor Giovanni Pisano was given the task of carving a commemorative lunette for the Porta di San Ranieri of the Cathedral, which already housed spectacular bronze doors by Bonanus dated to 1186. The lunette, now in fragments, contained a central seated Madonna with Christ Child, flanked to either side by standing angels presenting on the left, Henry VII, and on the right, Charity (figure 4).<sup>14</sup> In her original state Charity looked up reverently at the Madonna and Child while two children suckled at her prominent breasts. According to Giorgio Vasari’s description of the lunette, an inscription once identified this figure as a personification of the city: “I am Pisa, handmaiden of the Virgin, and at peace beneath her gaze.”<sup>15</sup> Another figure blending Charity, Pisa, and the Church appears in the pulpit carved by Giovanni Pisano around the same time for the Cathedral.<sup>16</sup> In theological terms, Charity involves two kinds of *caritas* or love: *amor dei* (love of God) and *amor proximi* (love of neighbor). In the civic context, Charity expresses the abundance and nurture offered to Pisa’s citizens who, like eager children, will be lovingly embraced and fed by the mother. Charity offers a pleasurable fantasy of equality between siblings/citizens enjoying equal access to the breast, and ready, flowing milk.<sup>17</sup>

In 1365, when Pisan officials tried to counter a bid for political power by Giovanni d’Agnello, their agents were confronted with a living tableau of Pisan Charity. According to the chronicle written by a Florentine, Filippo Villani, the crafty Giovanni anticipated being attacked during the night: “he took measures to cover himself; he distributed his armed men



Figure 4. Giovanni Pisano, *Charity*, c.1310 Pisa:  
Museo del Opera. Photo author.

among the houses of his trusted, special friends; and he instructed his wife and household servants in all that they were to do."<sup>18</sup> While her husband pretended to be asleep, Giovanni's wife "got up and sat, bare breasted on the bed, and said to the citizens that Giovanni needed to rest, but that if they wanted her to wake him, she would. The citizens, ashamed at the sight of this lady...took her words at face value and left."<sup>19</sup> In Villani's account, Giovanni d'Agnello trusted the legibility of his wife's exposed body. Transformed into a living Charity reminiscent of Giovanni Pisano's figure from the Porta di San Ranieri lunette of a generation earlier, Signora d'Agnello embodied Pisa as mother and thus "shamed" her sons. Her performance averted the assassination of her husband, allayed suspicion, and bought time for Giovanni's eventual successful bid for the office of doge. The Pisan officials, caught off-guard by Giovanni d'Agnello's strategic employment of civic imagery, were unable to contravene his assumption of control over the city.

In the illuminated Pisan statute books of the period, in contrast, as in an example dating to 1308, there is no maternal Charity figure.<sup>20</sup> The statutes represent instead the orderly procedures of the law undertaken by the *Anziani*, literally the old men, who appear in assembly, debate, and arrive at decisions under the imposing sign of the imperial eagle. Elected by peers and sworn to duty, the *Anziani* and their officials are shown as upright citizens ostensibly incapable of the plots, deceits, and betrayals so frequently lamented by Pisa's own citizens and so vehemently criticized by her enemies.

Despite the idealizing message of the lunette over the Porta di San Ranieri or the Pisan Statutes, contemporaries concentrated on the civil conflicts driven by faction in late medieval Pisa. Sounding a stereotypical theme, Guido da Pisa, writing at just about the same time that Giovanni Pisano was at work at the Cathedral, laments that Pisa has been brought low by "discord among its citizens."<sup>21</sup> Guido says that the city of Pisa, having lost her satellite cities and much of her international trade "has fallen among thieves, that is new citizens, who have robbed it of all its honor, status, riches and glory, and have either killed the old, noble citizens of hunger, allowing them to die in prison, or sent them into exile . . . and so, wounded from head to foot, the city lies half dead."<sup>22</sup> In Guido da Pisa's

terms, the mother's body bears the wounds of violence between brothers; rather than serving as the source of life and sustenance for others, Pisa is herself expiring. While the Porta di San Ranieri lunette with Giovanni Pisano's *Charity* proclaimed imperial protection for the city and overflowing maternal love for its citizens, the popular perception of Pisan politics was that of internecine conflict and debilitating factions. In a fascinating new interpretation, Diana Norman suggests that Pisa's reputation for crippling civil disorder may have inspired the depiction of the *Effects of Bad Government* in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fresco cycle for the Sala dei Nove, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, circa 1338.<sup>23</sup> There Tyranny, War, Fury, Discord, and Cruelty preside over a war-torn, insecure city where Charity is noticeably absent.

Dante tells a tale of Pisan Charity completely undone by faction in the infamous story of Ugolino della Gherardesca, tyrant of Pisa until 1288. Ugolino's history suggests that those citizens who once shared the maternal breasts of Pisa can descend into cannibalism, that they can consume each other through rivalry, conspiracy, and revenge. Ugolino, who was thought to have betrayed the Pisan fleet at Melora in 1284 and who conspired with Archbishop Ruggieri degli Ubaldini, the leader of the Ghibelline faction, to take control of the Pisan Guelfs, was himself subsequently betrayed. Ruggieri imprisoned Ugolino together with his sons and grandsons in a tower, subsequently known as the *Torre della Fame* (Tower of Hunger), and left them to die. Watching his sons starve, Ugolino was forced to witness the annihilation of his family, and the utter disintegration of the patriline.

Dante gives a voice to one of the condemned sons who exclaims, "Father, it would give us much less pain if you ate us; it was you who put upon us this sorry flesh; now strip it off again."<sup>24</sup> The horror of a parent forced to watch his children die is made yet more terrible by the filial piety of the sons who wish to give life and sustenance back to their progenitor; such an inversion turns an act of cannibalism into one of charity, death into birth. Dante consigns Ugolino to Hell for his treason but for his inhuman cruelty Ruggieri joins him there. In an anonymous fifteenth-century illuminated manuscript of the *Divine Comedy* from the Veneto, Dante and Virgil look on as the *contrapasso* (or fitting punishment) of the sinners takes place on the ground in front of the stunned spectators.<sup>25</sup> The

discarded bishop's mitre identifies the bottom figure as Ruggieri while Ugolino above "gnaws his brain." A powerful image of retribution in itself, this scene of cannibalism so associated with Pisa resonates against the traditional personification of the city as Charity.<sup>26</sup> Rather than two infants finding nourishment at the mother's breasts, here we find two grown men struggling while one mouths not milk, but blood. If lactation is considered natural and a corollary of God's love, consumption of human flesh and blood is taboo, demonic. Charity expressed the healthy civic body of Pisa, but Ugolino's monstrous repast, familiarized through Dante, continually interrupted that image with its reminder of the total disintegration of the body, the family, and of civil society.

The representations of Pisa considered so far have involved oral experiences such as suckling, drowning, starving, or cannibalism. The production of pleasure and disgust that frames personifications of Pisa takes yet another form in a large panel painting from the Vallombrosan church of S. Paolo a Ripa d'Arno, or S. Paul's on the banks of the Arno, (figure 5).<sup>27</sup> It was likely commissioned as a votive after one of the Arno's periodic floods. Although modern scholars date the painting to circa 1380 and give it to an anonymous master, Giorgio Vasari attributed the picture to Bruno di Giovanni, an assistant to the elusive Buonamico Buffalmacco working in Pisa in the early years of the fourteenth century. Vasari's account of the panel is useful both for what it describes and for its symptomatic Florentine denigration of Pisa as the "mouth" of Tuscany:

Bruno painted the altar of S. Ursula with the company of virgins . . . he made in the hand of the said Saint a standard with the arms of Pisa, which are a white cross on a field of red, and he made her offering the other hand to a woman who, rising between two mountains and touching the sea with one of her feet, is stretching both her hands to her in the act of supplication; which woman, representing Pisa, and having on her head a crown of gold and over her shoulders a mantle covered with circlets and eagles, is seeking assistance from that Saint, being much in travail in the sea.<sup>28</sup>

As if to make Dante's wish for Pisa's annihilation come true, here the personified city barely escapes the engulfing waters of the Arno which are





Figure 5. Anon., *S. Ursula Rescues Pisa from the Arno*, c.1380. Pisa: Museo S. Matteo.  
Photo courtesy of Alinari/Art Resource, New York.

teeming with aquatic life, including one fish in the process of swallowing another. S. Ursula dominates the composition since she is represented in a larger scale and holding the Pisan banner; her massive figure, accentuated by the dark cape, makes her rescue of the helpless, diminutive Pisa all the more impressive.<sup>29</sup> Pisa, weighed down by her heavy brocade dress, is a maiden in distress, dependent upon divine salvation; in the upper left corner Christ appears while an angel hovers between Ursula and her companions. The long flowing blonde hair and youthful features, as well as her passivity, further differentiate this image of Pisa from the capable, active, and maternal Charity figures carved by Giovanni Pisano.

The signs of conventional beauty featured in the S. Paolo a Ripa d'Arno personification of Pisa, including the high forehead and blonde hair, were relentlessly challenged in poetry and vernacular literature. The ugliness of Pisan women was proverbial among Florentines, a truth continually produced and circulated in authoritative texts. Giovanni Boccaccio, for example, sets one of the stories from the *Decameron* in Pisa; as he introduces the female protagonist, Bartolomea Gualandi, he notes that she was very beautiful in contrast to the overwhelming majority of Pisan women who seem like "worm eating lizards" (*lucertole verminare*).<sup>30</sup> This dehumanizing imagery is not unique to Boccaccio; a poetic exchange between Ventura Monachi and Lambertuccio Frescobaldi features descriptions of Pisan women who look like "yellow, irascible moles"; due to their proximity to water, they are all permanently "wrinkled."<sup>31</sup> As late as 1403 the Sienese poet Simone Serdini, known as Saviozzo, while describing his patron's love for a Pisan lady, asks "What power or art, in a city now so disagreeable and vile, deprived of all nobility, agreed to the birth of such beauty here?"<sup>32</sup> Saviozzo's rhetorical question, of course, depends on an audience familiar with the topos of ugly Pisan women. If the artist of the S. Ursula panel intended to contrast Pisa's beauty with the bizarre sea creatures swimming at her feet, he unwittingly confirmed the bestial and repellent imagery associated by Florentines with the women of Pisa.<sup>33</sup>

Vasari's generally positive description of the S. Ursula panel hits a snag when he discusses the inscribed banderoles. To explain their presence Vasari makes up a story involving Bruno di Giovanni's feelings of inadequacy and desire to compete with his master Buffalmacco. The trickster

Buffalmacco suggests that in order to “make his figures not merely vivacious but actually speaking,” Bruno should “paint some words issuing from the mouth of that woman who is supplicating the Saint [ie. Pisa], and the answer of the Saint to her.” Accordingly, Pisa says, “God grant mercy to your servant. I will praise him for eternity”.<sup>34</sup> S. Ursula replies, “His name appears to all who see . . . and liberates them.”<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the *Lives of the Artists* Vasari criticizes the inclusion of text in paintings as old fashioned, a practice to be avoided. In the case of the S. Ursula panel, however, his distaste stems at least in part from the suggestion of oral excess, of “words issuing from the mouth.” The words that spill out across the image in curving banderoles echo the curves and reverse curves of the squirming sea creatures below; as the Gothic letters squeeze into the space of the banderoles, so too the waters appear to be swarming with life. This visual display of loquacity is monstrous for Vasari; it calls forth his scorn for the “thick-witted men” of those times, as well as for the “boors” of his own day, who are still “pleased by craftsmen as vulgar as themselves.”

## Good Children

To return to the *Conquest of Pisa* panel (figures 1 and 2) is to move from the idealized representations of Charity and divine salvation to the dehumanizing and repellent imagery strategically generated by Florentine propaganda. The Florentine annexation of Pisa in 1406 captured the imagination not just of contemporaries but of later generations as well. The conflict generated an outpouring of texts, ranging from eyewitness reports to informal chronicles, and from ambitious humanist histories to poetic laments. The subject matter of the *cassone* panel is related to a later retrospective phase of historical writing around 1430, with the picture itself probably dating to circa 1460.<sup>36</sup> In the third decade of the fifteenth century, when republican Florence was newly engaged in wars with ducal Milan and the Medici were emerging as dominant among their patrician peers, Florentine historians presented the conquest of Pisa as the result of inexorable and divinely approved force.<sup>37</sup> Pisan aggression and discord could no longer be tolerated; and with justification in hand for expanding



the territorial state, the Florentines finally achieved their long-cherished goal of acquiring the port of Pisa and the means to profit even more effectively from international trade.<sup>38</sup>

This official view of the motivations and outcome of the Pisan war can of course be qualified by looking at a range of sources, including the Dublin *cassone* panel, that temper Florentine claims of inevitable victory with indeterminacy and compromise on the ground. These sources also reveal contestation over civic representation, localized as suggested earlier in the groups of refugee women shown outside the walls of the fallen city. Although they are small, the figures are in the center of the composition, highlighted by expanses of white wall, and given a margin of open space. A closer look at the vernacular *Commentary on the Acquisition of Pisa, or the Taking of Pisa in the Year 1406*, ascribed to Gino Capponi (1351–1421) but generally thought to have been written by Gino's son Neri sometime after 1427, helps us to understand the significance of the Pisan women.<sup>39</sup>

Neri Capponi (1388–1457) wrote in his father's name, literally writing as Gino, and figuratively recounting the just cause of the *patria*. Neri's famous father Gino was a soldier, citizen, and the first Florentine *Capitano del Popolo* of Pisa. The identification ran so deep that Neri specified in his will that he wanted to be interred with his father in the Capponi family chapel in S. Spirito; in its completed state, the tomb includes Neri's profile portrait in a roundel below the Capponi family shield.<sup>40</sup> The black and white Capponi arms also appear on a tent in the left background of the *Conquest of Pisa* panel; a fluttering white flag with the red fleur-de-lis of Florence draws attention to the tent and its heraldry. Neri idealized Gino's participation in the battle and the victory, and he suppressed the role of Maso degli Albizzi, a Florentine rival for power who had been exiled by the time Neri wrote the *Commentari*. Neri had himself been present at the battle as a teenager, one of the Florentine youths given to the Pisans to guarantee the peaceful transfer of the city to Florentine authority. Perhaps these adolescent hostages are to be recognized—generically, *not* as portraits—among the bare headed, blond youths scattered among the well-armored soldiers in the foreground of the picture (figure 2).

The Capponi text dwells on the lengthy political maneuvering between France, Burgundy, Milan, Genoa, Padua, and Naples that pre-

ceded the 1406 takeover. Although Pisa was officially under the lordship of Gabriele Maria Visconti of Milan and his mother Agnese, Visconti had put himself under the protection of Marshall Boucicault, the French governor of Genoa. The Florentine position before 1405 was one of uncertainty and dissention. Some members of the War Council, or the Dieci di Balìa, were in favor of war at any cost; others were more cautious and favored a negotiated settlement allowing access to the port and trade concessions.<sup>41</sup> Capponi describes the constant back and forth between parties, the ambassadorial and secret missions that he led while representing Florentine interests, eventually securing from Boucicault the sale of Pisa to Florence for 206,000 gold florins. The sale may have satisfied Boucicault, and relieved him of a troublesome obligation, but it was not welcomed by the Pisans, who settled in for a long siege unified under the leadership of Giovanni Gambacorta. The city that the Florentines had just purchased appears on the *cassone* as a circuit of defensive walls and empty buildings; we see no Pisan soldiers or male citizens. It's already a ghost town for the taking.

The Florentines, as was customary, engaged the services of mercenaries, including Sforza da Cotignola, Tartaglia, Franceschino dalla Mirandola, and a Brigade of the Rose formed from the tag end of Visconti's army. Conditions in the field were dicey, provisions were thin, and opinions were divided over military strategy. Sforza and Tartaglia developed "*una certa differenza*," as Capponi phrased it, stemming from Tartaglia's accusation that Sforza had purchased poison in order to kill him! Capponi's solution was to divide the respective armies like disobedient children on either side of the Arno; although it gave the *condottieri* time to cool off, this even-handed solution created additional problems of communication and coordination. In accordance with Capponi's text, the *cassone* painter takes pains to show armies camped on both sides of the Arno, along with oxen carting essential supplies in the left background.

Throughout his account, Capponi describes the river not as a conduit for commerce but rather as an obstacle. The river was swollen by spring melt from the Apennines, necessitating the construction of a makeshift pontoon bridge floating on boats, making it just possible for the Florentine forces to maintain contact. While permanent bridges are depicted span-

ning the river, it is plausible that the artist has also included a temporary platform supporting a soldier in the middle ground to the left of center. In order to force the Pisans into submission, the Florentines burned one galley that attempted to convey provisions to the besieged city and they blockaded the port, represented in the extreme right background, against receiving any additional supplies. In the context of war, Pisa's voracious "mouth" was temporarily forced shut.

Capponi explains that the city's resolve was worn down by the famine conditions created by the siege. Pisa fell not as a result of military ingenuity but rather from exhaustion and starvation. Several sources lend credence to Capponi's account of the Florentine treatment of Pisans fleeing the miserable conditions of the city. An anonymous *Chronicle* notes that Pisan citizens tried to escape at night with the help of guides; they were willing to risk capture to avoid dying of hunger.<sup>42</sup> Capponi says that the Pisan men who were captured were immediately hanged. Another text claims that when captured Pisans were presented to Gino Capponi the men were bound and thrown into the sea.<sup>43</sup> The male figure shown on the temporary bridge being pushed into the Arno and then shown again swimming in the river, just behind and to the left of the two groups of Pisan women, probably represents the herald of the Duke of Burgundy who survived his ordeal by water.

With dwindling resources to support the defense of the city, the Pisan leader Gambacorta decided that all non-essential fighters, the *bocche inutili*, should be expelled to fend for themselves.<sup>44</sup> Gambacorta's expulsion of women and children made a travesty of the city's traditional personification as Charity. While the executions of Pisan men are not shown on the *cassone*, the treatment of the women who tried to escape is portrayed: "in the beginning they cut the dresses of the women above the ass (*al culo*) and branded them with a lily and forced them back into the city."<sup>45</sup> In contrast to the fatal treatment of the Pisan men, the women were chased back (*ricacciate*) into the famine ravaged city. But since even these cruel measures didn't discourage enough of the women from fleeing, the Florentines began to cut off their noses as well.

The topography, the disposition of the troops, the hostages and the refugees all seem to tally with Capponi's account. The picture displays the

devastating consequences of war and the power of the strong over the weak, of men over women, and hence, of Florence over Pisa. The *Conquest of Pisa* naturalizes political conflict through gender stereotypes. And considering that brides comprised at least half of the intended audience for any *cassone* panel, this image of Pisan women wounded and publicly humiliated presumably served a cautionary, didactic function.<sup>46</sup> Yet the *cassone* also differs from Capponi's text; the imagery is selective and overlaid with competing associations. The refugee women are the only Pisans represented; nine of them appear with pubis and buttocks exposed, while another fully dressed group and three young children look on.

The partial nudity of the Pisan women, along with the textual references to them being chased back into the city, recalls the customary racing of prostitutes during a lull in battle. Spectacles aimed at frightening or humiliating conquered subjects had been a common feature of battlefield experience in medieval Italy. Festive games, including foot races by prostitutes and ribalds, were often staged by attacking armies just below the walls of an enemy city. During a battle of 1362, for example, the Pisans held feast day races outside Florence and in the following year the Florentines retaliated by staging their San Giovanni races on the outskirts of Pisa.<sup>47</sup> Sporting games demoralized the besieged inhabitants, mocking their impulse to flee and impugning their courage. They also served to "accustom them to the imminence of loss . . . contrast[ing] . . . their own entrapment and immobility and their attackers' freedom to move and to act."<sup>48</sup> Such military games were within the living memory of the commander, Gino Capponi, if not of his son Neri. By the time the picture came to be painted circa 1460, such rituals of humiliation were being suppressed. Although the appearance of the Pisan women would have reminded viewers of Gambacorta's cruel treatment, it also bore witness to the Florentine battlefield as a stage for choreographed violence. So the image is doubly anachronistic, purporting to illustrate events in 1406 and evoking the memory of an even earlier form of displaced aggression.

The branding of the cheeks of the Pisan women with the fleur-de-lis, the same motif that appears on Florentine flags and coins, was intended to mark the refugees with Florentine subject identity. Note the large banner featuring the Florentine lily held aloft just to the right of the groups of

women refugees. They become living reminders of the Florentine purchase of Pisa with florins. The branding of the Pisan women perhaps also recalls the minting of victory coins in anticipation of taking an enemy city. Some armies in medieval Italy ostentatiously minted coins and displayed them to their enemies to undermine their resolve.<sup>49</sup> The Pisan women were forced back into their beleaguered city, then, as newly minted subjects simultaneously displaying their own lack of value and the superimposition of Florentine financial, economic, and institutional supremacy.<sup>50</sup>

But when the fleur-de-lis was branded on Pisan women, it would have appeared as a wound surrounded by burnt and bleeding flesh. The very mark that claimed possession and the imposition of authority exceeded the limits of legibility. Whereas the hard metal surface of a coin presents a stable image of the Florentine lily, the curving planes and mobile features of a human face would distort its outlines and make it strange, monstrous.<sup>51</sup> In the marketplace a florin could satisfy desire, but on the battlefield such embodied florins became repulsive, damaged goods. As such, the distance between signifier and signified turns the Pisan women into allegories, in Paul de Man's terms, of the impossibility of reading and by extension, of the instability of political propaganda.<sup>52</sup>

Like bad pennies, Capponi tells us, these women kept showing up outside the walls, requiring further symbolic marking by their Florentine assailants who then cut off their noses. The disfigurement of the Pisan women associated them with prostitutes, criminals, and slaves, the marginalized and contaminating segments of society. Such facial disfiguration was associated with civil law and judicial punishment.<sup>53</sup> Yet the histories of female Christian martyrs also feature instances of self mutilation, specifically cutting off the nose, to avoid being raped.<sup>54</sup> So whether the nose referred to illicit sexual activity or to the maintenance of virginity under duress, it was nevertheless associated with impurity. The Pisan women whose noses were slashed became doubly abject, figures of lack above and below. Their wounded faces literalized women's "castration," the lack of the penis, and hence disempowerment.<sup>55</sup> Cutting off the dresses of the Pisan women "*al culo*," or as Matteo Palmieri puts it in his Latin *On the Capture of Pisa*, "up to the belly button" (*ad umbilicum*), exposed the organs of sex and birth.<sup>56</sup> The uncovered genitals thus evoked the threat of rape and

violation, although Capponi insists throughout his account of the conquest that the Pisans were spared the typical looting and “*adulteri*” of most Renaissance military occupations. Indeed he doesn’t even use the technical term for rape, *stuprum* or *stupro*, but rather “adultery,” which implies consenting parties.<sup>57</sup>

Might the redundancy of symbolic marking—sartorial, genital, nasal—be symptomatic of repressed desire? Might the Florentine treatment of the Pisan women function as much to discipline the self as to terrify the enemy? The hyperbolic production of signs might have functioned as a defense against the Florentines’ own rapaciousness toward the city and its women. Not only were brides cautioned about their place when confronting the women represented on the *Conquest of Pisa* panel, but perhaps grooms also understood its imagery in terms of humiliation, curbing greed and mastering desire.<sup>58</sup> It seems that one of the first decrees passed after Florence took possession of Pisa specifically targeted intermarriage; offenders had to pay a fine of 1,000 florins. Apparently so many Florentines were eager to obtain property through marriage with Pisan women, however, that the fine was soon abandoned.<sup>59</sup> Marriages are recorded, in the immediate aftermath of the battle, between prominent Florentine families and Pisan subjects: for example, between Rinaldo degli Albizzi’s daughter and Gambacorta’s son; between Dionigi Pucci and Giovanna d’Antonio Gambacorta; and between Guglielmo de’ Bardi and Caterina della Gherardesca, descendent of the tragic Ugolino.<sup>60</sup> In contrast to the official policy banning intermarriage, Florentine viewers of the *Conquest of Pisa* could see the city and its women, subdued and chastised, available for possession, and ready to be made fruitful and productive. In this regard, the fully clothed women on the right may represent rehabilitation of the Pisans under Florentine husbandry.

We can gain some sense of the Pisan response to the fall of the city by turning from Capponi’s Florentine propaganda to the vernacular three-part *Lament of Pisa*, an account of the disastrous fall of the city, written circa 1430 by Puccino d’Antonio.<sup>61</sup> Puccino, writing at about the same time as Neri Capponi, has a double perspective; on the one hand he is a proud citizen, and on the other, he is filled with guilt, despair, and the desire for repentance. Puccino’s *Lament* features an eroticized but moribund

Pisa “half dead,” familiar from Guido da Pisa’s imagery a century earlier. Puccino’s personified Pisa describes, for example, how her “beautiful room has become a bordello;” her “head is destroyed, her members weak and wasted away.”<sup>62</sup> Pisa continues, describing herself as “sick and unlucky, widowed, old, blind, poor and wretched.”<sup>63</sup> In her youth, Pisa had been a “showy whore” (*sfacciata putta*), but she gave herself over to dissent and faction and she was overly indulgent with her children. No help is forthcoming and Pisa’s list of woes culminates with the death of her diseased body. The final words of Pisa’s *Lament* are “it is finished” (*consummatum est*). Puccino thus inverts the traditional image of Charity nourishing her citizens with that of Pisa corrupted from within and devoured by her enemies.

Although they represent different sides of the battle over Pisa, Neri, writing in the name of Gino Capponi, and Puccino d’Antonio both agree on the eroticized embodiment of the city; they speak the same allegorical language. One hundred and fifty years later, when the Capponi family commissioned Bernardino Poccetti (1548–1612) to decorate a large room in the Palazzo Capponi in Florence, Neri’s *Commentary* was still an essential source. Among the various episodes concerning the key role that Capponi men played in the consolidation of the Tuscan state, Poccetti gave Gino’s speech to the conquered Pisans in 1406 a prominent position along the central axis of the frescoed ceiling (figure 6).<sup>64</sup> The scene represents the initial moments of the Florentine occupation of the city; in contrast to the Dublin *cassone*, the fresco shows soldiers and Pisan citizens gathered in front of the Palazzo Gambacorta. Gino Capponi, still clad in armor, addresses the crowd from the top of a flight of stairs. He faces forward but gestures to his right, toward the Tower of Hunger in the background associated with the treachery and cannibalism of Ugolino della Gherardesca and his sons. Tucked just below Gino’s outstretched arm, we see the only female figure present in the crowd. A matron, as indicated by her modest dress and veil, she carries a tray up to the victors. On the one hand, this woman is simply providing food and drink for the Florentine officials who are taking over the administration of the city. But on the other, she seems to recall the old personification of Pisa as Charity, albeit modernized by Poccetti’s depiction of sixteenth-century costume. If we see this figure as standing for a subservient Pisa, then Capponi’s gesture becomes propri-





Figure 6. Bernardino Poccetti, *Gino Capponi's Speech to the Pisans* (1406), 1585. Florence: Palazzo Capponi, Lungarno Guicciardini. Photo courtesy of Alinari/Art Resource, New York.

etary as well as protective. While Puccino d'Antonio had lamented Pisa as the "bad" mother, sexually licentious and lenient with her children/citizens, Poccetti shows Capponi acting like a Florentine "father." Capponi's counterpart, the woman bringing food to the palace, is a subtle reminder of the extreme hunger that ultimately brought the Pisans to submission. In contrast to Poccetti's oblique reference to the Tower of Hunger and war-time famine, the *Conquest of Pisa cassone* panel features the post-surrender provision of grain and bread prominently in the foreground, along with loaves being carried into the city on the tips of lances held by Florentine soldiers. The return of food to the famine stricken city in either picture can be read as a figuration of the replacement of maternal Pisan Charity by paternal Florence. The Pisans, eating solid food now rather than drinking mother's milk, submit to the law of the Father.<sup>65</sup>

In the *Commentary* Capponi tells the newly conquered citizens of Pisa that they will be treated kindly, just like good children (*siccome buoni figliuoli sarebbe benignamente trattati*).<sup>66</sup> He emphasizes that the Florentines did not sack the city, although they could have; and Capponi, along with the other Florentine leaders, even entrusted their own sons to the Pisans as hostages. If Pisa had been lax, easily swayed by faction, and inconstant, Capponi promises that the Florentines will be strict. He wastes no time ordering the construction of gallows and an executioner's block in the newly occupied city; the Florentines will not hesitate to punish Pisan rebellion. If spendthrift Pisa mismanaged her finances, Capponi reassures the Pisans that the Florentines are only interested in encouraging a healthy economy, they will not squander the Pisan patrimony. Open your shops and stores, he says, get back to business and start making money as soon as possible. For their part, the Pisans are made to apologize for their past hostilities, even thanking Gino for his reprimands: "the effect of your speech is nothing other than what Christ said to the woman who was taken to the temple after having been found in adultery: Go and sin no more."<sup>67</sup> Comparing themselves to an adulterous, rather than a raped woman, the Pisans speak as a chastened and compliant corporate body, grateful for the imposition of Florentine discipline and civic control.

In conclusion, the refugee women outside the walls of the city in the *Conquest of Pisa cassone* stand for more than just overt war crimes and

abuse. The terrors experienced by the Pisans during the siege were real, but they also circulated within a constellation of images where mothers, hags, and whores represented different aspects of the struggle for the possession of Pisa, whether Pisa was conceived as a civic entity or as a fantasmatic body. If the branding and disfigurement of Pisan women was an attempt to turn them into Florentine subjects, Barbara Johnson reminds us that “the temptation of immediate readability . . . turns out to be a denial of the difference between self and non-self.”<sup>68</sup> Although Capponi tried to minimize the role of women in the conquest of Pisa, making the battle into an affair of men and boys, neither the artist who decorated the Dublin *cassone* nor Bernardino Poccetti could completely eliminate them. The incorporation of Pisa into the Florentine territorial state depended, at least in the allegorical imagination, on Pisa’s grotesquely desirable body.

## Notes

I would like to thank David Cast and Steven Levine for inviting me to speak at Bryn Mawr and to chair the Graduate Student Symposium jointly sponsored by the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2002. This paper revisits my 1981 Master’s thesis written for Loren Partridge and Randolph Starn at UC Berkeley. It is indebted to their work on the arts of war and peace in Renaissance Italy. Further research for the paper was undertaken during a Tufts FRAC/Mellon funded Sabbatical in 2001–2002. Thanks are due to William Connell, Jennie Hirsh, Allison Levy, Lisa Rosenthal, and Pat Simons for their helpful suggestions. I would like to dedicate this essay to those women and children around the world who are still being treated like *bocche inutili*.

1. National Gallery of Ireland, *Illustrated Summary Catalogue of Paintings*, ed. Homan Potterton (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981), 53, numbers 780 and 778. The pictures were first published by Paul Schubring, “Cassoni Panels in English Private Collections I,” *The Burlington Magazine* 22 (1913): 158–165; *ibid.*, *Cassoni: Truhen und Truhenbilder der italienischen Frührenaissance* (Leipzig, 1923), catalogue numbers 103 and 104, p.106, 243; E. R. Fry, “Notes on the Anghiari and Pisa Cassoni Panels,” *The Burlington Magazine* 22 (1912–13): 239, discusses the attribution of the panels to Paolo Uccello. Everett Fahy attributes the panels to Biagio d’Antonio in “The Argonaut Master,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 114 (1989): 285–299, but they are not mentioned in Roberta Bartoli’s monograph on *Biagio d’ Antonio* (Milan: F. Motta, 1999). Graham Hughes attributes the panels to the Anghiari Master, in *Renaissance Cassoni* (London, 1997), 104–105, 229.

2. There is a tantalizing reference to a pair of wedding chests made for Piero Capponi in 1467 by Giuliano da Maiano and decorated by a painter in his shop; see

Biblioteca Nazionale Firenze, Carte Ginori-Conti, vol. 18, f.54 left and f.11 right. Citation in Stephanie J. Craven, "Three Dates for Piero di Cosimo," *The Burlington Magazine* 117 (1975): 576. More research is required before we can assume that these chests correspond to the Pisa and Anghiari panels under discussion.

3. The two groups of Pisan women were first related to historical accounts of the battle by Lucia Tongiorgi Tomasi, "Osservazioni su una tavola poco nota raffigurante *La presa di Pisa*," *Antichità pisane* 2 (1975): 11–18. Since the appearance of Tongiorgi Tomasi's article several useful studies on the relationship of women to war have been published: J. R. Hale, "Women and War in the Visual Arts of the Renaissance," *War, Literature and the Arts in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, ed. J.R. Mulryne and M. Shewring (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), 43–62; *Arms and the Woman: War, Gender, and Literary Representation*, ed. Helen M. Cooper, Adrienne Auslander Munich, Susan Merrill Squier (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); and *Violence in Fifteenth-Century Text and Image*, ed. E. E DuBruck and Yael Even (Woodbridge, Camden House, 2002).

4. My reading of the *Conquest of Pisa* panel has been influenced by a number of literary studies, including: *Desire in the Renaissance: Psychoanalysis and Literature*, ed. V. Finucci and J. Schiesari (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); *Historicism, Psychoanalysis and Early Modern Culture*, ed. C. Mazzio and D. Trevor (New York: Routledge, 2000); Valeria Finucci, *The Lady Vanishes: Subjectivity and Representation in Castiglione and Ariosto* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); and *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

5. For a discussion of the historiography of domestic painting, see Cristelle L. Baskins, *Cassone Painting, Humanism and Gender in Early Modern Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1–25, 187–195.

6. Schubring (1913), 158, made the connection to the decorative program for the Sala del Gran Consiglio. Barbara Hochstetler Meyer returned to Schubring's suggestion in "Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari*: Proposals for Some Sources and a Reflection," *The Art Bulletin* 66:3 (1984): 367–382. On the later history of the room, see Randolph Starn and Loren Partridge, *Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy 1300–1600* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 149–212, 339–366.

7. David Herlihy, *Pisa in the Early Renaissance: A Study in Urban Growth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 28. See also Emilio Tolaini, *Pisa* (Rome: Laterza, 1992); A. Zampieri, ed., *Pisa nei Secoli: La Storia, l'Arte, le Tradizioni*, vol. 2 (Pisa: ETS, 2002); and M. Tangheroni, ed., *Pisa e il Mediterraneo: Uomini, Merci, Idee dagli Etruschi ai Medici* (Milan: Skira, 2003).

8. On the gendering of imagery involving the mouth and tongue, see Barbara Spackman, "Inter musam et ursam moritur: Folengo and the Gaping 'Other' Mouth," *Refiguring Woman: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*, ed. M. Migiel and J. Schiesari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 19–34; Carla Mazzio, "Sins of the Tongue," *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. D. Hillerman and C. Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), 53–80; and in general, Mary

Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

9. Herlihy, 32–33, cites Giovanni Villani, *Cronica*, Book II.78, where Pisans refer to their Florentine business competitors as “Arabs.” Some place names in Pisa, such as the Kinzica (or enclosure, i.e. left bank of the Arno) and the Porta Agazir derive from Arabic. Florentine relations with Arabs form the subtext of another set of domestic pictures; see Cristelle Baskins, “Scenes from a Marriage: Commerce and Hospitality in Boccaccio’s *Saladin and Torello*,” *Marriage in the Middle Ages: Prudence, Passion, Policy*, ed. S. Roush and C. Baskins (Tempe, AZ: MRTS, 2006), 97–117.

10. Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, ed. J. Ciardi (New York: Norton, 1970): Inferno XXXIII.82–84. Roger D. Masters discusses the 1503 Florentine plan to divert the Arno and subdue the Pisans in *Fortune is a River: Leonardo da Vinci and Niccolò Machiavelli’s Magnificent Dream to Change the Course of Florentine History* (New York: Free Press, 1998).

11. Eloise M. Angiola, “Nicola Pisano, Federico Visconti and the Classical Style in Pisa,” *The Art Bulletin* 59:1 (1977): 1–28. See also Diane Cole Ahl, “Camposanto, Terra Santa: Picturing the Holy Land in Pisa,” *Artibus et Historiae* 48 (2003): 95–122.

12. Suzanne Butters, *The Triumph of Vulcan: Sculptors’ Tools, Porphyry, and the Prince in Ducal Florence* (Florence: Olschki, 1996), vol. I, 42.

13. A. Lanza, ed., *Polemiche e berte letterarie nella Firenze del primo Quattrocento: (1375–1449)*, (Rome: Bulzoni, 1989), 220.

14. Gian Lorenzo Mellini, *Giovanni Pisano* (Milan: Electa, 1970), 176–177. See the fundamental essay by R. Freyhan, “The Evolution of the Caritas Figure in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 11 (1948): 68–86. For the cult of S. Ranieri, see Lily Richards, “San Ranieri of Pisa: A Civic Cult and its Expression in Text and Image,” *Art, Politics and Civic Religion in Central Italy, 1261–1352*, ed. J. Cannon and B. Williamson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 179–235; and Egina Duchini, “Le storie di San Ranieri di Pisa: problemi iconografici,” *Iconographica: Rivista di Iconografia Medievale e Moderna* 1 (2002): 32–63.

15. Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, ed. G. du C. de Vere (New York: Knopf, 1996), “Life of Niccola and Giovanni Pisano,” 82.

16. Helene Wieruszowski, “Art and the Commune in the Time of Dante,” *Speculum* 19 (1944): 26. For useful discussions of civic iconography, see *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit: der Argumentation der Bilder*, ed. Hans Belting (Munich: Hirmer, 1989); and Chiara Frugoni, *A Distant City: Images of Urban Experience in the Medieval World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

17. The image of Charity continued to represent Pisa well into the sixteenth century; see Cristelle Baskins, “Shaping Renaissance Personification: *Pisa sforzata*, *Pisa salvata*,” *Early Modern Visual Allegory: Embodying Meaning*, ed. Cristelle Baskins and Lisa Rosenthal (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming).

18. Filippo Villani (1325–1405) as quoted in *The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Trevor Dean (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 227.

19. For the range of meanings associated with bare breasts, see Martha Easton,



"Saint Agatha and the Sanctification of Sexual Violence," *Studies in Iconography* 16 (1994): 83–118; and Megan Holmes, "Disrobing the Virgin: The Madonna lactans in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Art," *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. G. Johnson and S. F. Matthews Grieco (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 184–187.

20. Illustrated in Gigetta Dalli Regoli, *Miniatura pisana del trecento* (Venice: N. Pozza, 1963), 80–81.

21. Guido da Pisa, as quoted in *The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages*, 157. For Guido's involvement in a manuscript commission, see Millard Meiss, "An Illuminated *Inferno* and Trecento Painting in Pisa," *The Art Bulletin* 47 (1965): 21–34.

22. Guido da Pisa, 157.

23. See Diana Norman, "Pisa, Siena, and the Maremma: A Neglected Aspect of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's Paintings in the Sala dei Nove," *Renaissance Studies* 11:4 (1997): 310–342. On the Lorenzetti cycle see Starn and Partridge, 9–59, 311–324. See also Emilio Cristiani, "The Political and Economic Relations of Pisa and the Guelph League in the late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries," *The Other Tuscany: Essays in the History of Lucca, Pisa, and Siena during the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. T. W. Blomquist and M. F. Mazzaoui (Kalamazoo: Studies in Medieval Culture, 1994), 153–162.

24. *Inferno* XXXIII.61–63. On Dante's treatment of the Ugolino episode, see Maggie Kilgour, *From Communism to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 62–78.

25. For a color illustration, see Dante, *La Divine Comédie*, ed. S. Samek-Ludovici (Freiburg-Geneva: Liber, 1987), *Inferno* XXXIII.1–78, p.46. The manuscript is currently in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, Codex It. IX, 276 (6.902). See the *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, ed. P. Brieger, M. Meiss, C. Singleton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), vol. 1, 51, 332–339.

26. On retribution see Trevor Dean, "Marriage and Mutilation: Vendetta in Late Medieval Italy," *Past & Present* 157 (1997): 3–36.

27. Enzo Carli, *La pittura a pisa dalle origini alla 'bella maniera'* (Pisa: Pacini, 1994), 101; and Franca Guida, "Le origini della chiesa e del monastero di S. Paolo a ripa d'Arno in Kinzica," *Bolletino storico pisano* 33–35 (1964–66): 103–116.

28. Vasari, "Life of Buffalmacco," 151–152. See also Luciano Bellosi, *Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della Morte* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974).

29. On the iconography of S. Ursula, see Guy de Tervarent, *Le légende de Saint Ursule dans la littérature et l'art du moyen age* (Paris, 1939).

30. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, *Filocolo*, *Ameto*, *Fiammetta*, ed. E. Bianchi (Milan/Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1952), 176; *Decameron* Day II.10.

31. *Ibid.*, footnote 1. For the dehumanizing function of animal imagery, see also Juliana Schiesari, "The Face of Domestication: Physiognomy, Gender Politics, and Humanism's Others," *Women "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. M. Hendricks and P. Parker (New York: Routledge, 1994), 55–70.

32. Lauro Martines, "The Politics of Love Poetry in Renaissance Italy," *Historical Criticism and the Challenge of Theory*, ed. J. L. Smarr (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 133. See now Lauro Martines, *Strong Words: Writing and Social Strain in the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

33. For a reading of similar imagery in the twentieth century, see the provocative work of Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987–1989), Vol. I: Women, Floods, Bodies, History, 229–362.

34. MISERICORDIAM FECIT DOMINUS CUM SERVA TUA. LAUDABO IPSUM IN ETERNUM

35. APPARVIT [OMNIBUS VID]ENTIBUS NOM[EN]...TUUM ET LIB[ERAVIT] EOS

36. For a brief discussion of the relationship between historical texts and the Pisa and Anghiari panels, see Guy Wilson, "Military Science, History, and Art," A ed. P. Cuneo (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002), 18–20.

37. For an exemplary close reading of historical sources and the "reality effect" in domestic battle pictures, see Randolph Starn, "Representing War in the Renaissance: The Shield of Paolo Uccello," *Representations* 5 (1984): 33–65.

38. For the historiography, see Anthony Molho, "A Note on the Albizzi and the Florentine Conquest of Pisa," *Renaissance Quarterly* 20 (1967): 185–199; Michael Mallett, "Pisa and Florence in the Fifteenth Century: Aspects of the Period of the First Florentine Domination," *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence*, ed. N. Rubinstein (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 403–441; Donald Wilcox, "Matteo Palmieri and the *De captivitate pisarum*," *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hans Baron*, ed. A. Molho and J. Tedeschi (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), 267–281; and Gene Brucker, *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 208–215.

39. In Dino Compagni, *Cronica fiorentina agguintovi il tumulto dei Ciompi e I Commentari dell'Acquisto di Pisa di Gino Capponi* (Florence: G. Barbera, 1862), 333–406. All translations from this text are my own. For the Capponi family in the later fifteenth century, consult F. W. Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: Family Life of the Capponi, Ginori and Rucellai* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

40. For the illustrations and a discussion of the chapel and its decoration, see Anne M. Schulz, *The Sculpture of Bernardo Rossellino and his Workshop* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 69–74, 114–117.

41. Molho, 188–189.

42. *Polemiche e berte*, 216.

43. The Florentine Giovanni di ser Piero delle Riformagioni based his *Chapters on the Acquisition of Pisa* of 1408 on the chronicle of a priest, Luca di Simone; see *Polemiche e berte*, 217.

44. Capponi, 369.

45. Capponi, 370. This information is repeated in the Latin version by Matteo Palmieri (1406–1475), *De captivitate pisarum liber*, ed. G. Scaramella, *RIS* 19 (1904):



23: "ceterum feminas, circumcisis ad umbilicum vestibus extremitateque interdum nasi recisa, mares vero nudatos et ignito nonnunquam ferro sigillatos verberibus impellebant ab urbem."

46. Essays that primarily consider the disciplinary function of painted wedding furniture include: Christina Olson, "Gross Expenditure: Botticelli's *Nastagio degli Onesti* Panels," *Art History* 15 (1992): 146–170; Lilian Zirpolo, "Botticelli's *Primavera*: A Lesson for the Bride," *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. N. Broude and M. Garrard (New York: Icon Editions, 1992), 101–109; and Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art: Gender, Representation, Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 21–46.

47. Richard Trexler, "Correre la Terra: Collective Insults in the Late Middle Ages," *Dependence in Context in Renaissance Florence* (Binghamton: MRTS, 1994), 113–170.

48. For a discussion of the prostitutes' race in Ferrara and its antecedents, see Deanna Shemek, "Circular Definitions: Configuring Gender in Italian Renaissance Festival," *Renaissance Quarterly* 48:1 (1995): 9–12. See, also, Deanna Shemek, *Ladies Errant: Wayward Women and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

49. Trexler, 127–128.

50. Women are still associated with currency in the modern era; see Virginia Hewitt, "Glamour and Glory: The Symbolic Imagery of Women on Paper Money," *Representations of Gender from Prehistory to the Present*, ed. M. Donald and L. Hurcombe (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), 137–152. See also Marc Shell, *Money, Language and Thought: Literary and Philosophical Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

51. See the essential work by Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

52. Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

53. Janet T. Schulenberg, "The Heroics of Virginity: Brides of Christ and Sacrificial Mutilation," *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. M. B. Rose (Syracuse University Press, 1986), 50, 68–69. She notes that the Lombard Laws as well as the Statues of late medieval Venice, Bologna, and Naples included facial disfigurement, i.e. cutting off of noses, for adulterous women and prostitutes. For the relationship of art to judicial practice, see Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). For crimes and punishment in Pisa involving women, see Samuel K. Cohn Jr., "Sex and Violence on the Periphery: The Territorial State in Early Renaissance Florence," *Women in the Streets: Essays on Sex and Power in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 98–136.

54. Schulenberg, 46–49.

55. For the notion that women's castration produces a "medusa effect" or *frisson* for male viewers, see the anthology of sources in *The Medusa Reader*, ed. M. Garber and N. Vickers (New York: Routledge, 2003).

56. Palmieri, 23. On the famous example of Caterina Sforza's defiant exposure of her own genitals during a siege, see John Freccero, "Medusa and the Madonna of Forlì: Political Sexuality in Machiavelli," *Machiavelli and the Discourse of Literature*, ed. A. Ascoli and V. Kahn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 161–178. See also the collection of essays in *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity to Early Modern Europe*, ed. V. Finucci and K. Brownlee (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

57. For a discussion of legal terminology relating to rape and adultery, see Diane Wolfthal, *Images of Rape: The Heroic Tradition and its Alternatives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 99–100, 110.

58. For the issue of male self control, see John M. Najemy, "The Republic's Two Bodies: Body Metaphors in Italian Renaissance Political Thought," *Language and Images of Renaissance Italy*, ed. A. Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 237–262; and Cristelle L. Baskins, "(In)Famous Men: The Continence of Scipio and Formations of Masculinity in Italian Renaissance Domestic Painting," *Studies in Iconography* 23 (2002): 109–136.

59. Mallett, 432.

60. Mallett, 432; and Schubring (1913), 161. For the consequences of the Florentine subjugation of Pisa, see also Elena Fasano Guarani, "Città soggette e contadi nel dominio fiorentino tra Quattro e Cinquecento: Il caso pisano," *Ricerche di Storia Moderna* 1 (Pisa 1976), 1–94. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber discusses the *catasto* for the *contado* of Pisa in, "A uno pane e uno vino: The Rural Tuscan Family at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Century," *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 36–67; Giuseppe Petralia, "Crisi ed emigrazione dei ceti eminenti a Pisa durante il primo dominio fiorentino. L'orizzonte cittadino e la ricerca di spazi esterni (1406–1460)," *I ceti dirigenti nella Toscana del Quattrocento*, ed. D. Ruggiadini (Impruneta: Pappafava, 1987), 291–352; Michele Luzzati, "Il Quattrocento: dall'avvento della dominazione fiorentina (1406) alla 'guerra di popolo' (1494–1509)," *Pisa: Iconografia a Stampa dal XV al XVIII secolo* (Pisa: ETS, 1991), 9–15; Giuseppe Petralia, "Pisa laurenziana: una città e un territorio per conservazione dello 'stato,'" *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico: Politica, Economia, Cultura*, ed. R. Fubini (Pisa: Pacini, 1996), vol. 3, 955–980; and M. Mirri, ed., *La città e il contado di Pisa nello Stato dei Medici (XV–XVII)* *Ricerche di storia moderna* vol. 3 (Pisa: Pacini, 2000).

61. Puccino d'Antonio "Lamento di Pisa, Risposta dell'Imperatore, Testamento di Pisa," *Lamenti storici Pisani*, ed. G. Varanini (Pisa: Nistri Lischi, 1968), 65–97. On the city lament genre, see Rinaldina Russell, "Studio dei generi medievali italiani: il compianto per un personaggio illustre," *Forum Italicum* 4:4 (1977): 349–370; and Lauro Martines, "Poetry as Politics and Memory in Renaissance Florence and Italy," *Art, Memory and Family in Renaissance Florence*, ed. G. Ciappelli and P. Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 58.

62. Puccino d'Antonio, 76–77.

63. Compare the representation of widowed Rome in Cristelle L. Baskins, "Trecento

Rome: The Poetics and Politics of Widowhood," *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. A. Levy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 197–209.

64. For the 1585 cycle see Julian Kliemann, *Gesta Dipinte: la grande decorazione nelle dimore italiane dal Quattrocento al Seicento* (Milan: Silvana, 1993), 159–160, 163–165; and Stefania Vasetti, *Palazzo Capponi on Lungarno Guicciardini and Bernardino Poccetti's Restored Frescoes* (Florence: Centro Di, 2001), 92, 126.

65. This reading is influenced by the feminist critique of Jacques Lacan; see Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

66. Capponi, 392.

67. Capponi, 395.

68. Barbara Johnson, "Women and Allegory," *The Wake of Deconstruction* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), 63.



## Maladies up Her Sleeve? Clerical Interpretation of a Suffering Female Body in Counter-Reformation Spain<sup>1</sup>

SUSAN LANINGHAM

On the second Sunday of Lent in 1598, just as she was about to take the holy wafer of communion in the convent of Santa Ana in Ávila, Spain, a thirty-seven-year-old Cistercian nun named María Vela found she could not open her mouth.<sup>2</sup> Shocked witnesses reported that María's jaws were clenched "as if they were nailed," and no one could wrench them apart. Over the next year, María's mysterious ailment occurred intermittently, sometimes only on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The Cistercian sisters would rush early to her room on those mornings, hoping to get her to eat before the malady reappeared, only to find her teeth already clamped shut.<sup>3</sup> Complicating the situation was a host of other inexplicable physical ailments: a distended abdomen that arched her spine to the breaking point, hands knotted in a vice-like grip,<sup>4</sup> violent tremors, and raging fevers. There were also the illnesses that normally plagued María: spasms in her joints, fluid in her lungs, vertigo, and seizures that some attributed to epilepsy. Accommodations were made for her, not simply because she ailed or came from a distinguished Spanish family,<sup>5</sup> but because she claimed that heavenly visions and voices had revealed to her that all her excruciating pains were sent from God. Since many of her illnesses defied diagnosis, she was fast becoming a topic of unrelenting gossip inside and outside the convent walls. Thus, the nuns of Santa Ana did what was expected of them. They called for male assistance.

The men most intimately associated with the convent of aristocratic nuns hurried through the gates of Santa Ana—confessors, priests and theologians; men whose duty it was to investigate, diagnose, and cure whatever spiritually or even physically ailed a nun. The men proposed a variety of solutions, from exorcism to rum, and they argued with each other: should she fast, or eat more meat; would the biblical herb, hyssop, relieve her suffering? A Jesuit priest quietly advised María to eat a slice of melon with sugar, but not to tell anyone since such a thing might horrify his colleagues.<sup>6</sup> Suggested treatments were profuse and creative, but not everyone felt compelled to offer remedies for María's corporeal dysfunctions. In fact, several of her male overseers suspected she was faking the aches and pains. Their conclusion: that she had motives of her own for taking to her bed or swooning during choir practice. Her jaws locked, they said, because she did not want to join the others at mealtimes; she fainted because she did not like her confessor. Some declared that her constant fasting, which they surmised should have already killed her, was really a hoax. "Talk is going around," María admitted to her older brother, "that I secretly sustain myself with beautiful rashers of bacon."<sup>7</sup> In short, many believed María was orchestrating her own medical emergencies because she did not want to follow the dictates of confessor, abbess, or tradition. The convent chaplain bluntly expressed his doubts: "He spoke to me," María reported, "with great severity, saying, among other things, that if the trouble with my jaws could be so easily cured, it seemed like something I had up my sleeve to use as I wanted."<sup>8</sup>

This essay focuses on the five men directly responsible for María's body: her confessors. Information concerning the interaction between María and her confessors is drawn from the two spiritual autobiographies María wrote at the behest of two of her confessors; over eighty letters she wrote to her siblings; a smattering of letters penned by outsiders; and the biography published by her last and favorite confessor, Dr. Miguel González Vaquero. The spiritual autobiographies and biography, in particular, are didactic apologies, but they, along with the more candid letters, show clearly that each confessor responded to María's ailing body in decidedly different ways, from outrage to collusion. María's confessors were a varied lot, among them a Jesuit, a *Discalced* (or Barefoot) Carmelite,<sup>9</sup> and

an exorcist, as well as a former confessor of St. Teresa of Ávila. They were young, old, and middle-aged. Academic credentials were equally assorted, one having only the rudimentary education required for the priesthood and another holding the university title of "Doctor."

The ambitions of María's confessors were as diverse as their backgrounds. The *Discalced* Carmelite who served as María's confessor used María's body to demonstrate reforms advocated by the *Discalced* Carmelites, such as public penance and poverty, while the Professor of Law and Theology saw in María's inexplicable maladies the opportunity to exhibit his expertise on demons.<sup>10</sup> María's body functioned as a platform on which each confessor could prove theological points and endorse male constructs. Dyan Elliott has already shown that the Church of the High and Late Middle Ages sponsored the emergence of particular forms of female asceticism in order to combat heresy and articulate doctrine. Thirteenth-century women, Elliott says, "found themselves implicated in the clergy's machinery of proof for a time as living exempla of orthodox contentions," with the woman's role as exemplar often relying upon her somatic proofs.<sup>11</sup> Elliott centers her discussion in the Middle Ages, but calculated clerical employment of female piety extended well beyond that period, certainly into Counter-Reformation Spain.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, I find that individual confessors employed a woman's "somatic proofs" for their own purposes. I suggest that the personal profile or "resume" of each of María's confessors shaped his perception and treatment of María's body. Thus, each confessor's personal beliefs and ambitions, prior experience and professional status were far more crucial to the diagnosis than the actual condition of María's body. Ultimately, it was the prerogative of a woman's confessor to ignore, discredit, or unfavorably diagnose her physical disorders if he saw no possible benefit to come to himself, his monastic order, or his theological interpretation.

This analysis of the reactions of men to María's suffering body offers a new and complementary perspective to a distinguished body of scholarship on the corporeal agency of holy women inspired and informed by Caroline Walker Bynum. Over the last twenty years, most scholarly studies of the physical torments of spiritually exceptional women have focused primarily on how holy women used their own bodies to achieve



their own ends: to bypass clerical authority, to rescue those in purgatory, to preach without a pulpit, and to declare their own sanctity.<sup>13</sup> I propose reconsidering the extent to which a suffering holy woman empowered herself. Specifically, I argue that early modern female ascetics were more typically manipulated by the very men on whom they relied to disseminate their somatic messages. In addition to understanding that these women could possibly employ their own bodies as tools for female agency, we must acknowledge the extent to which the pain-racked body of a woman became a tool in the hands of men. We must do as John Coakley admonishes readers of late-medieval hagiography to do: think “not only about the women’s powers but also about the powers of the clerics themselves.”<sup>14</sup>

A more truly gendered reading of the dynamics between male confessor and female penitent becomes possible only when we recognize that men, specifically male confessors, possessed the authority to articulate the experiences of the cloistered women under their care. The relationship between a nun and her confessor was, quite often, the most important human relationship in the life of the woman, if not also in the life of the confessor, but all was not equal in their relationship, as Jodi Bilinkoff has shown; not even when the female penitent was considered by popular acclaim and even by her own confessor to be especially favored by God.<sup>15</sup> There were those, like María Vela’s second confessor, Francisco Salcedo, who believed women could, indeed, receive favors from God, either in the form of visions or bodily sufferings; yet Salcedo felt compelled to “test her spirit” time and time again for confirmation that it was God and not Satan at work.<sup>16</sup> Salcedo finally exhausted himself with the tests and abruptly resigned as her confessor, leaving her to defend herself from accusations of demonic possession and fraud. Confessors could also be outright hostile to women who claimed God-given revelations or ailments, such as María’s first confessor, Gaspar Dávila, who told her that it was only pride that caused her to think God was favoring her; that she was, he said, “trying to enter heaven by way of the roof and should leave such matters to the guidance of the Church.”<sup>17</sup>

In the face of such obstacles and resistance placed in their paths by confessors, women were not always able to employ effectively their bodies, or even willing to do so. Not every woman could manage her environment

like Catherine of Siena or Teresa of Ávila, though María certainly tried to emulate the two female saints. Throughout her life, María continued to assert that her illnesses and pains were God-given tests and proofs of her faith, in spite of disdainful and wary confessors. As we shall see, it was only after she relinquished total control of her body to her confessor that the ridicule and denouncements ended. Acquiescence to the confessor was necessary if María, or any woman, was to realize some degree of agency over her own body. Still, the agency was primarily his, inasmuch as he legitimized her ailments and pains. He, more often than she, defined her maladies.

When María entered Santa Ana in 1576, a confessor was appointed to her, Father Gaspar Dávila. María was only fifteen at the time, and she dutifully placed herself under Dávila's direction. For the next twenty years, María and Dávila maintained a rocky relationship, punctuated by María's health crises and her desire to extend her physical sufferings by an ascetic regime that Dávila refused to condone. María longed to feel pain equal to what Christ had endured and to achieve through physical resemblance a spiritual kinship with him. The Lord, she said, "gave me such a yearning for suffering that I thought it would never be satiated."<sup>18</sup> Dávila, as her spiritual advisor, had to approve all mortifications, of course, but he refused to do so. Concerned about María's health and realizing his young penitent's propensity for physical mortifications, Gaspar Dávila decided to transfer all authority over María's day-to-day schedule to María's aunt, a formidable aristocrat who served at least one term as abbess of Santa Ana. Under her aunt's watchful eye, María was seldom allowed to endure any monastic discipline at all. Frustrated, María complained of "continual torment" due to being "perpetually coddled and cared for."<sup>19</sup> Hoping to thwart her aunt's protective prohibitions, María took the wire given her for making paper flowers and twisted it into the shape of a cross with sharp points sticking out all around to wear next to her breasts.<sup>20</sup> She surreptitiously employed iron chains, wooden crosses with nails, and thrice-daily scourging, and she bound her reportedly lovely hands with a cord of raw wool, so "they took on the color of the grave."<sup>21</sup>

The teenaged María believed that once Dávila realized the depth of her convictions, he would assist her bodily expressions of devotion to Christ. "I

placed myself under the direction of my confessor, Father Gaspar Dávila," she recalled, "with complete confidence that thereby Our Lord would satisfy my longings," but Father Gaspar preferred to leave María in the care of her aunt. Since María's health often rendered her too feeble to walk, Dávila was possibly distancing himself as far as his office would allow from any responsibility for undermining the young woman's health, but above all his primary consideration seems to have been the pacification of María's aunt, a woman who socially outranked him. Dávila's response, then, is indicative of his acute awareness of the political hierarchy in the convent. Class and status could take precedence over the sexual hierarchy. María's body was of less concern to Dávila than his career. "Playing the game" could be conducive to a long tenure as spiritual director in a prestigious convent.

María caused little scandal during her first twenty years in the convent; she was quiet and morose, which may explain why she remained in obedience to Dávila, but she was already setting exacting standards for her confessors. She decided Dávila was incapable of attending to her special needs, especially as she began, at some point, to receive visions and voices. "Our Lord was favoring me with supernatural grace," she wrote, "... and my confessor was not treading these same paths." Dávila, she said, "took the morsels in which I most delighted from my mouth, clipped the wings of my flight and the freedom of my spirit."<sup>22</sup> Dávila's idea of perfect female piety was obviously incompatible with hers, insomuch as he rejected any suggestion that God was granting her special favors. He rebuked her for the pride that caused her to believe God was singling her out. "He always preferred," María recalled, "that I should be timid and fearful." Dávila and María quarreled, and María began withholding information from him.<sup>23</sup> If, as Erik Berggren says, the amount of disclosure a penitent offered her confessor ultimately depended upon the personality of the confessor,<sup>24</sup> then Dávila's demeanor utterly failed to inspire María's trust. It is also possible that María's rejection of Father Gaspar was based on a fledgling protest against the constraints of patriarchy. Her confessor, that consummate symbol of the male hierarchy, was effectively blocking her path to God. He could do this simply because he was a man, a spiritual "father."<sup>25</sup>

During her twenty years as Dávila's penitent, María's health and emotional condition became such that, at only thirty years of age, she trembled

constantly. Shaking, she would recite over and over, "I am nothing, I can do nothing, I am worth nothing." She lamented that under Dávila's care she "could find no spiritual rest in so much physical rest."<sup>26</sup> In order to assuage her guilt for what she believed was inadequate suffering for God, she devised a mental exercise whereby she would seek her aunt's permission before praying, thereby bowing to the will of another. In so doing, María believed she could achieve perfect *imitatio Christi*, for Christ had submitted to the will of his father and the will of his executioners. The act of submitting to one, "who could not know my inmost soul," María said, "filled me with such deep repugnance that, during the ten years that I followed the practice, I could never overcome my revulsion; not even once, I think."<sup>27</sup> Dávila, on the contrary, heartily approved of the exercise, for María was learning humility, and to Dávila, María's submission to authority befitted her sex far more than bloody disciplines or voices from the heavens. He believed her weak physical state and constant illnesses needed to be cured by doctors or tender, loving care; that the pains were not evidence of divine favor.<sup>28</sup> Any impulses María had toward physical mortification or communication with God were, Dávila told her, to be resisted, for, as he pointed out to María, "they were all an illusion of the devil."<sup>29</sup>

Dávila lived his entire life in Ávila, a city already known for producing the mystic and reformer Teresa of Ávila, and he lived in a century when the somatic mysticism of Catherine of Siena, as written by Raymond of Capua, topped the "bestseller" lists,<sup>30</sup> but he never admitted the possibility that María, like Teresa and Catherine, could experience God through physical pain. He remained focused upon an ideal of female submission rather than a female-as-suffering-Christ model. For him, perfect female piety included full mental and physical submission to institutional authority. When María told him that she could taste flesh and blood in her mouth after partaking of the Eucharist, he responded that he had heard such things before, and it was always the woman's imagination. He commanded her to drink something so that the sensation would go away.<sup>31</sup>

Instead of directly opposing Dávila's instructions for the proper use of her body, María let her visions speak her concerns and ambitions. One vision, in particular, elevated her to male status and at the same time resulted in the termination of one of her most persistent physical

maladies: her constant fainting. Her peers, quite naturally, attributed her swoons and blackouts to her inability, or refusal, to eat meat. Dávila and the abbess discussed forcing her to eat, but before they could put their plans into action, one of María's visions ended her fainting. It was a vision of the Virgin Mary, suckling the child Jesus. In the vision, the child moved to one side of his mother's breast, motioning for María to take his place. Hesitating for only a moment, María nursed at the Virgin's breast, after which the Virgin and child told her that the superior sustenance from the Virgin would eliminate her fainting spells.<sup>32</sup> While the vision ostensibly contained nothing more than a remedy for a physical ill, the act of María receiving milk from the Virgin would have caused no little consternation. Being suckled by the Virgin was the prerogative of men. Christ, of course, nursed at the Virgin's breast, and only one mortal, since then, had been so favored. St. Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), founder of the Cistercians, María's own order, also received milk from the Virgin in a vision. With one homely vignette, María equated herself with both Bernard, the most famous and revered of Cistercians, and with Christ, the singular man-god figure. She then experienced another vision that more specifically elevated her to the status of men. She saw a cup of blood, so full that it splashed over and covered the floor. The celestial voices told her to "drink, drink," so she bathed her face with the blood and took it in her mouth. She drank the blood like the priests, who alone partook of the transformed wine, or blood of Christ, during the mass.<sup>33</sup>

Left under Dávila's care, María would likely have faded into the ranks of the frustrated and ridiculed, but Dávila suffered a stroke in 1591 that left him paralyzed and unable to speak. He was probably considerably older than María, which may account for his intolerance of her youthful impulses and unusual piety. Hoping to preclude any independent action from María, he chose his own successor shortly before he died. Ironically, he selected a man who would try to facilitate María's corporeal spirituality: Father Francisco Salcedo, a young Jesuit. According to María's last confessor, Salcedo already "had his eyes on María." Salcedo may have hoped, by associating himself with an extraordinary holy woman, to imitate his famous uncle, Baltasar Alvarez (d. 1580), confessor to Teresa of Ávila.<sup>34</sup> Whatever his initial interest in María, Salcedo's introduction into María's

life came about because Gaspar Dávila believed Salcedo to be a younger version of himself: stable, traditional, and able to instill humility in a woman who believed God operated through her body.

Salcedo did not fulfill Dávila's expectations concerning María's care. Salcedo suspected that María might be telling the truth about God's demands on her body. Yet, his respect for Dávila's position prevented him from countering the more experienced priest.<sup>35</sup> His acquiescence to Dávila was a foreshadowing of darker days to come for María. She soon realized that her new confessor had a tendency to try to appease everyone. Salcedo was cautious, she believed, to a fault.

Above all else, Salcedo lacked confidence, a fact affirmed by the celestial voices that spoke to María on a regular basis. Conversely, Salcedo worried that María's voices, visions, and maladies were demonic, not heavenly. The possibility that María's malfunctioning body was a result of Satan's presence rather than God's favor prompted Salcedo to seek out dozens of theologians and scholars for advice, even from as far away as the University of Salamanca, sixty miles to the northwest of Ávila, and Madrid, sixty miles in the opposite direction. María found his caution frustrating and even ridiculous. In a letter to her brother, Lorenzo, she labeled Salcedo "shrunken and timid." She fretted that her illnesses were becoming a matter of public debate. Indeed, the self-effacing Salcedo's need for reassurance from his peers brought numerous men to the convent, not all of them sympathetic to María's physical sufferings. Speculation about Satan's involvement increased, especially in 1598, when María's jaws locked. Salcedo had already directed her for eighteen years, but María became increasingly unsure of his ability when the convent erupted over the clenched jaws. María prayed that God not let Salcedo mislead her.

Still, María admitted years later that during those miserable months there were times when Salcedo "alone continued to stand up for me." That he did persevere for nearly twenty years, the last few years against hostile opposition from his own peers and the majority of the nuns, suggests much about his personal convictions regarding women and their bodies. Perhaps, to borrow Mary Elizabeth Perry's theory, he was simply seduced by María, not sexually, but "through a sensual perception of the body as a vehicle for salvation."<sup>36</sup> He was a man, in a man's body, doing a man's work, but



privileged to experience vicariously spiritual longing, satisfaction, and the *imitatio Christi* as a female.<sup>37</sup> His seduction was complete because María held nothing back from him. She told him everything, drawing him so deeply into her physical suffering that a bond was forged that he had no desire to break.

María reveals the depth of her own emotional attachment to Salcedo in her *Mercedes* (Mercies), the spiritual diary she kept in 1598 at Salcedo's insistence. She wants him, she says in the *Mercedes*, to feel in his body what she feels in hers. Directly addressing Salcedo, she assures him that she has already entreated God "not to keep Your Reverence at a distance any longer." Because she knew Salcedo prayed for her, she boldly told God to "repay him for this service. If you loved me, you would."<sup>38</sup> For his part, Salcedo supported María with more than prayer. He went bravely on her behalf to the disobliging and scornful abbess, something his predecessor, Dávila, would never have done. Though the abbess wielded more actual authority in the convent, Salcedo pressed her to allow María to fast on the days she received Communion, despite her frail health. He feared María might kill herself with the strenuous fasting, but he was willing to support the spiritual elevation of a woman through the use of her own body.

Salcedo's positive attitude toward María's somatic mysticism may have been as much a product of his theological training as his emotional trust in María. He was a Jesuit. Jesuits were popular confessors, reputed by many to be the most effective in Europe, and were the preferred confessors of female mystics like Teresa of Ávila because of their acceptance and promotion of sensory and extrasensory knowledge of God.<sup>39</sup> The vast majority of Jesuits were *espirituales*: those who emphasized mystical encounters with the divine through interior prayer and physical mortification as necessary to complete union with God. In this, they differed from those known as *letrados*, who focused on doctrine rather than personal experience as the path to Christian perfection. Gillian Ahlgren has demonstrated the tendencies of Jesuits by considering all the men who examined Teresa of Ávila's visions: the Jesuits on the list were, without exception, *espirituales*.<sup>40</sup> Because Jesuits defined faith as personal experience of God, they were favorably disposed toward Teresa's mystical and corporeal communion with God. As a Jesuit, Salcedo was in all probability similarly inclined toward María.

Jesuit philosophy penetrated Santa Ana and influenced the interpretation of María's ills, not only in the person of Salcedo, but in the letters and visits he solicited from a number of Jesuits at the nearby College of San Gil in Ávila and the prestigious University of Salamanca. Salcedo shared María's spiritual autobiography with José de Acosta, the Jesuit Provincial of Peru, who was then at Salamanca, and Luis de la Puente, celebrated theologian and author. De la Puente even traveled from Valladolid to Ávila in 1598 for the purpose of interviewing María and aiding the beleaguered Salcedo. Of all the Jesuits, de la Puente was likely the most qualified for this particular task and his influence on Salcedo the strongest. De la Puente interpreted illness and suffering as the "buried treasure" that all Christians should covet. He maintained that there was hidden merit in disease and infirmity, that all physical suffering was a test from God and counted as *imitatio Christi*, if the afflicted accepted it as such and endured cheerfully.<sup>41</sup> De la Puente articulated through sermons and a posthumously published treatise exactly what María had been saying all along.

María continued to insist that her maladies were sent from God to test her faith and the faith of her skeptical advisors. God, she said, was constantly reassuring her that he would not allow her fasting, scourging, or any other ascetic practice to impair her health. Neither de la Puente nor José de Acosta found anything fraudulent or demonic in María or her writings, but they did tell Salcedo they thought María might be relying too much on her own interpretation of God's will. De la Puente advised Salcedo to wait for more signs from God and limit María's fasting for the sake of her health.<sup>42</sup> Salcedo agreed and forbade María to fast. Shortly thereafter, María's jaws locked for the first time, followed by paralyzed hands and abdominal swelling. Under the spiritual direction of Francisco Salcedo, she might have hoped for a more positive interpretation of her bodily malfunctions, since Salcedo's Jesuit training and career ambitions steered him toward the endorsement of experiential faith. He could have presented her locked jaws, her first real effort to exercise some autonomy through the use of her own body, as evidence that God was directing her ascetic regime. Yet, Salcedo's need to have indisputable proofs and uniform approval of her corporeal manifestations subjected her to the medical ministrations of perplexed or outright derisive peers, and placed her in the

middle of a theological debate between *espirituales* and *letrados* that could not be resolved.

Salcedo was forced to reevaluate his relationship with María. The union between him and María was consensual, but it was also fixed by contract. Each year, they renewed their formal relationship in writing and signed their names.<sup>43</sup> This contract was intended to discourage nuns from changing confessors at will, while it also served to increase their dependency on one man, much like a marriage contract of the time. When the equivalent of a divorce finally came, it was not María, but Salcedo who negated the contract. He had suffered unrelenting criticism from the nuns of Santa Ana. According to them, he was “very young and inexperienced”<sup>44</sup> and had “too few gray hairs.”<sup>45</sup> The threat of certain dismissal, of being “fired” by the Jesuit Provincial for his inability to resolve the controversy in the convent, compelled him to summon María, the abbess, and a priest as witness, and in front of all declare he was tired of testing María’s spirit. He said, María later recalled, “that he had no courage to torture me any more.”<sup>46</sup> María was devastated by his departure. “I was left,” she said, “with no one but God.” God was not enough in a society where unsupervised women were an anomaly and considered particularly vulnerable to error and heresy. Without a confessor, María could not expect a favorable reception of her bodily manifestations of God’s will. Only with the official approval and support of an authorized representative of the church could she successfully promote her ailments as signs of sanctity.

When María heard she was to receive as her next confessor the renowned priest Julián de Ávila, former confessor and traveling companion of the soon-to-be-canonized Teresa of Ávila, she could only describe herself as “in a state of great anguish.” Julián, she knew, was one of her severest critics. News of her locked jaws had reached him months before, and he was ill disposed to tolerate a woman he believed to be suffering from nothing but her own imagination. Having spent twenty-two years with Teresa, the holiest woman in Spain, he believed he was capable of detecting a fraud like María.

One of Julián’s peers admitted years later that “Julián was very knowledgeable concerning the ways of the spirit, but he had a notable aversion to extraordinary paths.”<sup>47</sup> During their first two-hour meeting, Julián told María that incompetent confessors had filled her head with nonsense.

Clearly, he meant the obliging and waffling Salcedo. Julián also told her that even a person “of little intelligence” would know the devil was behind her insistence that God directly intervened through her body. Even as Julián said these things, María heard the heavenly voices in her ear, contradicting the famous confessor. Pointedly, she implored God “in the name of Holy Mother Teresa of Jesús” to enlighten Julián. Two weeks later, Julián ordered María to eat a meat stew for the sake of her health. Immediately after choking down the meat, María’s jaws locked with such force that her jawbone was thrown out of joint.

Julián did not lay the blame for María’s maladies on demons; he blamed María. Her illnesses and the disjointed jawbone, he declared, were the direct result of her discontent with him.<sup>48</sup> After only two months as her confessor, Julián terminated their relationship. He had supported and promoted Teresa, but at this point in his life he was not inclined to struggle through another woman’s personal spiritual drama, especially one that expressed her convictions through bodily malfunctions. Julián was already over seventy years of age and did not, like Salcedo, need the constant reassurance of his peers, but Julián’s patience with unusual women had worn thin. Perhaps, as has been suggested, he was trying to thwart any competition to “his” saint, Teresa.<sup>49</sup> Or, Julián may have worried that entangling himself with María, a woman who had already exhausted two confessors, would destroy a reputation already gained through his association with Teresa. He preferred to leave the Jesuit Salcedo, and perhaps, by implication, all Jesuits (whom Teresa praised far more than she praised Julián), at the forefront of those who mismanaged María.

Then, in 1599, at the age of thirty-eight, María believed she had found the perfect confessor. He was Gerónimo de San Eliseo, a *Discalced*, or Barefoot, Carmelite of the newly reformed order of Carmelites, recently arrived in Ávila. “I decided,” María recalled, “to tell him about the most important things that had happened to me.” After listening to her entire story, Gerónimo said her spirit was right and “he would so maintain, in the face of every opposition.”<sup>50</sup> María finally had a champion. In keeping with his promise, Gerónimo convinced the abbess to allow María to fast openly, thus relieving María of the necessity of pretending to eat meat at mealtimes. Immediately upon receiving permission from the abbess,

María's jaws unlocked. Gerónimo decided to take this victory even further. He instructed her to eat meat again, whereupon her jaws relocked, as expected. He then ordered her to receive Communion. María wept bitterly, but obeyed. In the last second before the priest offered the wafer, her jaws relaxed. In her autobiography, she explains how "the Voices told me that, because I had revealed so much faith by my obedience, the Lord would show me mercy by removing my impediment." Her jaws never locked again. Gerónimo de San Eliseo had taken control of her body.

The condition of María's jaws seems to have been the primary indicator of her pleasure or displeasure with her confessor. When she discarded her most effective defense mechanism—her locked jaws—she did so because Gerónimo unreservedly believed her claims of divine interaction. He elicited a level of trust from María that she never realized with any previous confessor. She managed, for the first time, an emotional acceptance of clerical authority, due to this new confessor's unqualified recognition and acceptance of her somatic expression. She actually found his authority useful. Gerónimo became her advance guard, the frontal assault, qualified by his clerical status and sex to deflect any criticism of María's bodily self-expression. He was, in short, what María always needed her confessor to be: a vindication for her frail female body. Armed with his "institutional stamp of approval," as Patricia Ranft calls it,<sup>51</sup> there was now little María could not do, and even less for which she would be held personally accountable. If her bodily mortifications or illnesses produced a negative reaction from her peers, Gerónimo, as her confessor, was required to shoulder the responsibility, and he appeared fully inclined to do so.

After waiting so long to find an actively supportive confessor, María made a hasty evaluation of Gerónimo's suitability. Her naïveté and preoccupation with her own spiritual needs and desires would plunge her once again into controversy, but the ensuing scandals that arose in Santa Ana were a direct result of Gerónimo's zeal, not María's. Gerónimo appropriated María's body for his own use, employing it to promote religious practice that to him epitomized pure and reformed monasticism, but which many of the Cistercian sisters found distasteful and disruptive.

Gerónimo instructed María to perform a public penance, as he was "very inclined toward such mortifications."<sup>52</sup> The denigration of one's body

in public was no longer practiced at Santa Ana, so when the feeble María appeared in the refectory with a thick rope around her neck and a gag in her mouth and proceeded to mumble her sins while lying on the floor, the uproar was such that the presiding sister signaled for María to leave the room. The story spread throughout Ávila. The prior of the Dominican monastery that supplied Santa Ana with most of the convent's confessors and counselors wrote a pamphlet denouncing María's physical excesses and Gerónimo promptly responded with a written rebuttal. María was forced to admit that she had caused "considerable commotion."

The dispute over María's public mortification only served to invigorate Gerónimo. "He wouldn't let it rest," recalled a later confessor. Gerónimo commanded María to dress herself in the primitive garb prescribed in the original Cistercian rule, a crudely constructed outfit of coarse cloth worn with hemp sandals.<sup>53</sup> As expected, the majority of nuns decried the costume. Then, when a few of the younger nuns decided to wear the costume, also, "the entire convent," María recalled, "rose up in wrath." María's non-conformist body was an affront to the aristocratic sisters. She, or more precisely, Gerónimo, was preaching with her body, telling the nuns of Santa Ana that the purity of their monastic practice left much to be desired.

María and Gerónimo had gone too far. Their message of criticism and reform resonated throughout the city. The abbess was told by her own Dominican confessor that if she did not force everyone to return to the contemporary garb, she would be in a state of mortal sin. Even Father Salcedo, who suffered so much with María, wrote María an indignant letter and then came to the convent to see for himself the offensive dress. María faced her critics alone, for Gerónimo de San Eliseo was absent during the entire clothing controversy. He was in Salamanca, having departed Ávila after giving María the order to wear the costume. He thus avoided personal confrontation with the nuns and Dominicans over María's dress. To María's dismay, but to the relief of the sisters, Gerónimo took his final leave of her shortly after the wearing of the primitive habit, due to the *Discalced* Carmelites's new restrictions concerning monks visiting convents.

Gerónimo's appropriation of María's body allowed him to promote his own religious views without actually engaging himself in the pedantic and heated debates of his male peers. He "lectured" with María's body,



using it to issue instructions for spiritual perfection: fasting, public penance, poverty of raiment. Jodi Bilinkoff's study of confessor-penitent relationships shows it was quite typical for confessors to order autobiographies, for instance, from their gifted penitents wherein the confessor, either through the power of suggestion or the actual insertion of his own words, could safely discuss controversial theological issues.<sup>54</sup> But Gerónimo did not have María keep a diary he could edit or rewrite for his own purpose; he simply used her body as he would a book or pulpit.

Gerónimo's actions indicated his appreciation of women employing their own bodies to express their spiritual progress, but he failed to acquiesce to a basic truth of Counter-Reformation life: an aggressive female body could be frightening. It bespoke an inversion of nature, a reversal of divinely designated roles. It was Eve in its potential; Amazonian in its emasculating properties. No matter how holy a woman seemed, she was certain to alarm if she appeared to be acting on her own initiative. A man, typically her confessor, needed to "soften" the audience's perception of this holy woman through a judicious and restricted display of her body. Otherwise, her spiritual exhortation took second place to a plethora of unsavory possibilities implied by her bold body. In fact, the more restrained the woman's body, the more palatable her influence.<sup>55</sup> Gerónimo failed to restrict María's body. He allowed too much. His actions suggest that he was so excited by what he *could* do with María's body that he never stopped to consider whether he *should*.

The recklessness with which Gerónimo handled María's body brought about María's first and only brush with the Inquisition. Less than three months after Gerónimo ceased to be her confessor, several of the nuns in Santa Ana reported María to the Inquisitor. The Inquisitor appointed the local Dominican prior, Fray Juan de Alarcón, to interview María. Alarcón had written the scathing critique of María a few months earlier, after she followed Gerónimo's orders to mortify her body in public. Immediately upon meeting with María, Alarcón told her that he still stood by his previous opinion of her, that she was meddlesome and caused scandal in the convent. He presented María with a list of accusations leveled against her by many of the nuns. The complaints centered on María's insistence that God was her personal director. One report in particular María noted in her

spiritual autobiography: "That when I was very weak from illness, I said to those who urged me to eat, 'Why not leave this in God's hands?'" Alarcón asked for a full explanation of the reported remarks. María replied that most of what the nuns *thought* she said were simply misinterpretations of sound advice and counsel given to her by others, namely Julián de Ávila, her former confessor. After hearing María's explanations and her reference to Julián de Ávila, Alarcón admitted to her that he had acted in accordance with indirect information. He decided to pay no more attention to the accounts. They parted, according to María, "as good friends." Still, María had no confessor and, as the encounter with the Inquisition had just revealed, having the right confessor could mean the difference between approval and infamy.

In 1603, the same year Gerónimo left Ávila and the Inquisitor came to Santa Ana, María became acquainted with Dr. Miguel González Vaquero, or Dr. Vaquero, as he was called, who had a doctoral degree in theology and law from the University of Salamanca.<sup>56</sup> Vaquero was serving as chaplain at San José, the first *Discalced* Carmelite convent founded by Teresa of Ávila. He had first heard of María when her jaws locked and "throughout the city, they talked of nothing else."<sup>57</sup> Initially, he believed her to be deluded or deceitful, because Julián de Ávila told him so. Julián, María's short-lived confessor and "severest critic," was Vaquero's own confessor and mentor. As Vaquero later admitted, "I thought then that if Julián did not approve of something, it could not be good."<sup>58</sup> Yet, Vaquero was not permanently swayed by Julián's initial opinion of María. When he met María, he was struck by her humility and honesty.

Dr. Vaquero would be María's last and favorite confessor. The rapport was instantaneous. Ten years later, María clearly recalled how she "felt so deeply satisfied" after only one conversation with him. When she prayed about the feasibility of Vaquero as her confessor, the voices told her, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him," recommending Vaquero with words taken from scripture and originally applied to Jesus. The heavenly voices insisted that María ask Vaquero to be her confessor. Vaquero agreed to her request. Besides having a professional interest in promoting the sacrament of confession, Dr. Vaquero was also confident that just as María needed a male supervisor, so he,

too, must direct her. He agreed to confess her, he said, for the good of his own soul. Her affective spirituality was a contrast and complement to his formal theological training. Indeed, since she physically received God and he, so far, did not, it was only through her that he could experience a living God.<sup>59</sup> His was a vicarious sensory encounter with the Divine, but this was often all a male confessor would hope for. This explains why men such as Salcedo, Gerónimo, and Dr. Vaquero were reluctant to disengage themselves from what was clearly an emotionally draining and professionally risky relationship.

Dr. Vaquero's success in directing María can be attributed to his emphasis on the difference between male and female spirituality. That women perceived and experienced God differently than men was a basic social and theological assumption of the early modern period.<sup>60</sup> Vaquero did not blur the distinctions between men and women, but stressed and utilized them, thus operating within accepted social parameters. He employed a series of calculated moves designed to make María's bodily ailments and abnormalities acceptable to their peers. María was a willing collaborator to these maneuvers. From the beginning of their relationship, she and Vaquero worked in tandem to highlight her female nature and, consequently, his maleness, by placing themselves squarely within traditional seventeenth-century gender boundaries.

According to Vaquero, their first move was to "bury all her things," that is, to curtail her exposure and reduce gossip. In *La Muger Fuerte* (The Strong Woman), the biography of María he published one year after her death in 1617, Vaquero declares that he never approved of women "leaving their corners or becoming known."<sup>61</sup> Exposure, he explains, is a dangerous thing for women. More importantly, Vaquero's emphasis on her "burial" highlighted María's inviolate nature, for, as Claire Marshall has pointed out, a dead virgin was the "dominant representation of female sanctity," since death assured the cessation of temptation and violation.<sup>62</sup> A buried virgin, though the burial was only symbolic, was similarly protected from the machinations of Satan. María, realizing Vaquero's intentions, "lifted her hands and thanked God for giving her a confessor who *buried her alive*." For María to rejoice at this new state of affairs suggests that she thoroughly grasped, at last, the necessity of enveloping all bodily expression within clerical supervision.

Vaquero immediately began taking control of the situation. His strategy was two-fold: first, to put María's body under absolute obedience to him; second, to blame the devil for ailments that had previously appeared to be María's own inventions. Then, Vaquero would act against Satan in accordance with his authority as María's confessor and his power as a priest. Focusing on María's weak physical condition, Vaquero subtly switched the emphasis away from María's singular suffering to the biological inferiority of her sex. He stressed the physical agonies María endured: the fainting fits, the spasms, the choking sensations, the agonizing pains in her side and the bruises she suffered from falls, and interpreted these maladies as evidence that she was not an unnatural woman, but a completely natural one with all a female's physical weaknesses. She was true to her creation, not an aberration. Her female body was in pain, suffering as it should be for Eve's transgression.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, when her body failed her, it was to be expected. Illness in a woman was part of the "saintly paradigm," as Elizabeth Rhodes points out, and also functioned as an antidote to a woman's potency in realms traditionally dominated by men, for instance, the realms of politics or theology.<sup>64</sup> With regard to María's physical maladies, Vaquero showed that while she should be pitied, she must also be admired, and never castigated.

Vaquero also emphasized María's femininity. She might be thrown to the floor by the devil and suffer her bruises with the quiet strength of a man, but her dress was never disheveled and her limbs were never exposed. According to Vaquero, God had particular care for the modesty of the female sufferer. It was crucial that the woman remained covered and not permitted to entice, albeit inadvertently, any man who might witness the fall. If God took pains to keep María's body covered, then María was clearly a woman, and a modest one, at that.<sup>65</sup>

A particularly telling example of the strength and efficacy of their relationship is included in both María's autobiography and Vaquero's *La Muger Fuerte*. In July of 1604, as María sat at the organ in choir, a mysterious figure approached. It was an "abominable form," and it uttered promises certain to please María. *Leave your confessor*, the creature told her, and it would permit her to take Communion according to her own desire. María immediately recognized the creature as Satan. She angrily retorted

that she would not be separated from her confessor. Hearing this, Satan cursed her and pummeled her body with blows. He threw her violently to the floor and tried to strangle her.

Failing to kill her in this manner, the devil's rage grew worse. One afternoon, as María prayed in the choir, the abbess's heavy silver crosier crashed onto her head, knocking her senseless to the floor. Several witnesses thought a passing nun accidentally knocked it down, but María saw the "cursed one" throw the crosier. Blood poured from the head wound as she was lifted and carried to her cell. When the doctor arrived, he took scissors, cut her hair to the scalp and declared that her cranium was cracked. That night, a rosary belonging to Vaquero was placed on the head wound, and when María was examined in the morning, only a small cut remained on the surface of her scalp. Vaquero's rosary effected a complete cure. By establishing María as the unfortunate tenant of an inferior female body buffeted by Satan in retaliation for her steadfast loyalty to a confessor who alone could mitigate the devil's blows, Vaquero's priestly power was enhanced and María's dependence confirmed.

The male-female dynamics in both *La Muger Fuerte* and María's autobiography are consciously traditional in that the Jesus-like anatomy of the man is needed to protect the frail body of the woman. Of all her confessors, Vaquero was the only one to attempt to buffer her body with his own. He even tried to take on her illnesses, and die for her if necessary. "You decided," María reminded him in her autobiography, "to offer your life for mine. Your prayers were heard. While you were stricken with a high fever, my health improved."<sup>66</sup> *Maladies* were no longer María's prerogative; Vaquero was suffering them, too. His male body withstood constant physical onslaughts from the devil. According to María, Satan caused Vaquero to fall down the stairs and bleed profusely from his injuries. Not satisfied with that, Satan pushed him down another flight of stairs, this time resulting in two broken bones and a poultice that caused intense pain.

Vaquero quieted María's critics with his careful delineation of gender roles. He was possessor of a superior—that is, male—body, and María allowed him to shield and heal her. Vaquero cured her of a quinsy that constricted her throat, a "great pain" in her side, numerous fevers and, of course, the cracked skull. María praised him for the alleviation of her pain, explain-

ing how, when the heavenly voices told her that Vaquero would witness marvels *through her*, "I interpreted this as meaning that Our Lord would cure me *through you*."<sup>67</sup> Theirs was a reciprocal effort, but it was not an equal relationship and thus it pacified their contemporaries and reading audience. There were no more murmurings or scandals surrounding María.

Vaquero's handling of María's former confessors gave him further control of her reputation, as well as his own. In *La Muger Fuerte*, Vaquero declares one of Salcedo's finest virtues to be his "tireless spirit" in the face of constant criticism, a diagnosis that allowed Vaquero to remind readers of two things: that Salcedo admirably struggled with María for twenty years; that Salcedo ultimately failed. Rather than personally list Salcedo's faults, Vaquero allows the nuns to do the criticizing: he says it was they who thought Salcedo inept in his handling of María.<sup>68</sup> Gerónimo de San Eliseo, on the other hand, receives no such subtle treatment from Vaquero. Vaquero points out that when María was under Gerónimo's care there were still many in the convent who believed she was faking her illnesses, an opinion Gerónimo was never able to change. Neither could Gerónimo cure María of her ailments, but stood by helplessly as she suffered continuous pains in her bones, severe enough that, during the worst bouts, she could only murmur "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. . ."

Vaquero and María maintained their relationship until her death in 1617 at age fifty-six. He remained at her side as she lay dying and as soon as she died began a campaign to have her made a saint. He published *La Muger Fuerte* by 1618 and was a key witness in her beatification proceedings conducted by the bishop of Ávila. María was not canonized, achieving only the title of Venerable, but her reputation for piety in Ávila was secure. Vaquero had refigured her image by placing her securely under male authority and enhancing her feminine dependence. After decades of confrontation and debate over her physical maladies, María was able, through Vaquero, to have the patriarchal authority of the church working in her favor. Once "buried," or dominated, by Vaquero, her bodily malfunctions no longer alarmed or threatened the nuns and their confessors. She had, at last, submitted her body to the male-dominated ecclesiastical hierarchy.

For María's confessors, as for confessors everywhere, the task of controlling a woman's ailing body was often more an opportunity than a



predicament. Female medical problems could be irresistibly attractive to men of the church. A woman's pain-wracked body presented them with prospects for fulfilling special functions reserved for men: the healing of physical maladies or elimination of disease-causing demons through religious rituals. Clerics eager to alleviate suffering or advance their own careers often appropriated the diagnosis and treatment of female illness. In fact, theologians such as Martín del Río admonished confessors in his 1599 treatise on demonology to "know the causes, types, and cures of diseases," for how else could they correctly distinguish between a fraud, a demoniac, and a woman who was actually ill?<sup>69</sup> When María ailed, medical experts were called, but religious authorities had the last word in determining cause, treatment, and validity of her maladies.<sup>70</sup>

A woman who sought recognition for her bodily suffering needed a sympathetic and astute confessor, one who would support her claims of divinely given ailments and interpret her illnesses as evidence of God's favor.<sup>71</sup> She needed what Dyan Elliott calls an "interpretive strategist."<sup>72</sup> Realizing this, María refused to be governed by a man who was not in complete agreement with her own interpretation of her special physical ailments. Thus, it was crucial that she evaluate each confessor's attitude toward the female body. By analyzing a man's reaction to her pain-wracked body, a woman could ferret out a loyal male supporter or a chauvinistic saboteur. It was a complicated identification, since a sympathetic response to a raging fever did not necessarily indicate a man who liked or valued women; he might simply relish the distribution of power in the sickroom where he attended the bed-ridden woman. For women like María who tried to exercise some autonomy in a rigidly prescribed environment and who realized the extent to which their maneuverability depended upon the empathy and complicity of attending confessors, a sickroom was the crucible of truth.

Still, María's maladies and claims of divine favor were only as effective as her confessors allowed them to be, and what each confessor permitted was a direct reflection of his concerns about his own *reputación*. Dávila courted the approval of the senior nuns in Santa Ana. Salcedo resigned rather than face the disgrace of removal. Julián de Ávila would not tolerate any threat to the public esteem he had acquired from twenty years

as confessor to St. Teresa. Gerónimo de San Eliseo was more concerned with promoting the ideals and reputation of the *Discalced* Carmelites than securing for María the positive regard of her peers. It was Dr. Miguel González Vaquero who best understood how inextricably intertwined were his and María's reputations. Public opinion of both depended on how judiciously he utilized her body. Vaquero turned María's infirmities and corporeal piety into proof of her sanctity and evidence of his own professionalism and expertise.

Always in close proximity, accustomed to being obeyed and depended upon by his numerous female penitents, a confessor resembled the Hebrew patriarch with multiple wives found in the Torah. In early modern Spain, the confessor exercised complete authority, not just over a woman's spiritual life, but over all aspects of her physical existence: the food she ate, the clothes she wore, the medicines she was given, and the diagnosis of any physical malfunction, thereby controlling the way her body was perceived by others. In doing so, a confessor expressed his own thoughts and convictions through her body, thus ensuring that in seventeenth-century Spain there was at least some truth in the apostle Paul's first-century declaration that as a man is the image and reflection of God, a woman is "the reflection of man."<sup>73</sup> I suspect the same level of male influence over the holy woman's body to be true in the two centuries prior to the Counter-Reformation, when the physical maladies of European holy women such as Catherine of Siena, Angela of Foligno, and Margaret of Cortona were just as much a part of their fame as their doctrinal or political contributions. In fact, as Caroline Walker Bynum has shown us, a woman's authority often rested upon her physical disorders, what I call a woman's "supra-sufferings." Yet, more examinations of confessors and their female penitents similar to the one conducted here could reveal that the effects of the female supra-sufferer's physical maladies—her relative power or apparent autonomy—were primarily reflections of the theology and social mores of the men who attended her and defined the illnesses. Her maladies were his, to a great extent, to do with as he pleased.

## Notes

1. I wish to thank the Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain's Ministry of Culture and United States Universities for their generous research grant, as well as Leo McGee, Dean and Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs at Tennessee Technological University for allocating the necessary travel funds. On a personal note, my gratitude goes to Jodi Bilinkoff and Lynda Coon, who read and edited this latest essay, as they have so many of my scholarly efforts, and Katherine Osburn and Hazel Fernandez for editing and suggestions.

2. María Vela's recollections of these events are detailed in her spiritual autobiographies. See María Vela y Cueto, *Autobiografía y Libro de las Mercedes*, ed. Olegario González Hernandez (Barcelona: Juan Flors, 1961). For an English translation, see María Vela y Cueto, *The Third Mystic of Ávila: The Self-Revelation of María Vela, a Sixteenth-Century Spanish Nun*, trans. Frances Parkinson Keyes (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1960). English translations for this essay are taken from Keyes, designated as coming from either *María's Life* or *Mercies*. For María's confessor's version of the events described, see Miguel González Vaquero, *La muger fuerte: Por otro titulo, la vida de Doña María Vela*. . . . (Madrid, 1674). María's correspondence to her older male siblings, unusually candid for this genre and era, complements the more contrived and scripted hagiographical narratives of autobiography and biography: María Vela y Cueto, *Letters* (Archivo de Monasterio de Santa Ana, Ávila, Spain). For a discussion of María Vela and her brothers, see Susan Laningham, "Making a Saint out of a Sibling," *Thicker than Water: Sisters and Brothers in the Early Modern World*, ed. Naomi Yavneh and Naomi Miller (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate Publishing, 2006).

3. Wednesday and Friday are traditional fast days, mentioned in both the *Didache* and the *Rule* of Benedict.

4. Vaquero, *La muger fuerte*, 76r; Vela, *Life* 55.

5. The Cueto's were local elite, but the Vela name was recognized across Spain and Spanish America. María's great-uncle, Blasco Nuñez Vela, served as the first viceroy of Peru and other family members served as members of the royal council and as bishops.

6. *Life*, 64; Vaquero, 105r. Since the spiritual experts could not concur or provide a remedy, the nuns in desperation called for a physician, a Dr. Madrigal, who took one look at María and refused to touch her. The sisters insisted that the doctor do *something*, so surrounded by the anxious women he attempted, with the use of forceps, to pry María's jaws open. Dr. Madrigal was so afraid of hurting her that he wept, giving the nuns a "thousand reasons" why such a procedure was ill advised. Ultimately, his efforts failed, though María later recalled that he managed to exert such pressure "it made my teeth grate." Medical experts were regularly called to minister to María, but generally only to relieve her immediate discomfort. Diagnosis was left to the spiritual experts.

7. Vela, *Letters*, 20. Stephen Haliczer, *Between Exaltation and Infamy: Female Mystics in the Golden Age of Spain* (Oxford University Press, 2002) tells how the false mystic and Bernardine nun Clara de San Francisco, who claimed she had gone without

food or drink for a year, managed to convince supporters to smuggle food into the hermitage where her bishop confined her in order to test her claims. Clara was denounced to the Inquisition because of this fraud.

8. *Life*, 72: " . . . entre otras rezones que me dijo, fué una que si se me quitaba con aquello el impedimento que parecía que le traía en la manga para cuando quería." In *Letter 17* to her brother, Lorenzo, she reports that the chaplain agreed to try any means for cure that the abbess suggested, but "si sanase que no diría él que era demnio sino que yo traía el mal en la manga para cuando quería."

9. St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) founded the Discalced, or Barefoot, Carmelites, in Spain in the mid-sixteenth century. Barefoot Carmelites sought a return to the full observance of the original thirteenth-century Carmelite Rule, which called for constant prayer and strict poverty and seclusion. Teresa established her first Discalced Carmelite house in Ávila in 1562, when María Vela was one year old. Although María and Teresa lived in the same city and María speaks often of "Holy Mother Teresa" in her autobiographies, Teresa was much older and there is no indication that they ever met. Teresa's influence on María, however, is undeniable, since one of María's primary goals was to emulate Teresa in reforming her own convent.

10. Darcy Donahue, "Writing Lives: Nuns and Confessors as Auto/biographers in Early Modern Spain," *Journal of Hispanic Philology* 13 (1989), declares this confessor an opportunist whose biography of María was an exercise in self-promotion, an opinion countered by Jodi Bilinkoff, "Confessors, Penitents, and the Construction of Identities in Early Modern Ávila," in *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800): Essays in Honor of Natalie Zemon Davis*, ed. Barbara D. Diefendorf and Carla Hesse (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

11. Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 297–298.

12. Scholars who address the issue of the Church's manipulation of holy women in Spain include Jodi Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa: Religious Reform in a Sixteenth-Century City* (Ithaca & New York: Cornell University Press, 1989); Gillian T. W. Ahlgren, *Teresa of Ávila and the Politics of Sanctity* (Ithaca & New York, Cornell University Press, 1996); Stephen Haliczzer, *Between Exaltation and Infamy: Female Mystics in the Golden Age of Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

13. Of course, an ailing female body could be a woman's most effective tool for altering her environment or expressing herself, as Rudolf Bell and Caroline Walker Bynum have shown in their provocative scholarship on medieval holy women: Rudolf Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). Richard Kagan and Sherry Velasco likewise demonstrate how women of early modern Europe sought to manipulate those around them through the ingenious use of their bodies: Richard Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams: Politics and Prophecy in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Sherry M. Velasco, *Demons, Nausea and Resistance in the Autobiography of Isabel de Jesús*,

1611–1692 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

14. John W. Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and Their Male Collaborators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 11.

15. Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives: Confessors and their Female Penitents, 1450–1750* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

16. See Coakley, *Women, Men and Spiritual Power*. Also, Elliott, *Proving Woman*.

17. Vela, *Life*, 44.

18. Vela, *Life*, 43.

19. Ibid.

20. For an insightful analysis of self-inflicted wounds, see Stephen Greenblatt, "Mutilation and Meaning," *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York and London: Routledge Press, 1997). Also, Ariel Glucklich, *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

21. Vaquero, 20.

22. Vela, *Life*, 44.

23. Vela, *Life*, 45. "When I told my confessor of such things, which were beyond my control, we quarreled, so that sometimes I let them pass."

24. Erik Berggren, *The Psychology of Confession* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1975), 46.

25. Sherry Velasco has shown how the seventeenth-century Spanish holy woman, Isabel de Jesús, equated the devil in her visions with patriarchal society. Both the devil and the male hierarchy of the church, says Velasco, made a practice of silencing women who tried to speak on spiritual matters. María Vela's antipathy toward Gaspar Dávila may have been based on his power to silence both her tongue and her body. See Velasco, *Demons, Nausea and Resistance*, pp. 91–96.

26. Vela, *Life*, 43.

27. Vela, *Life*, 46.

28. See Ariel Glucklich, *Sacred Pain* (Oxford University Press, 2001), for a categorization of physical suffering in a religious context. Glucklich refers to *The Life of Suor Maria Maddalena de Patsi, 1619*, by Vincenzo Puccini, in which Suor Maria declares that she is comforted when ill because all the pains endured by mankind "did pass through that most holy Humanity of Chrsit, where they grew to be sweet." This, along with other examples that include Teresa of Ávila's exquisite pain when the angel pierced her entrails, show how "pain became a meaningful experience rather than a problem." Glucklich, 83.

29. Vela, *Life*, 44.

30. See Gillian T. W. Ahlgren, "Ecstasy, Prophecy, and Reform: Catherine of Siena as a Model for Holy Women of Sixteenth-Century Spain," *The Mystical Gesture: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Spiritual Culture in Honor of Mary E. Giles*, ed. Robert Boenig (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2000), for a history and influence of the publication in Spain of Catherine of Siena's *Life* by Raymond of Capua, 53–65.

31. Vaquero, 25r. See Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*, for the classic discussion of the Eucharist as a sensory experience in the lives of women in medieval Europe.

32. Vaquero, 36r.

33. Vaquero, 121r. Protestant sects allowed the laity to take Communion in both kinds, but there is no reason to believe María was covertly expressing heretical views in her vision. As Vaquero felt perfectly safe in recounting the vision in his biography, the taking of the cup by María is accurately interpreted as reinforcement of special grace from God, not Protestantism.

34. Vaquero, 42v. According to Vaquero, Alvarez had been confessor not only to Teresa of Jesus but to "all the great pious people in town." A confessor's reputation rested upon the quality of his penitents.

35. Vaquero, 43r.

36. Mary Elizabeth Perry, "Subversion and Seduction: Perceptions of the Body in Writings of Religious Women in Counter-Reformation Spain," *Religion, Body and Gender in Early Modern Spain* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1991), 67.

37. John Coakley, "Friars as Confidants of Holy Women in Medieval Dominican Hagiography," *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 225.

38. Vela, *Mercies*, 188.

39. See John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 140–151, for information on Jesuits as confessors. O'Malley points out that much of what we know about Jesuit confessional techniques comes from Teresa of Ávila's spiritual autobiography.

40. Ahlgren, *Teresa of Ávila and the Politics of Sanctity*, 57.

41. Luis de La Puente, *Tesoro Escondido en las enfermedades y trabajos* (Madrid: Manuel Fernandez, 1750). Stephen Haliczzer, *Between Exhaltation and Infamy*, mentions the treatise in his discussion of suffering holy women.

42. Vaquero, 70v.

43. Vaquero, 43v.

44. Ibid.

45. Vaquero, 66v.

46. Vela, *Life*, 64–65.

47. Vaquero, 102v. See Vaquero, also, for a brief biography of Julián de Ávila.

48. Women did, indeed, use their bodies to pointedly criticize their male superiors. Caroline Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, provides examples of women who gagged on the host offered by priests who were impious. Bynum shows how women were "inspired critics" of not only specific priests, but of corruption in the church. Their role as critic was not only understood by men, but also approved (Bynum, 227–229). Julián, it is fair to say, understood and did not approve of the criticism of his methods implied by María's dislocated jaw.

49. Bilinkoff, *The Ávila of Saint Teresa*, 191, fn 80.

50. Vela, *Life*, 76.



51. Patricia Ranft, "A Key to Counter Reformation Women's Activism: The Confessor-Spiritual Director," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, vol. 10, number 2 (Fall 1994) 7–26.

52. Vaquero, 127v.

53. The aljuba was a tight-fitting garment, particularly uncomfortable when made of rough cloth.

54. Jodi Bilinkoff, "Confessors, Penitents, and the Construction of Identities in Early Modern Ávila." Bilinkoff evaluates confessors of five holy women in Ávila who made their reputations by including themselves in their penitent's autobiographies. María Vela's last confessor, Dr. Vaquero, is among them. See, also, Bilinkoff, *Related Lives*.

55. Teresa of Ávila kept her bodily mortifications to a minimum, and though she traveled widely, she was never without a male escort that included at least one priest. Julián de Ávila must have realized that his physical presence on her journeys was every bit as necessary as his ability to say mass. For Julián's recollections of Teresa, see his *Vida de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, ed. Vicente de la Fuente (Madrid: Antonio Pérez Dubrull, 1881).

56. See *Autobiografía & Libro*, ed. González Hernandez, for brief biography of Miguel González Vaquero, 108–111.

57. Vaquero, 85r.

58. Ibid.

59. John Coakley, "Friars as Confidants of Holy Women in Medieval Dominican Hagiography," *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Tímea Szell (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1991), 225. Coakley explains the confessor's attraction to the holy woman as an appreciation of her otherness, "both symbolic and literal." While otherness was itself evidence of divinity, the woman's mediation of the divine, so unlike his own, was certainly instrumental in assuring the loyalty of the confessor to the penitent.

60. Coakley, 224. Coakley stresses that "fundamental to the encounter [between confessor and female penitent] was the man's sense of the difference between women's experience and their own."

61. Vaquero, 143.

62. Claire Marshall, "The Politics of Self-Mutilation: Forms of Female Devotion in the Late Middle Ages," *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Darryll Grantley and Nina Taunton (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Press, 2000), 11–12. Marshall's discussion of the intact female body leads to speculation on a deeper meaning implicit in María Vela's locked jaws. The locked jaws might be seen as a demonstration of female holiness in a culture that, when considering the female body, "focused on gaps, orifices and symbolic filth."

63. Based upon the negative though suitable model of the woman through which sin entered the world, the holy woman's corporeal performance became acceptable. The idea that women were supposed to suffer is treated by Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages," *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books,

1991) and in Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, p. 100, but dealt with more specifically in relation to sixteenth-century Spanish culture in Elizabeth Rhodes, "What's in a Name: On Teresa of Ávila's Book," *The Mystical Gesture* (Ashgate, 2000), 101–104. According to Rhodes, the life of a holy woman (in Rhodes' example, the written life, though a lived life, also) "not only provided ample room for her to represent her bodily ailments, but required that she do so." Also, Kate Greenspan, "Autohagiography and Medieval Women's Spiritual Autobiography," *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Chance (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1996), 221, points out that a woman's inherent feebleness is a topos found in hagiography and theological works.

64. Rhodes, "What's in a Name."

65. I am reminded of the third-century martyr, St. Perpetua, whose greatest concern, when she was knocked to the ground in the amphitheatre, was to cover up her thigh that had been exposed by the tearing of her robe.

66. Vela, *Life*, 100.

67. Vela, *Life*, 93.

68. Vaquero, 49v.

69. Quoted in Andrew Keitt, "The Miraculous Body of Evidence: Visionary Experience, Medical Discourse, and the Inquisition in Seventeenth-Century Spain," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 35/4 (2004). Keitt explains that "medical knowledge had become an adjunct to spiritual direction," and there existed "a new recognition that medicine... could be mobilized by the church in its efforts to discipline the faithful."

70. For example, the diagnosis of María's locked jaws as a symptom of epilepsy, along with a prescription of rum to relax the jaws, came not from a doctor, but from a priest. *Life*, 71.

71. Since 1516, Christians were allowed by papal decree to choose their own confessors. St. Teresa of Jesus, fellow resident of Ávila who died in 1582, the same year María took monastic vows, instructed her nuns to search diligently for a suitable confessor, even changing confessors a number of times, herself, but church officials feared that the freedom to choose one's own confessor carried with it the potential for sin. St. John of the Cross (1542–1591), friend of Teresa and yet another resident of Ávila, wrote of the inherent dangers in his *Dark Night of the Soul*, observing that, "Sometimes... when their spiritual masters, such as confessors and superiors, do not approve of their spirit and conduct... they go about in quest of someone else who will accommodate himself to their fancy." María was suspected of just this sort of behavior, admitting that her fellow nuns "thought I wished to confide only in those who agreed with me." María allowed her superiors to choose her first three confessors, possibly because she ailed or because she viewed it as an act of humility.

72. Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 212, says that the "interpretive strategist—usually a confessor" was the "surest way to secure one's mystical experiences against the whims of the pathologizing clergy."

73. I Corinthians 11:7



## Suppressing Women Philosophers: The Case of the Early Modern Canon

JOHN J. CONLEY, SJ

Recently I published a monograph on women philosophers in seventeenth-century France.<sup>1</sup> Focused on the moral philosophy developed in the Parisian salons of the period, the book studied five women authors in particular: Madame de Sablé (1598–1678), Madame Deshoulières (1638–1694), Madame de la Sablière (1640–1693), Mademoiselle de La Vallière (1644–1710), and Madame de Maintenon (1635–1719). In order to be classified as a philosopher in this work, these authors had to meet three criteria: (1) they wrote non-fiction works dealing with philosophical issues (such as the nature of virtue); (2) they defended their positions with an extended argument (rather than simply asserting a thesis in ethics, they provided justification for their claim); (3) they gave evidence of a formal philosophical formation (usually acquired through a tutor or through study of canonical classical and modern philosophers).

As I finished my research, an inevitable question perplexed me: if these five women are properly considered philosophers—if indeed their philosophical reflection is as engaging as I thought—why are they virtually absent from the history of philosophy? Their absence raised the broader question of how the voice of women philosophers has been erased from the canon of early modern philosophy. I would like to propose some tentative explanations concerning why these women have long been ignored as philosophers and concerning the typical obstacles we face as we try to expand the canon to reintegrate their contributions to philosophy.

First, we need to challenge two common explanations for the omission of these women philosophers from the canon. The first goes something

like this: although these women wrote works on philosophical issues, these works were never published; or if they were published, they had such brief and ephemeral circulation that the authors and their argument remained obscure. It is only in the wake of the second wave of feminism in the 1970s, with its systematic expansion of the canon to include women's voices, that we have begun to rouse these authors from their archival slumber. It is only in our egalitarian culture that we have begun to see and to hear these women and thus to discover their merit.

The publishing history of these authors, however, belies such a self-flattering theory. Many of the publications of these women enjoyed a remarkably long shelf-life. The poetical works of Madame Deshoulières, first published in 1687, enjoyed new editions in 1688, 1694, 1695, 1702, 1703, 1707, 1709, 1724, 1732, 1745, 1747, 1753, 1754, 1759, 1762, 1764, 1777, 1780, 1799, and 1803.<sup>2</sup> The maxims of Madame de la Sablière were published in 1705, 1725, 1743, and 1777.<sup>3</sup> La Vallière's *Reflections on the Mercy of God*, first published in 1680, had undergone at least ten editions by 1706.<sup>4</sup> It became a staple of French Catholic devotional literature well into the nineteenth century.

A second common argument, more plausible than the first but still inaccurate, is that these women may have been respected as authors, but they were not seen as *philosophical* authors. Certainly no one to my knowledge had treated La Vallière as a philosopher before I did so. But such is not the case with the others. Pierre Bayle, Voltaire, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau all praised Deshoulières, a metaphysician and disciple of Gassendi who used her pastoral poetry to present her philosophical naturalism.<sup>5</sup> Victor Cousin, the president of the Sorbonne and the head of the eclectic school of French philosophy in the nineteenth century, published a biography of Sablé and lauded her value as a *moraliste*.<sup>6</sup> During the Third Republic, educational philosophers Félix Cadet, Émile Faguet, and Octave Gréard analyzed the pedagogical theory developed by Madame de Maintenon in the anthologies of her works they published for secondary-school use.<sup>7</sup> If no one acclaimed any of these five women as a major philosopher, the philosophical quality of their work was clearly not ignored by subsequent generations of philosophers.

If the erasure of these women from the philosophical canon cannot be explained by lack of literary or philosophical recognition during their

lifetime or afterward, the reasons for their long absence from the canon must be found elsewhere. I propose several possible explanations for their excision from the canon.

First is the misattribution of several of these works. When first published, many of these works appeared anonymously. Their anonymity derived from social conventions concerning women's modesty and the impropriety of the aristocracy, the class to which most salon authors belonged, engaging in the publishing trade. Circulating manuscript versions of poetry and family memoirs among salon intimates was quite different than placing printed works for sale in the bookstalls. The anonymity also sprang from the desire of publishers to avoid legal entanglements over the rights to a work. As a result, the identity of the woman author was often masked. Not surprisingly the texts were often attributed to a male acquaintance who openly worked in a similar genre. Hence the confusion at certain moments between the maxims penned by Sablé or La Sablière and those, more famous, written by their mutual friend, La Rochefoucauld.

These misattributions often bear clear traces of misogyny. For example, Madame de Sablé's most celebrated passage in her collection of maxims was the section entitled "On Theater." This extended maxim is actually a miniature essay on the moral dangers of the theater: "All the great diversions are dangerous for the Christian life, but among all those invented by the world, none is more to be feared than that of the theater. It is so natural and so delicate a representation of the passions that it makes them come alive and makes them arise in our heart. This is especially true of love, when one offers a fairly chaste and honest love, because the more innocent it seems to innocent souls, the more are those souls susceptible to the theater's effects."<sup>8</sup> Given Madame de Sablé's longstanding participation in the Jansenist movement—her salon in fact abutted the Port-Royal convent in Paris—her critique of the theater was hardly surprising. The similarity of this maxim's style to that of her other maxims, the presence of this text in her own handwriting, and the acknowledgement of the marquise's authorship by other members of the salon confirmed Sablé as the author of the anti-theater brief.

When scholars noted an uncanny resemblance between one of the entries in Blaise Pascal's *Pensées* and Sablé's attack on the theater, her



authorship began to be denied. The early twentieth-century Brunschvicg and Lafuma editions of *Pensées* attributed Sablé's maxim to Pascal.<sup>9</sup> The editors insisted that Sablé had copied and altered some jottings on theater which she had received from Pascal, a friend, correspondent, and participant in her salon. Tellingly, they argued that the quality of the argument against attending theatrical performances was typical of Pascal's genius and surpassed the intellectual capacity of Sablé. Only in the 1960s did literary critics decisively reject the thesis of Pascalian authorship and reattribute the critique of theater to its rightful author, Sablé.<sup>10</sup> It was Pascal who had actually copied the passage from Sablé, a correspondent he had praised for her philosophical as well as literary acumen.

A more egregious act of misattribution concerns Louise de La Vallière. A mistress of Louis XIV who underwent a religious conversion and subsequently entered a Carmelite convent, La Vallière wrote *Reflections on the Mercy of God* in 1671, shortly after her religious conversion when she was under the spiritual direction of Bossuet. First published anonymously in 1680, after La Vallière had entered the convent, the work was immediately attributed to her. Both external and internal evidence confirmed her authorship. Subsequent editions of the work cited her as the author on the title page; several visitors to the Carmelite convent recounted conversations with La Vallière, now known as Soeur Louise de la Miséricorde, in which she clearly acknowledged herself as the author of the work. The style of the treatise matches the style of La Vallière's numerous letters; the autobiographical references to court life, especially to its sexual decadence and appointment-seeking behavior, conform to La Vallière's disillusioning experience as royal mistress; the treatise's theological concerns are typically those of La Vallière's spiritual director, Bossuet.

Despite this overwhelming evidence, the literary critic Marcel Langlois announced in 1928 that La Vallière could not have been the author of the work. He claimed that a laywoman of the period could not have had the intimate knowledge of Scripture and the familiarity with Aristotle and Descartes manifested by the author of *Reflections on the Mercy of God*. Furthermore, according to Langlois, the whole argument of the book was clearly male: logical, directive, commanding. He claimed that this rationalistic rhetoric is not typical of women, especially of an emotional woman

like La Vallière, known for her moody temperament: "A careful look at the text indicates that there is no trace of a feminine style and we know that at this period Mlle de la Vallière was depressed and convalescent, and a very timid person all her life. On the contrary, on every page, one hears the voice of a man, of a director of conscience. This voice appeals to reason, refutes the objections of a woman, and firmly guides a vacillating will."<sup>11</sup> Since Langlois had deduced that the author of the treatise must be male, he named Paul de Beauvillier, a young courtier who frequented the network of devout laity at Versailles, as the long lost author of the book.

Other literary critics, notably J.-B. Eriau,<sup>12</sup> immediately demolished the argument, pointing out that that La Vallière was well-known for her salon debates precisely on Descartes's *Discours de la méthode* and Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. The biblical knowledge of a woman under the spiritual direction of a cultured theologian like Bossuet could easily be the equal of that demonstrated by the author of the book. And the insistence that women, being inherently emotional, were incapable of the theological argumentation in the book was simply raw gender prejudice.

The second reason for exclusion derives from the longstanding tradition of treating these women as auxiliaries to prominent men, themselves often notable authors. Presented as the patrons or disciples of men, these women's own writings and theories have often been ignored. In this role of auxiliary, Sablé survives as La Rochefoucauld's patron, the hostess of the salon where he developed his maxims and the editor who critiqued and proposed revisions for earlier drafts of his maxims. But her own maxims, arguably more philosophical than La Rochefoucauld's because they provide a more extended argument for their theses, are rarely studied. La Sablière survives in literary history as the patron of La Fontaine and as the addressee of his anti-Cartesian poem *Discours à Mme de la Sablière*,<sup>13</sup> but her own neo-Augustinian letters and maxims have suffered oblivion. Deshoulières enjoys a minor place in the history of Renaissance philosophy as a disciple of the naturalist Gassendi, but the skeptical boldness of her naturalism compared to Gassendi's is rarely highlighted. Whereas Gassendi affirmed the immortality of the human soul, Deshoulières dismissed such a claim as incompatible with naturalism and a fantasy of human pride. La Vallière and Maintenon have long fascinated French historians and novelists on

romantic grounds because of their relationship to Louis XIV as mistress and morganatic wife respectively. Alexandre Dumas's novel *Louise de la Vallière* (1848) embellished the prurient details of La Vallière's liaison with the king; countless historians have debated whether Maintenon actually engaged in sexual relations with the king before their secret marriage in 1683. Planted in the shadow of the great man, these women function as the *beau idéal* of bedazzled men. But their literary work and the complex philosophy of virtue and of education advanced by their work are suppressed in romantic tales of boudoir intrigue.

The third reason for this erasure springs from the tacit frontier between philosophy and non-philosophy. As I have often been told when I discuss a new author unearthed from Versailles, "This is all very interesting, but it's not philosophy." Two frontiers in particular often exclude women authors from consideration as philosophers: the literary and the religious.

The first frontier separates philosophy from literature. Most of the women I studied could be considered *moralistes*, a term dimly translated as "moralist." We have never been too certain what to do with these authors who analyze the recesses of the human heart through the media of essays, maxims, poetry, literary portraits, and dramatic dialogues. They are usually reserved for French literature departments, although we have long made exceptions for Montaigne and Pascal precisely because they, like other *moralistes*, engage in a sustained critique of the virtues, of social conventions, and of the human capacity for self-deception. Sablé, Sablière, and Maintenon offer similar anthropological criticism, but as long as the *moraliste* is considered a purely literary figure, the works of such women philosophers will remain closed to the history of philosophy.

As Catherine Villanueva-Gardner argues,<sup>14</sup> the expansion of the philosophical canon to include the voices of forgotten women must carefully attend to the issue of genre. Since the university and the scientific academy were closed to women in the early modern period, philosophically curious women scholars rarely wrote in the form of the philosophical treatise. A philosophical canon that is *a priori* hostile to the genres of letters, devotional treatises, literary dialogues, maxim collections, and novels will ignore the elaborate philosophical argument many early modern women authors have embedded in texts written in such genres.

Another division between philosophy and non-philosophy concerns the tacit difference between philosophy and religion or theology. Several of the works I have studied, such as La Vallière's *Reflections on the Mercy of God*, are profoundly religious texts, in this case a work of religious autobiography. A secularist account of philosophy, which refuses or marginalizes predominantly religious works in the philosophical canon, can only ignore such works in its history of philosophy. I hasten to add that a work like *Reflections* should not be considered a philosophical work because of its religious fervor or theological erudition. I consider it philosophical because of its critique of all natural virtues as a mask of vice, its exaltation of theological virtue, and its strikingly original analysis of the counterfeits of faith, hope, and charity to be found in the court culture of the period. If a certain rationalistic casting of the early modern period systematically discounts religious works as devoid of philosophical interest, the voices of many philosophical women will remain suppressed. Most of the non-fiction writing by women in this period is of a religious nature and most of the philosophical formation received by women during this era was acquired through their theological education.

Related to the issue of genre is the question of thematic focus. In nearly all contemporary philosophy departments, courses on early modern philosophy, especially those focusing on France, concentrate on epistemology and philosophy of science. Descartes's theory of knowledge and its context in the scientific controversies of the period is usually given pride of place; his philosophy of mind, especially his alleged mind-body dualism, is also usually given ample treatment. His philosophy of God, if considered at all, is firmly subordinated to his epistemological and mechanistic concerns. His ethics receives scant attention if it is considered at all. Such an epistemological and scientific grid for the reading and interpretation of early modernity inevitably marginalizes women philosophers. Since few received any serious scientific training, the women philosophers of the period showed little interest in the technical scientific controversies of the age and rarely participated in the epistemological controversies concerning certitude that were tied to the new scientific discoveries. In philosophy their predilection was for ethics, aesthetics, and philosophy of religion, especially for the philosophical controversies internal to Christian theology.

There is, of course, an immense canon of sophisticated works in moral philosophy written in the early modern French period. In and of itself, the lively controversy between the Jansenists and Jesuits over the value of moral casuistry could provide a flood of texts and problems for many seminars in early modern thought. But in an approach to modern philosophy that insists on epistemology as the key to modernity, there is little room for philosophical discussion of Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, let alone for Sablé's critique of the virtues or Deshoulières's naturalistic theory of love or La Vallière's dismissal of natural justice. When modern philosophy is presented within a rationalistic framework, which firmly separates philosophical considerations of God from questions of theology and revelation, the neo-Augustinian moral theories of La Sablière and La Vallière, defending the primacy of the divinely infused virtue of charity in the moral life, can only appear atavistic, if they appear at all.

A fourth reason for the exclusion of women philosophers from the canon is a sociological one. It concerns the venue in which philosophy is practiced. Since the vast majority of contemporary historians of philosophy are themselves faculty members of university philosophy departments, they naturally tend to search for the history of philosophy in the person of their faculty predecessors. Descartes and Pascal may never have received a post in a philosophy department, but their works were never ignored by Louvain or the Sorbonne. More importantly, their works quickly became the object of furious and extensive debate in the new scientific academies, which were also closed to the participation of women. Women were similarly barred from the seminary, which in the early modern period in France boasted of such philosophical luminaries as Malebranche and which offered an extensive philosophical curriculum to its members. Since women are absent from the early modern constellation of the university, the academy, and the seminary, the histories of philosophy focused on these vectors of philosophical activity naturally ignore the women engaged in philosophical reflection during this period. In this sociological grid they simply do not exist.

To recover the works and theories of philosophical women in the early modern period, two social venues must become the object of the historian of philosophy's attention: the salon and the convent. Each presents

its own obstacles to sympathetic study by the historian of early modern philosophy.

Presided over by an aristocratic hostess, the literary salon of seventeenth-century Paris permitted men and women to meet informally to discuss and to participate in the cultural movements of the period. The salons often took on a particular religious and political coloration. Madame de Sablé's salon hosted many Jansenist sympathizers of Port-Royal, while Madame Deshoulières's salon was notorious for its bold libertinism. The Hôtel de Rambouillet welcomed many partisans of the Fronde, the loose coalition of nobles and parliamentarians who opposed royal absolutism in a series of civil wars (1648–1653). Particular salons practiced specific literary genres. Sablé's specialized in the *maxime*, concise epigrams dissecting the movements of the heart; La Sablière's in the fable, epitomized by the work of La Fontaine; Montpensier's in the *portrait moral*, sketches of the distinctive vices and virtues comprising the moral character of a particular person.

Historians have never ignored the institution of the salon, but as Jolanta K. Pekacz argues in her study of French salon women,<sup>15</sup> until recently this history has tended to marginalize the *salonnières* and mask their philosophical interests. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, amateur historians, often of aristocratic background, made salon history part of France's *petite histoire*. These chronicles detailed the love affairs, the political intrigues, and the literary battles that broke out in the more prominent salons. The portrait of prestige-driven hostesses battling for the debut of a Molière comedy or the demonstration of Pascal's astonishing calculating machine only confirmed the superficiality of salon culture. Historians and literary critics often noted the literary production of the salons, but they tended to focus on the charm and wit of the literary miniatures produced by socially ambitious courtiers. The philosophical seriousness of the arguments embedded in a maxim or a literary portrait tended to disappear in the rustle of silk and taffeta.

Several literary salons of the period developed a more serious and more determinedly philosophical culture than the *petite histoire* vignettes suggest. Sablé's salon at Port-Royal (1655–1678), for example, drew largely on the conventions of the new scientific academies of the period, especially



the most prestigious of them, the *Académie française*.<sup>16</sup> Salon sessions used formal agendas, minutes, and proceedings to organize and diffuse the work of the salon. Valentin Conrart, a distinguished member of the *Académie française*, offered his services as salon archivist. The salon featured formal debates on the controversies of the day. Members discussed La Clausure's defense of Descartes's dualism. A partisan of Stoicism, Countess de Brégy defended the moral philosophy of Epictetus, newly translated into French. Original papers presented by salon members analyzed issues in metaphysics and ethics. Reflecting the Jansenist provenance of the salon, papers on the ethics of war often betrayed a pacifist coloration. On July 17, 1663, the salon witnessed a debate between the Protestant Gasche and the Catholic Desmares on the alleged truths of Calvinism. Housed at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the salon archives witness to the philosophical sophistication of the salon's cultural life,<sup>17</sup> but the longstanding taste of salon chroniclers for romantic intrigue and the precious phrase has often obscured this philosophical impulse.

Recent studies on the salon culture of the period have highlighted the intellectual seriousness of the more literary salons and downplayed the older emphasis on romance and intrigue. Linda Timmermans analyzes the role of the salon in permitting women to acquire a literary and scientific culture rarely available to them in the schools of the era.<sup>18</sup> The properly philosophical character of this salon culture has become more clearly perceived. Wendy Gibson studies the emergence of coteries of *Cartésiennes* and *Malebranchiennes* within the more prominent Parisian salons.<sup>19</sup> Erica Harth explores why the philosophy of Descartes in particular acquired such an avid following among *salonnières*.<sup>20</sup> Cartesian dualism's insistence that biological differences between men and women made no difference in the purely spiritual reason possessed by members of both genders provided its own powerful justification for women engaging in philosophical disputes.

The other central sociological vector for the development of women's philosophy in the early modern period is the convent. As Elizabeth Rapley notes in her study of French women religious orders in seventeenth-century France, this period marks the first time in Catholicism that female religious outnumbered male religious.<sup>21</sup> Not only did the convents expand in terms of numbers; the birth of new, more apostolic orders permitted

the nuns to enlarge their longstanding work in the field of education. The nun became the central teacher of the Catholic faith in the new systematic catechism classes mandated by the reforming Council of Trent. This catechetical instruction served as a privileged vehicle for disseminating the neo-Aristotelian philosophy that had become the intellectual vulgate of the Catholic Church and its seminaries. Convent schools hummed with simple cosmological arguments for God's existence, lectures on substance and accident (to provide a metaphysical framework for the church's controversial Eucharistic doctrine of Transubstantiation), and exhortations to cultivate the moral virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice. In more contemplative convents, the Counter-Reformation's stress on the need to develop a more sophisticated biblical and patristic culture fostered the rise of a more speculative philosophy on the part of educated nuns, epitomized by the controversial neo-Augustinian theories of grace and freedom defended by the nuns at Port-Royal.

Like the salon, the modern convent has not lacked its chroniclers. But the convent history produced by these chroniclers tended to portray the nuns as angels or demons. An immense hagiographical literature, often written by the nuns themselves or their clerical defenders, proclaimed the heroic virtues and even miracles of a community's founders and other outstanding members. The deeds and graces of the eulogized nuns received far more attention than their theological and philosophical ideas. A subterranean anti-convent literature, which became mainstream in such Enlightenment diatribes as Diderot's *The Nun* (1760), specialized in portraits of the sadistic mother superior and the abducted novice. In the furious polemic over the moral and social value of the nun's vocation, the presence and complexity of nuns' reflections on philosophical issues within the cloister or the convent school simply disappeared.

In recent years the reconstruction of the philosophical canon to include the hitherto silenced voices of women has facilitated rediscovery of a number of early modern nuns who developed significant philosophical arguments. The abundant secondary literature on the works of Teresa of Ávila, Sor Juana de la Cruz, and Jacqueline Pascal provides ample evidence of a renewed scholarly interest in the philosophical nun of early modernity.<sup>22</sup> In much of this literature, however, the philosophical work

of the nun is only tangentially related to the distinctive moral culture of the convent and religious order in which she worked. The relationship of these nuns' theory of virtue to the monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience requires further analysis. How the nuns' philosophy of education for women, presented in their many texts on educating girls, differs from the dominant philosophy of education for men in this period needs more prolonged attention. If the current retrieval of suppressed women philosophers has identified many early modern nuns who engaged in philosophical reflection, it still needs to explain how this reflection constitutes a properly conventual philosophy, one whose content and method are influenced by the distinctive concerns of women consecrated by religious vows to a particular type of monastic community. As long as the convent is dismissed as the site of a piety foreign to philosophical reflection, the nun-philosophers of early modernity will remain marginalized and the distinctive monastic and gendered contours of their philosophical arguments will receive scant attention.

Finally, one of the major causes for the exclusion of women from the canon of early modern philosophy remains a particular kind of misogyny. The rise of a large number of women discussing and writing on philosophical issues in seventeenth-century Paris, especially in its salons, could not be ignored. But as critics of these women learned, they could be subject to ridicule and thus denied any intellectual worth. Molière's comedy *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659) remains the most enduring literary vehicle of this dismissal of salon metaphysicians.<sup>23</sup> In such satirical portraits, the *salonnières* may use Latin phrases, but they do not understand their meaning. They may banter about the differences between dualism and monism but it is to be taken no more seriously than their preference for silk over cotton. They do indeed cite Aristotle and Descartes but only in the way they drop the name of the latest royal mistress.

Molière was not alone in his ridicule of the salon and its philosophical aspirations. In the literary establishment, Boileau's *Satires* were even more influential in arguing that the philosophical achievement of the *salonnières* were only apparent, the risible product of social pretension rather than of intellectual prowess.<sup>24</sup> Boileau's dismissal of Madame de la Sablière's scientific achievements was typical of his technique of ridicule. Renowned

for her mastery of classical Greek and Latin, La Sablière had received an unusually thorough education in mathematics and science during her adolescence. She was personally tutored in science by the engineer Joseph Sauveur, the botanist Guichard-Joseph du Verney, and the distinguished mathematician Gilles Personne de Roberval. Attending the lectures of Giovanni Domenico Cassini at the Royal Observatory of Paris, La Sablière had become an ardent amateur astronomer, often using her personal telescope and other instruments to plot the movement of the stars and planets for Cassini's team. Boileau can only mock the pseudo-scientist La Sablière entangled in her telescope:

What do we see first? Well, it is this Scholar [*Sçavante*]  
 Esteemed by Roberval and frequently visited by Sauveur.  
 Where did she get her infected eye and her pale complexion?  
 They say that in doing calculations for Cassini  
 With her astrolabe in hand, she spent the entire night  
 Following Jupiter through her drinking glass.  
 Let us be careful not to disturb her. I believe that her science  
 Is going to preoccupy her today more than any job would.  
 She must use her new microscope  
 To spend some time at Dalancé's doing experiments  
 And then with a dead woman still carrying her fetus  
 She must go to Du Vernay's to see its dissection.  
 Nothing escapes the attention of our curious scholar.<sup>25</sup>

The alleged scientific culture of La Sablière is thus dismissed as a burlesque sham.

This literary caricature of salon culture as vain and precious has endured down to the present and continues to marginalize the works and theories of the women who operated within this culture. The reconstruction of the early modern philosophical canon to include the voices of long-forgotten women philosophers must not only confront the absence of these women; it must also scrape away the prejudicial reduction of these women to a cartoon by a literate misogyny that successfully ridiculed what it could no longer ignore.

An act of intellectual justice, the retrieval of women philosophers in early modernity can alter the way in which the history of philosophy is pursued. It requires a more sociological approach to the sites in which modern philosophical reflection emerged. Teaching and scholarship on early modern philosophy tend to focus on “the argument” presented by a particular philosopher, but this argument is embedded in a text, not necessarily in the genre of the treatise, and the text is embedded in a social context, not necessarily that of the university. The expansion of the canon to include women philosophers inevitably changes the sociological map of early modern philosophy as new genres, such as maxim collections, and new institutions, such as the salon, impose themselves as authentic sites for the modern practice of philosophical argumentation. The retrieval of early modern women philosophers also encourages a more irenic understanding of the very nature of the philosophical enterprise. It challenges the longstanding segregation of philosophy from other humanities, especially theology and literature, and it refuses the common reduction of modern philosophy to the narrow concerns of an epistemology fueled by disputes in physics. Literary dialogues on the virtues and poetic analyses of divine attributes, regardless of their authors’ gender, discover a new right to the philosophical city. In reinstating Sablé and Deshoulières as properly philosophical voices in the early modern canon, an enhanced history of philosophy promotes a chronicle of modern philosophy that is no longer confined to the narrative of the logician at work in the laboratory.

## Notes

1. See John J. Conley, SJ., *The Suspicion of Virtue: Women Philosophers in Neoclassical France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

2. See Antoinette du Ligier de la Garde, Madame Deshoulières, *Oeuvres*. 2 vols. (Paris: Stéréotype d’Hernan, 1803).

3. See Marguerite Hussein, Madame de la Sablière, *Maximes chrétiennes, Pensées chrétiennes*, in Menjot d’Elbenne, *Madame de la Sablière* (Paris: Plon, 1923).

4. See Louise de la Vallière, *Réflexions sur la miséricorde de Dieu* (Paris: Blaise, 1828).

5. See Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 4th ed. (Amsterdam: Brunel, 1730), 2.721 b; Voltaire, *Correspondance*, 13 vols., ed. Théodore Besterman (Paris: Gallimard-Pléiade, 1978–1993), 1.645, 4.794, 9.850, 10.875, 11.654, 11.762; Jean-

Jacques Rousseau, *Correspondance complète de Rousseau*, 52 vols., ed. A. Leigh (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation), 17.209, 17.222.

6. See Victor Cousin, *Madame de Sablé* (Paris: Didier, 1854).

7. See Françoise d'Aubigné, Madame de Maintenon, *Extraits de ses lettres, avis, entretiens, conversations et proverbes sur l'éducation*, ed. Octave Gréard (Paris: Hachette, 1885); *Madame de Maintenon: Éducation et morale; choix de lettres, entretiens et instructions*, ed. Félix Cadet et Eugène Darin (Paris: Delagrave, 1885); *Madame de Maintenon, institutrice: Extraits de ses lettres, avis, entretiens, conversations et proverbes sur l'éducation*, ed. Émile Faguet (Paris: Librairie classique H. Oudin, 1885).

8. Madeleine de Souvré, marquise de Sablé, *Maximes de Madame la Marquise de Sablé; suivies de Pensées de M.L.D.*, ed. Nicolas, abbé d'Ailly (Paris: Mabre-Cramoisy, 1678), 46.

9. See Blaise Pascal, *Oeuvres de Blaise Pascal, publiées suivant l'ordre chronologique, avec documents complémentaires*, ed. Léon Brunschvicg et Pierre Boutroux, 3 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1908); *Pensées sur la religion et sur quelques autres sujets*, ed. Louis Lafuma, 2 vols. (Paris: Delmas, 1948).

10. See Gérard Ferreyrolles's note attributing the authorship of the disputed maxim to Sablé and explaining the history of this misattribution, in Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Philippe Sellier and Gérard Ferreyrolles (Paris: Le Livre de Poche classique, 2000), 408 n.2. The maxim on theater appears as *Pensée* no. 630 in the aforementioned Sellier edition of Pascal's *Pensées* and as maxim no. 81 in Madeleine de Souvré, marquise de Sablé, *Maximes de Madame la Marquise de Sablé; suivies de Pensées de M.L.D.*, ed. Nicolas, abbé d'Ailly (Paris: Mabre-Cramoisy, 1678).

11. Marcel Langlois, *La conversion de Mlle de la Vallière et l'auteur véritable des Réflexions* (Paris: Plon, 1932), 134–135.

12. See Jean-Baptiste Eriau, *La Madeleine française: Louise de la Vallière dans sa famille, à la cour, au Carmel* (Paris: Nouvelles éditions latines, 1961), 17–27.

13. See Jean de La Fontaine, *Discours à Madame de la Sablière (Sur l'Âme des animaux)*, critical edition by H. Busson (Paris: Droz, 1938).

14. See Catherine Villanueva-Gardner, *Women Philosophers: Genre and the Boundaries of Philosophy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003).

15. See Jolanta K. Pekacz, *Conservative Tradition in Pre-Revolutionary France: Parisian Salon Women* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

16. For further discussion of the operations of Sablé's salon, see Nicolas Ivanoff, *La Marquise de Sablé et son salon* (Paris: Les Presses Modernes, 1927).

17. See *Portefeuilles de Dr. Valant*, BNF Ffr. 17044–17058.

18. See Linda Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture* (Paris: Champion, 1993).

19. See Wendy Gibson, *Women in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

20. See Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992).



21. See Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

22. Recent examples are Jean de Groot, "Teresa of Ávila and the Meaning of Mystical Theology," in *Hispanic Philosophy and the Age of Discovery*, ed. Kevin White (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 32–48; Masata Mistuda, "Chuang Tzu and Sor Juana-Ines de la Cruz: Eyes to Think, Ears to See," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, March 2003, vol. 29, no. 1, 119–133; Jacqueline Pascal, *A Rule for Children and Other Writings*, trans., ed., and introd. John J. Conley, SJ. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

23. If Molière contributed decisively to the satirical portrait of salon women in *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659) and *The Learned Ladies* (1672), he also criticized the period's oppression of women in such works as *School for Husbands* (1661) and *The Forced Marriage* (1664).

24. Boileau's *Satire X* provides a thinly veiled catalogue of prominent intellectual *salonnières*, in which he mocks their alleged scientific, philosophical, and literary achievements. See Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Françoise Escal (Paris: Gallimard-Pléiade, 1966), 62–80.

25. Ibid., 73. Translation into English is by the author of this article.

## Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Ermine: Elizabeth I's Coronation Robes and Mothers' Legacies in Early Modern England

ELIZABETH MAZZOLA

The rules surrounding the nature and transmission of women's property in early modern England were remarkably unclear, and mothers were often able, as a consequence, to pass along their wealth with real care, deliberation, and invisibility. Of course, we need to take tremendous pains to define this wealth—be it in terms of personal possessions, familial property including land and jewels, or goods and favors shared by the living. Such a calculus of gifts and debts and resources also reveals something about the *economics* of gender; that is, the ways that women's (or men's) status and influence might be measured in terms of things that are owned, produced, consumed, left to or shared with others. But my primary concern here is more basic. By studying the circulation of women's wealth, I want to recover what it meant to mother in early modern England, because—aside from the often considerable physical demands mothering placed upon many women's energies—mothering also had a significant economic component that women of all classes somehow recognized and aimed to supply, in the form of linens and cloth, jewels and religious objects, medicines, prayers, and advice.

The first part of this essay explores how many links between mothers and children were therefore conceived through—even created by—material goods. I take, as a particularly striking example, Elizabeth I's use of her despised sister Mary's coronation robes, and explain Elizabeth's choice of

clothing as a way of simultaneously representing, interpreting, and disposing of Mary's legacy. Such recycling of royal garments was commonplace, to be sure, but these robes had special significance for the childless and Catholic Mary, such that sharing them with a sister or daughter would have been unlikely, perhaps impossible: Elizabeth would have to borrow or steal them, instead. That the ties between them were tangled, even broken, is a common theme in Elizabeth's letters to Mary, as when the princess admonishes her Queen to "remember your last promise and my last demand."<sup>1</sup> Promises and demands made between early modern women could take different shapes, however, and the second part of the essay considers other ways that women's property circulated in early modern England, in terms of the rules and conventions mother's advice books seek to uncover or establish. I argue here, though, that even these relatively uncomplicated exchanges—at least, ones less conflicted than that between Elizabeth and Mary Tudor—challenge us to look at women's power anew, in terms of the influence they wielded over or objects they might transmit to each other.<sup>2</sup>

\*\*\*

There were two false pregnancies in the course of Mary Tudor's five-year reign, and one illegitimate heir, Mary's bastard sister Elizabeth. The devoutly Catholic Mary reluctantly and only obliquely acknowledged her heretical half-sister as her successor in a codicil to her will;<sup>3</sup> for a brief time after the 1554 Wyatt rebellion, Elizabeth had even been placed under house arrest as a threat-in-waiting. But Mary was in many ways a mother to a sister seventeen years her junior, planning Elizabeth's engagement, providing her with jewels and a sable hood,<sup>4</sup> insisting on Elizabeth's observance of Catholic ceremonies, and closely monitoring her sister's whereabouts during her five years on the throne. Of course, the princess Elizabeth had been especially close to her always affectionate stepmother Katherine Parr (only four years older than Mary), but Parr died giving birth in 1548 when Elizabeth was fifteen years old; the relationship with Mary was more longstanding and demanding. Elizabeth's letters, like the one I have quoted from, always reflect tensions between rivals and heirs bound by history, expectation, and mutual suspicion. If at one point Elizabeth commiserates

with her sister about menstrual pains (*Collected Works*, 37), at another point such intimacies have been pushed aside, and Elizabeth demands a private audience with Mary so as to counteract “the evil persuasions [that] persuade . . . one sister against the other” (*Collected Works*, 42). Some of these “evil persuasions” were more widely felt. Mary’s awkward mothering was always more or less at issue during her short reign, with “Midwives, Rockers, Nurses, . . . the Cradle and all, . . . prepared and in a readiness” for its duration, as one pamphlet entitled *Idem iterum, or, The history of Q. Mary’s big-belly* suggests, elsewhere registering the Queen’s discomfiture in the gross terms of “*Spanish Hearts being carried in English Bodies*” and the Prophet Jonas “safely deliver[ed]” out of the Whale’s Belly.<sup>5</sup> Mary’s mothering burdened Elizabeth, too, implicating her in a relationship that would continue beyond the grave. As Mary was dying, Carrolly Erickson reports, the Queen sent a servant to Hatfield to give Elizabeth her jewels in return for the promise of three things: “that she would uphold the Catholic faith, take care of Mary’s servants, and pay [Mary’s] debts.”<sup>6</sup>

When Elizabeth was crowned a few months after Mary’s death in November 1558, she wore the very same robes Mary had worn for her own coronation. I argue that this unusual sartorial decision—especially given their troubled tie (and Elizabeth’s later reputation as a clotheshorse)<sup>7</sup>—is a way for Elizabeth both to reify and obliterate her connection to Mary Tudor, making it crucial and empty all at once. Similar gestures towards mothers are reflected in—and may have shaped—a tradition of women’s writing in early modern England and, as I explore in the latter part of this essay, these writings are especially preoccupied with both the importance and fungibility of maternal ties.

Of course, Queen Elizabeth’s later extravagance was matched by an equally well-known penuriousness, and Mary’s regalia was state treasure, to be disposed of by the crown. But Elizabeth’s choice of clothing on such a formative day actually has a variety of meanings and supports a variety of values. For one thing, it can also help us understand what women’s wealth consisted of, and to whom it most properly belonged. At the outset, I would suggest that Elizabeth’s decision has something to do with controlling reproduction: the reproduction of cloth, most obviously, but through this activity the reproduction of power, relations, and influence: it

therefore reworks once more the ambiguous relationship between mothers and children in early modern England. Scholars like Betty S. Travitsky in her edition of mothers' advice books, maintain that both Renaissance humanists and Protestant reformers accorded early modern mothers more intellectual and spiritual influence over their children than medieval mothers could claim,<sup>8</sup> yet the real nature of this power—who really possesses it, how it's wielded, what it shapes—is less clear, as the many manuals and treatises written by English women during this time indicate, again and again. Lady Macbeth's evocation of the nursing child whose brains she would dash out (1.7.54–59) is an example of the cruel license early modern mothers could take or deep affections they might easily abandon; yet Elizabeth's use of her sister's coronation robes implies that children might reinterpret or relinquish these relations themselves, given the chance. If Mary's robes illustrate the vaguely maternal authority she possessed and how it might continue after Mary's death on the one hand, they also tell us how this authority might be reconstituted by Elizabeth herself in her very first act as monarch, on the other hand, with the help of a court tailor.<sup>9</sup>

\*\*\*

Painted more than forty years after the fact, the 1600 "Coronation Portrait" of Queen Elizabeth I (figure 1) shows the queen wearing the same ermine trimmed robes at her 1559 coronation that Mary had worn five-and-a-half years earlier. Janet Arnold, who has produced an exhaustive inventory of Elizabeth's clothing during the years of her long reign, briefly comments on this borrowing and the feelings it symbolizes, suggesting that "[t]he robes of 'clothe of gold and silver tissue' which [Elizabeth] had watched her sister wear in 1553, must have seemed like a triumphant and tangible symbol of safety and freedom" ("Coronation," 728). Their symbolism is still more ambitious, however: identical dress would seem to untangle the complicated relationship between the sisters by making Mary's ambiguous legacy appear ready-made for Elizabeth, something that she might appropriately recycle—or at least easily remake. Mary Tudor's will was similarly equivocal, revealing a twinned discomfort with and confidence in her successor's natural abilities: "my said heyre and Successour," Mary writes, "will supplye the Imperfection of my said will and testament therein, & accomlishe and



Figure 1. The “Coronation Portrait” of Elizabeth I (1600) by an unknown artist. Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.



fynishe the same accordynge to my true mynde and intende.”<sup>10</sup> The suggestion is that Elizabeth would not only adhere to but realize Mary’s best designs. And what better way to appropriate Mary’s own iconography than to wear it on one’s back?<sup>11</sup>

Elizabeth had many mothers to “think back through,” as Virginia Woolf describes the work of daughters,<sup>12</sup> and we might view her long career as organized, at least in part, by this rethinking of her history. Still, why risk the specter of Mary’s ghost at the coronation festivities—designed, at least in part, according to contemporary accounts, to exorcise that ghost? Elizabeth’s royal apparel conjures up other magical dresses, too. Whether early modern spectators were reminded of the transformed Cinderella and her evil stepmother (stories of whom were being codified in print at the time)—or even of the beloved Creusa and spurned Medea (whose stories are reflected in contemporary maternal legacies)—the effect of the dress is almost the same—that of a fairy tale gone awry, or unsettling bad dream.<sup>13</sup> There are other drawbacks to imperial hoarding, as Shakespeare often notes, the widespread practice sometimes regarded as an example of bad taste: “Thrift, thrift, Horatio,” the sardonic Hamlet tells his friend, explaining why the “funeral bak’d meats” served after a burial “Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables” of his mother and uncle (1.2.180–81).<sup>14</sup> Shakespeare’s reading of royal economy is rendered with less irony in *Macbeth*, where the king’s men complain that Macbeth’s stolen title hangs loosely about him, “like a giant’s robe / Upon a dwarfish thief” (5.2.21–22).

Women’s clothing—even that of a queen—belongs to a more complicated category, however, since their property was typically under a husband or father’s supervision. A more practical question, then, is why Mary’s robes were taken possession of by Elizabeth after Mary’s death rather than by Mary’s husband Philip, to whom were returned many of the jewels he had given her during their marriage.<sup>15</sup> There were, however, an assortment of loopholes in the laws and practices governing women’s goods, and recent studies have not only helped us trace where these possessions might go, but also how extensive and significant were women’s goods at the time, their distribution not only informing coronation ceremonies but the very structure of society.<sup>16</sup> Women’s material objects, scholars tell us, substanti-



ate families, underpin affections, and organize households; and that these treasures are so easily lost or traded or resewn makes them more rather than less valuable, more easy to circulate. Taking stock of the “houshold stuff” or “paraphernalia” that by rights belonged to women and was carefully recorded in wills and account books—“stuff” that includes candlesticks, jewels, furniture, pots, combs, stockings, ribbons, linens, chairs, pillows, glassware, gloves, masks, fans and baskets—can also help us grasp an emerging women’s literary culture shaped—and often preoccupied—by similar “vagaries of transmission.”<sup>17</sup>

There are some telling iconographical, political, and religious motives and mechanisms behind Elizabeth’s borrowing, as I explore in the next section. But I will emphasize the *economic* practices this borrowing illustrates—especially, as the Greek term for household *oikos* indicates, those practices related to the circulation of women’s property or paraphernalia, their “houshold stuff.” Such a framework suggests what was markedly female about consumption in the early modern period, and what women in particular might share with or leave to each other at this time.

\*\*\*

Queens and kings often wore the clothing and jewels and gowns of predecessors for reasons of economy and tradition. Janet Arnold also points out that clothes were frequently left as bequests in wills because of the value of the material: many of Elizabeth’s gowns, Arnold reports, were “translated” into furnishings after her death or given to players, the pearls and spangles sold, other items given to her ladies-in-waiting.<sup>18</sup> But the “translation” of royal regalia could have the public effect of killing off a predecessor, too. In adopting the livery of her older sister and thereby advertising her secure position in Mary’s royal household, Elizabeth officially buries her sister’s royal claims: if clothes make the queen, Mary has been royally divested.<sup>19</sup> Of course, there were many reasons for Elizabeth to aggressively promote Mary’s image at the same time. Like Mary, Elizabeth assumed the throne as an unmarried queen *regnant*, not as a queen *consort*, and what little precedent existed for this unusual and uncomfortable state of affairs in England had to be followed to the letter: wearing something second-hand in this case made tremendous political sense. Yet in wearing

the same dress, Elizabeth was also emulating a Mary herself constrained by precedent, deliberately dressed down for her own coronation, because the "clothe of gold and silver tissue" was actually that of a queen *consort* rather than that of a queen *regnant*. As Judith M. Richards argues, the unmarried Mary Tudor presented herself on that day as a "less than fully royal monarch," with the loose hair of a bride, an open rather than closed crown, and a dress of white cloth of gold, not the purple robes of a king.<sup>20</sup> Such a circumscribed image of sovereignty later allows Elizabeth room to maneuver; but perhaps Elizabeth borrows the royal garment of a queenly virgin exactly because this was something the childless Mary could not bequeath a daughter. Elizabeth allows Mary a legacy, in other words, while underscoring its emptiness.

There was enormous religious motivation behind Elizabeth's decision as well. Protestant reformers in England strategically made use of Catholic relics including priestly vestments and altar cloths to unveil or discharge those items' ritual magic, turning them into furnishings for Protestant homes or costumes for professional players (Jones and Stallybrass, 192). The Catholic Mary Stuart allowed herself such iconoclastic impulses, too, when she recycled altar cloths confiscated from Aberdeen Chapel into a bedspread for her lover's apartments.<sup>21</sup> What seems like a rough handling of weighty theological matter actually has a rationale. Protestants who rejected the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, whereby the eucharistic bread and wine were literally transformed into Christ's body and blood, nonetheless exploited the magic and simply reversed the charm when they repackaged Catholic relics rather than disposing of them altogether.<sup>22</sup> The London of 1559 was still more Catholic than Protestant (see Frye, *Elizabeth I*, 45), and Elizabeth's religious impulses ran along several lines, suppressing as many religious questions as possible: William P. Haugaard tells us, for instance, that the consecrated host was not elevated at the coronation mass, even though Elizabeth was crowned according to the rites of a Latin liturgy (Haugaard, 170). Similarly, instead of tearing up Mary's Catholic costume for a queen, Elizabeth had a new bodice and pair of sleeves made for the kirtle (Arnold, *Wardrobe*, 52–7). What better way to retain the appearance of things (even queens) while neatly and quietly altering the substance underneath?

\*\*\*

More than fifty years later, Mary Stuart's niece Arbella will sell off the embroidered panels Mary had worked on in prison in order to finance her own escape from the Tower.<sup>23</sup> That women's belongings were meager and that their distribution frequently marked the rupture rather than the cementing of ties between them is explicitly taken up in Isabella Whitney's "Wyll and Testament," a poem that appears in a miscellany entitled *A Sweet Nosgay*, published by Whitney in 1573. Whitney's literary career likely began when sickness forced her out of employment, most likely as a maid-servant; in this poem, she adopts the voice of the nearly-departed, "whole in body" "but very weake in Purse" (lines 1–2) to take her survivors on a tour of London, bustling and indifferent to Whitney's defeats or to the economic losses which precipitate her departure.<sup>24</sup> The poet's pictures of clothing shops and poorhouses, churches, bookstalls, and prisons illustrate a growing economy of want, where a wealth of goods is disconnected from a glut of unhoused servants, authors, debtors, and "Maydens poore" (l. 201). In fact, the poem's twinned subjects are alienation and authority, for Whitney distributes to her readers things she can neither own nor share, but more simply those things she "shal leave behinde" (l. 22). The poem is strangely reminiscent of the children's game of hot potato, where the goal is to get rid of something in order to find oneself bereft: indeed, Whitney closes the poem by exorcising consumption, telling her readers: "may your wants exile" (l. 276). With a similar emphasis on the traps of consumption, Natasha Korda describes the responsibilities of women as housewives in the early-modern period, their moral duty and social standing increasingly centered on the preservation of "houshold stuff," more and more of it consumer goods acquired through their husbands' efforts, not their own. Many of Shakespeare's plays, Korda notes, explore the complicated new economic rules that encouraged acquisition but faulted spending: new wives Kate and Desdemona are criticized by their husbands for being irresponsible consumers (careless with caps and handkerchiefs, for instance) rather than capable managers of households, much less as producers of important goods.<sup>25</sup>

\*\*\*

Now to the particular ties between mothers and daughters in the early-modern period, a connection Shakespeare does not represent in his plays—except for *The Winter's Tale*, where the absent Hermione is recovered as a piece of “houshold stuff” herself after her daughter Perdita matures, a picture of consumption (one Leontes validates as “lawful as eating”) that makes a mother literally disappear into the home. Hermione’s magic is moral, her morality mostly aesthetic, and her powerlessness not unlike that of other early modern mothers, Mary Tudor among them, with confusions surrounding their possessions, authority, and the ability to transfer either one.<sup>26</sup> These confusions allow Elizabeth to use her sister’s robes so readily, transforming what is state property into more private paraphernalia. We know that, with the exception of such paraphernalia, women’s property belonged to their husbands, and so advice books written by mothers often begin with an apology for their presumption of male duties or authority in drafting such documents.<sup>27</sup> Such advice books, five of which appear in rapid succession after Elizabeth’s death, outline a specifically female world of caring, knowledge, and transmission. Many of them are self-deprecating, like the pregnant Elizabeth Jocelin’s 1622 tract, her “little legacy,” as she calls it, consisting of “a few weake instructions cominge from a dead mother.”<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Grymeston’s epistle to her son similarly describes her imaginative limitations as bodily ones, even as she seeks to disown them: “And the spiders webbe is neither the better because wouen out of his own brest, nor the bees hony the woorse for that gathered out of many flowers: neither could I euer brooke to set down that haltingly in my broken stile, which I found better expressed by a grauer author.” Yet these advice books also often articulate another way of calculating and sharing female wealth: Dorothy Leigh, in *The Mothers Blessing* (1616), likens unheard advice to “many mens garments motheate in their chests, while their Christian bretheren quake with cold in the street for want of couering.”<sup>29</sup>

Marked thus both by power and decay, Mary’s dress shares with these writings the riddle of maternal influence, presenting claims about women’s property and authority while detaching them from the mother. The next part of my argument looks at Mary’s dress in light of women’s work. I first briefly consider the nature of cloth and its status as female wealth, a

topic treated in some detail by anthropologists exploring the economics of small-scale societies; their accounts will help me then outline ways of reading early modern mothers' advice books as both literature and as wealth in the early modern period.

\*\*\*

In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf poses a question about the past that also centers on the faulty distribution of women's property: "What had our mothers been doing then," this impoverished child rudely wonders, "that they had no wealth to leave us?" (21). But Woolf's focus on economics unfortunately omits the *material* world that wives and mothers inhabit and routinely recreate. Studying cloth bestowal and exchange in twentieth-century Oceania and the Trobriand Islands, recent anthropologists supply us with a more nuanced picture of women's wealth. Many of their accounts focus on the ways that cloth is especially crucial to its accrual and exchange. In Oceania, for example, cloth mats woven by women are prized both for their sheer value and for their ability to link kin groups and obligations; indeed, as Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider argue, such items are so imbued with sacred and ancestral referents that they have "socially protective powers."<sup>30</sup> Studying related practices in Madagascar, where clothing is demanded by the dead as part of a complicated and protracted series of burial rituals, Gillian Feeley-Harnik suggests that clothing is a "product of reciprocity,"<sup>31</sup> a precious material that articulates otherwise unspoken relationships. Of course, we have to be careful in drawing connections between contemporary small-scale societies and the social world of early-modern England, but there are some useful similarities. Defining ancestors, maintaining lineages and identifying progeny, sumptuary codes regulating cloth distribution and display operate in small-scale societies much as they did in early modern England, where mourning robes were distributed by kin of the deceased at funerals as a way to "channel death into regeneration and political gain" (see Weiner and Schneider, 11). What anthropological accounts also tell us is that if, by definition, clothing is practical, superficial, and decorative, it is also always a rich and valuable tool precisely because of its exteriority, its ability to recreate the owner as part of its symbolism.

The connections between women and cloth are especially important in both worlds, as well. In her study of South Pacific societies, Weiner exam-

ines how women's weaving holds kin groups together, transmitting material wealth and influence in ways that Woolf's powerful account of a female tradition cannot register. After a death, Trobriand women bleach, dry, and fashion skirts from banana leaf fibers and distribute these bundles on behalf of the dead so as to ensure the continued stability of the deceased's family. Weiner views this project as the "transformation of women's reproductive capacity into an object."<sup>32</sup> Part of this wealth, however, continues to belong to the giver. Describing mats woven by Samoan women, Weiner points out that such objects can circulate and yet still be "inalienable," identified as a treasure that reinforces the giver's position (35, 46).

For similar reasons, Lear tells his daughter Regan to "reason not the need" for his own fastidious requirements for sumptuous living (2.4.264): the garments of power in Shakespeare's plays may be simply the clothes on a king's back, but their obviousness makes them no less necessary, and no less gorgeous. In *King Lear*, as Margreta de Grazia writes: "Clothes rank as the play's representative superfluous thing," but Lear nonetheless "shakes the superflux by disrobing."<sup>33</sup> Yet there are still other interests—more communal than Lear's private need to be recognized—created and protected by female cloth wealth that can be hoarded or banked, torn, shared, or left to rot. Used as tribute, displayed or worn in rituals of continuity or legitimation, "such treasure," Weiner argues, "facilitates claims to the past—its names, legends, and events—that justify the transactions and extend the power of living actors" (Schneider and Weiner, 6). A matriarchal world of obligation and likeness is also created in the process, assuming shape by describing ties to female relatives or by incurring debts to them (see Feeley-Harnik, 73–74). Elizabeth capitalizes on this process of producing mothers and daughters, for her appropriation of a despised sister's dress at once symbolizes Mary's ancestry as well as Mary's inability to reproduce such a relation.

\*\*\*

The existence of a female literary tradition in early modern England was likewise premised, Wendy Wall argues, on the language of legacy. This carefully crafted network of maternal ties helped female authors emerge and then explain themselves away, their wills and advice books and poetry "a strangely performative and self-constituting gesture dependent upon the

erasure of the subject.”<sup>34</sup> If female authorship was legitimated through the process of making real women disappear, so was motherhood itself, not only reconstructed as a literary and social, rather than biological fact, but also codified, amplified, or sometimes reorganized, especially in mother’s advice books. Such works are various and extensive, treating pregnancy, prayer, courtship, childrearing, marriage, and household management. Reading them gives us a better idea of the manifold circumstances under which mothering was permitted or reproduced in early modern England.

For one thing, many of the immensely popular advice books written by women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England are premised on the death of the author.<sup>35</sup> Upon learning of her pregnancy, for example, Elizabeth Jocelin (1596–1622) embarks on *The Mothers Legacie, to her unborne Childe* (1624) only after she buys her winding sheet.<sup>36</sup> (Elsewhere, she undercuts her work not only because it *derives* from her, but because it is *addressed* to a child.) The always-looming fear that she might die in childbirth allowed a woman to write in a patriarchal culture that otherwise mandated female silence (Travitsky, *Mother’s Advice*, ix). Adhering to this harsh convention, what mothers often give their children in these works is permission—and sometimes, overt and precise instructions—to ignore them. If mothers’ advice books therefore ensure a maternal legacy otherwise unavailable, the weakened authority of mothers is thus contradictory at best and always immaterial, premised, as Teresa Feroli puts it, upon the “dissolution of the female body” (91) or upon the insistent renunciations of a mother’s language. These books offer other telling examples. Elizabeth Grymeston (1604), for instance, explains that she can best show her affection by sharing her experience, but then colors that knowledge in “The Epistle” to her son as sinful, describing a mother’s wrath rather than her wisdom.

Such conditions of debilitation or absence would appear to make the 1622 appearance of *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie* (published 1628) all that more unusual. Written by Elizabeth Clinton (1574–1630), the *Nurserie* is directed specifically at new mothers (not at Clinton’s children) and focuses on the importance of breast-feeding, a practice that had been nearly eclipsed for elite women by what Clinton’s publisher Thomas Lodge calls the “unnaturall practise” of wet nursing. Male writers like Erasmus in



"The New Mother" (1524) and William Gouge in *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622) had adopted a similar stance,<sup>37</sup> so more interesting to me than why Clinton takes the position (after failing to nurse any of her own eighteen children) is the circumstance that, unlike other mothers' advice books, Clinton's argument emphasizes the regular, sustained, and physical presence of the mother. In Clinton's eyes, the mother's legacy is contingent upon her survival, not upon her death, her influence solely communicated and guaranteed by her body, not by its products or possessions.

The circulation of women's wealth accomplished via the exchange of banana leaf skirts guarantees that giving away something of value ensures its magical influence without consuming the maker. Clinton's outline of female influence transmitted through breast milk—whereby, publisher Thomas Lodge explains to the reader, the "stores" of mothers are drained so as to nourish the strength and continuity of their lines—shares this definition of female wealth by erasing any divisions between what a mother can give her children and what continues to be owned by her.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, mother's milk really issues from God's grace, as the pious Clinton explains in her dedication: "I thinke it an honour vnto you, to doe that which hath proued you to be full of care to please God, and of naturall affection, and to bee well stored with humility, and patience."<sup>39</sup> Indeed, all of the maternal virtues she enumerates find their source in God's bounty: "he is also *All sufficient*, & therefore infinitely able to blesse his owne ordinance, and to afford vs meanes in our selues" (*Nurserie*, 2). That women's possessions really belong to or emanate from men is reiterated by Grymeston's *Miscelanea. Meditations. Memoratives*, which consists of proverbs, prayers, quotations, and paraphrases from Catholic Church fathers (often in the original Latin or Greek). Like many male authors of the time, Grymeston describes her work as a conduit for wisdom that circulates elsewhere, not something that solely belongs to or originates in her, and elsewhere refers to her "broken style" as a way of characterizing her borrowings, obvious hand-me-downs in a literary world shaped by the coterie (and therefore, nearly closed) circulation of literary works rather than their (more open and unregulated) exchange and consumption in the marketplace.<sup>40</sup>

Clinton's vision could not be more different, however, since breastfeeding makes possible the transfer of specifically maternal wealth. The

uninterrupted tie and unmediated influence made possible via breast-feeding allow the mother—and only her—to become a crucial part of both the outer and inner world of the child, as a source of support, affection, nourishment, and discipline throughout her child's life. Recalling the precept “which willeth the younger women” “to *Beare* [children] in the wombe,” Clinton explains that this sustenance also means mothers “*Beare* [children] on their knee, in their armes, and at their breasts” (*Nurserie*, 6). According to Clinton's account, mothering is an ongoing event which utilizes all of a woman's physical and moral powers, conflating “the various parts of the body—knee, arm, breast—in [a] continuing natural process of reproduction.” “The new mother,” Marilyn Luecke argues, “is not only redeemed by breastfeeding; she is also empowered” (Luecke, 244).

Clinton's images of maternal ties involve at once a continuous experience and a remarkably closed one, seemingly impervious to outside influence, without even a wish for any other connection. Articulated through mother's milk, such ties also shape the early modern home as the premier setting for inalienable goods and inalienable ties, a refuge from the marketplace and a site of worship, an antidote to unchecked consumption and an Eden without wetnurses.

\*\*\*

Despite Clinton's convictions about breast-feeding, however, there also runs throughout her treatise a sad and profound skepticism about the definition or duration of maternal ties because of a deep uncertainty over what women might supply *each other*. One objection, “found by grievous experience” is to the “dissembling in nurses” who pretend “sufficiency of milke, when indeed they had too much scarcitie” (*Nurserie*, 18). Even when so closely associated with a mother's body, female wealth is not only unusually subject to decay—as Weiner and Feeley-Harnik also contend—but to counterfeiting and artifice, too.<sup>41</sup> Also striking is the strange genealogy Clinton supplies of nursing mothers depicted in the Bible: citing the motherless fallen Eve, the long barren Sarah, and the Virgin Mary, Clinton summons up a world without daughters, a set of precedents without influence. The bonds between mothers and children can be endangered in other ways, particularly, Clinton notes, by money: she admonishes upper-class mothers not to trust “other women, whom *wages hyres* to doe it, better than

your selves, whom *God, and nature ties* to doe it" (17–18). Indeed, cosmic "disorder" ensues from the practice of wet-nursing, when the hired nurse is separated from her own offspring in order to care for the children of wealthy mothers. "Be not so unnatural to thrust away your own children" she admonishes these upper-class mothers: "Be not so hardy as to venture a tender baby to a less tender heart. Be not accessory to that disorder of causing a *poorer woman to banish her owne infant* for the entertaining of a *richer woman's child*, as it were, bidding her *unloue her owne to love yours*" (*Nurserie*, 19). Elsewhere, the *Nurserie* imagines the practice of wetnursing in terms of a suffering explicitly unrelieved by substitution or exchange, a nightmarish fairy tale replete with "lukewarm" mothers (*Nurserie*, 19) and "orphans" (*Nurserie*, 4), "queens," "princesses," "Dragons," and "Ostriches" (*Nurserie*, 8)—a setting where few mothers' love is bestowed fully or correctly, and where sustenance is replaced—as it is in Whitney's London—by crime (ll.157–60) and infection (l. 151; see also Luecke, 242).

The failure to breastfeed thus accounts for a host of political, cosmological, and economic problems; following Clinton's guidelines creates, in contrast, what Irigaray calls an "economy of abundance" that endlessly renews both subjects and objects, and rewrites consumption as slaking desire.<sup>42</sup> With this grand aim in mind, Clinton gives us a definition of mothering that centers on its powers and privileges, suggesting that "to be a nursing mother, is a Queens honour" (*Nurserie*, 17; see also Weiner, 36). Clinton's summons was not powerful enough to counter the demands or satisfactions created by early modern commodity culture, however, where increasingly material things might shape both consumers and the way consumers related to each other, and some artifacts—like Mary's dress recycled by Elizabeth—might ultimately come to lose their value altogether. Samplers produced during this period similarly attest to the fragile, implicit state of links between many early-modern women and to the collective anonymity now fostered between mothers and daughters in an increasingly isolated domestic sphere. As cloth-weaving was replaced by embroidery and households were supplanted by workshops, for example, the same few needlework patterns were reworked, the same few symbols transmitted in smaller and smaller circles. One pattern book of the period explains: "So Maids may (from their Mistresse, or their Mother)/ Learne

to leave one worke, and to learn another,"<sup>43</sup> suggesting how maternal ties have at once become widespread and tenuous, easily replaced and finally abandoned.

\*\*\*

What kind of literary tradition might take shape from the daughters who chose to write in the early modern period? Whitney offers a good figure for their abilities and obstacles when she describes her "wylling minde" in the "Wyll and Testament" (ll. 21–24), the implication being that we learn about women's ideas by knowing what they have taught themselves to relinquish. Elizabeth's use of Mary's robes should be understood in this light, too, as a way of seeing what she could claim and thereby make a mother forego, and more broadly in terms of the ambivalence about early modern maternal ties, their extent and meaning and power, the doubts whether they even exist or can continue. Elizabeth spent much of her youth trying to respond to these doubts and puzzle out her relation to her half-sister. At one point, the princess Elizabeth signs a 1554 letter to Mary, by then her queen, as "Your highness' most faithful subject that hath been from the beginning and will be to my end" (*Collected Works*, 42). Later, she will refashion such loyalty—or self-abasement—and make her sister her mother by appropriating Mary's costume as queen, acquiescence to tradition or the status quo now a most powerful tool of self-assertion (see Frye, *Elizabeth I*, 24–30). Family feeling likewise serves as a mechanism for public repudiation, as we see in Elizabeth's first speech before Parliament (February 10, 1559), where she refuses to group Mary with enemies of the crown, explaining: "I will not now burden her therewith, because I will not charge the dead" (*Collected Works*, 57).

Mothers, even dead ones, were powerful figures in the early modern period precisely because their influence was so indirect, the ultimate source of their power so unclear. To be sure, in Elizabeth Clinton's imagination, breast-feeding provides at once a profoundly regenerative physical, theological, emotional, and social connection, knitting together mothers and children, women with women, and believers to their God. It also envisions maternal love as infinite and rich, with a power to rival that of Shakespeare's childless Cleopatra (also decked, Enobarbus tells us, in "cloth of gold" [2.2.199]), who "makes hungry / Where most she satisfies"

(2.2.237–38)<sup>44</sup> It is *this* image of dangerously draining female power which Elizabeth summons up when she puts on Mary's robes, where a mother's love is endlessly renewable, but also something an ungrateful child might override, reconstruct, or merely choose to put away.

## Notes

I am grateful to three anonymous readers for Early Modern Women, whose advice was generous and invaluable, and to Ernesto Gilman, who invited me to present an early version of this essay at the New York University Fales Colloquium; suggestions made there by Elizabeth Bearden, John Archer, and Hal Momma were especially helpful. I also wish to thank Alison J. Carter of the Hampshire County Museum, Aileen Ribiero and Margaret Scott of the Courtauld Institute, the staff of The Huntington Library, and Erika Ingham, Matthew Bailey, and Nicole Mendelsohn of the National Portrait Gallery, who have been remarkably helpful in supplying answers, pointing to sources, and helping me formulate questions. Germaine Warkentin first inspired my interest in Elizabeth's coronation dress, and directed me to Janet Arnold's stunning work on Elizabeth's wardrobe.

1. Queen Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, ed. Lead. S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 41.

2. John Foxe, *Idem iterum, or, The history of Q. Mary's big-belly from Mr. Fox's Acts and monuments and Dr. Heylin's Hist. Res.* (London, 1688).

3. For details about the succession and about the sisters' relationship more generally, see David Loades, *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), 283–90.

4. Janet Arnold, *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd* (Leeds: W.S. Maney & Son, 1988), 4.

5. See Foxe, *Idem iterum*.

6. Carrolly Erickson, *Bloody Mary: The Remarkable Life of Mary Tudor* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 481.

7. See Arnold, 98.

8. Betty S. Travitsky, ed. *Mothers' Advice Books*, Vol. 8, *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works*, Printed Writing 1500–1640 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), ix.

9. Arnold, *Wardrobe*, tells us the tailor's name was Walter Fyshe. Additional details about the coronation dress are provided in Janet Arnold, "The 'Coronation Portrait' of Queen Elizabeth I," *Burlington Magazine* 120, no. 908 (1978): 727–30. See also William P. Haugaard's account of the event in "The Coronation of Elizabeth I," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 19, no. 2 (1968): 161–70. Elizabeth's wardrobe's connections to Mary Tudor's have been, to my knowledge, considered only by historians of costume;

literary scholars have tended to focus on the young queen's chastity or unmarried state, on her isolation from her subjects rather than links to her royal forebears. For an excellent discussion of Queen Mary I's wardrobe, see Alison J. Carter, "Mary Tudor's Wardrobe," *Costume: The Journal of the Costume Society* 11 (1977): 9–28.

10. Loades, 382.

11. See Susan Frye for an examination of Elizabeth's use of Mary's iconography. *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993), 43–4.

12. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929) (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1981), 76.

13. In the first version of "Cindirella or, the Little Glass Slipper" recorded in English, the degraded princess is given a "dress of cloth of gold and silver, all beset with jewels." This version, translated by Robert Samber in his *Histories, or Tales of Past Times, by M. Perrault* (London, 1729), is reprinted by Iona and Peter Opie in *The Classic Fairy Tales* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974), 125. The earliest published version of the tale appears in Italy in 1634, although it likely circulated much earlier in oral form: part of the 1540 *Complaynt of Scotland* includes the tale of Rashin Coatie, in which a coat of rushes (like the biblical Joseph's coat) arouses the jealousy of a lovely girl's stepmother. Clothes are at the center of both of these stories, although in the Grimm's version, clothing plays a lesser part—a synecdoche of a synecdoche—when the heroine is identified by a missing slipper. Details of the Scottish story are provided by Opie and Opie (117–18). For the connection to Creusa, I am indebted to Teresa Feroli, who makes a persuasive case for Elizabeth Jocelin's anxiety about such a maternal image in her 1624 text in "'Infelix Simulacrum': The Rewriting of Loss in Elizabeth Jocelin's *The Mothers Legacie*," *ELH* 61 (1994): 95, 97–99. Barbara Johnson explores how (and why) such monstrous images of mothers are shaped in "My Monster/ My Self," *Diacritics* 12 (1982): 2–10.

14. All quotations from Shakespeare are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

15. Additional details about Philip's gifts of jewelry to Mary are supplied by Joanna Woodall in "An Exemplary Consort: Antonis Mor's Portrait of Mary Tudor," *Art History* 14, no. 2 (1991): 223 n. 75.

16. Additional details are supplied by Amy Louise Erickson in *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 4; and by Natasha Korda in *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 1–7.

17. Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: the woman writer and English literary history, 1380–1589* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000), 29.

18. See Arnold, *Wardrobe*, 98, xiv, 175; see also Carter, 17. Elsewhere Arnold comments: "The use of an earlier material is not unusual. There are hundreds of references to the remodeling of gowns for Queen Elizabeth's personal use, as well as for her ladies-in-waiting, sometimes over ten years after they were first made." See "Jane Lombard's Mantle," *Costume: The Journal of the Costume Society* 14 (1980): 56–72. She adds: "Expensive materials were used over and over again, as long as they were in good condition" (72 n. 57).



Jones and Stallybrass explore such borrowing and make reference to Elizabeth's recycling habits as well in *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000), 26; but they do not discuss Elizabeth's use of Mary's robes.

19. See Jones and Stallybrass on investiture robes (2); household livery (5); and how the medieval concept of the king's "two bodies" might be explained with reference to a queen or king subject to infirmity or death and the royal clothes that would outlast this figure (196).

20. See Judith M. Richards, "Mary Tudor as 'Sole Quene': Gendering Tudor Monarchy," *Historical Journal* 40, no. 4 (1997): 897, 900–901. Richards also explains that "it was during Mary's reign that accommodations consequent upon the occupation of the traditionally male monarchy by the first female occupant were devised. Those strategies subsequently defined central symbolic forms of Elizabeth's reign and shaped their readings" (895). Under different circumstances, however, Mary would insist upon her position as queen *regnant*. In a later study of Mary Tudor, Richards comments, "most remarkable was the path [Mary] followed in her marriage to a foreign prince while preserving her legal autonomy." See "Mary Tudor: Renaissance Queen of England," in *High and Mighty Queens of Early Modern England*, eds. Carole Levin, Debra Barrett-Graves, and Jo Eldridge Carney, 27–42 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 28. Margaret Scott of the Courtauld Institute made a similar point about the precedent of Mary as queen *regnant* in a personal communication.

21. Margaret Swain, *The Needlework of Mary, Queen of Scots* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973), 51.

22. Stephen Greenblatt argues that the eucharistic wafer was to the Renaissance imagination the "sublime object of ideology," "an entirely chimerical entity, impossible to grasp except by tracking its traumatic effects." See "Remnants of the Sacred in Early Modern England," in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, eds. Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass, 337–45 (New York: Cambridge UP, 1996), 338. Additional details on the Protestant destruction—or reconstruction—of Catholic symbols and objects are offered by Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992); and by Elizabeth Mazzola, *The Pathology of the English Renaissance: Sacred Remains and Holy Ghosts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1998).

23. Sara Jayne Steen, "The Cavendish-Talbot Women: Playing a High Stakes Game" *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450–1700*, ed. James Daybell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 147–63.

24. All quotations to Isabella Whitney's "WYLL and Testament" will be to *Renaissance Women Poets*, ed. Danielle Clark (London: Penguin, 2000), 18–28.

25. See Korda for details about women's household material.

26. Following Korda, we might ask whether increasing control over a relatively isolated household gave women more or less influence over each other (12).

27. Wendy Wall, "Isabella Whitney and the Female Legacy," *ELH* 58 (1991): 44–45.



28. Elizabeth Brown, "Companion Me with My Mistress': Cleopatra, Elizabeth I, and Their Waiting Women," *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England*, ed. Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 106–111.

29. Travitsky, *Mother's Advice Books*, 4.

30. Jane Schneider and Annette B. Weiner, eds., *Cloth and Human Experience* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 13.

31. Gillian Feeley-Harnik, "Cloth and the Creation of Ancestors in Madagascar," *Cloth and Human Experience*, ed. Jane Schneider and Annette B. Weiner, 78.

32. Annette B. Weiner, "Why Cloth? Wealth, Gender, and Power in Oceania," *Cloth and Human Experience*, edited by Jane Schneider and Annette B. Weiner, 61.

33. Margreta de Grazia, "The Ideology of Superfluous Things: *King Lear* as Period Piece," *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, ed. Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 23.

34. Wall, 36, 38. In *Dress in the Age of Elizabeth* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), Jane Ashelford adds another wrinkle to Elizabeth's fashion decision, suggesting how early-modern women in England might literally be lost in their clothes. The symmetry characteristic of clothes when Elizabeth ascended the throne—"the triangular shape of the skirt in perfect balance with the inverted triangular shape" of the bodice and extended hanging sleeves—ultimately would give way, by the end of her reign, to a "bizarre silhouette created by extensive stiffening and padding, and so encrusted with decoration that the natural female form entirely disappeared" (11).

35. Feroli claims that "the act of writing itself necessarily compels women to realize the terms of their negation," and she therefore reads Jocelin's text as "an autobiography of a lost self" (91). For an overview of maternal advice books, see Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987), 257–85.

36. See Travitsky, *Mother's Advice Books*, xii; and Betty S. Travitsky, "The New Mother of the English Renaissance: Her Writings on Motherhood," *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson and E.M. Bronner (New York: Ungar, 1980), 33–34.

37. Valerie Wayne, "Advice for Women from Mothers and Patriarchs," *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500–1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 61–62. See also Travitsky, "The New Mother," 42 n. 10.

38. Citing Annette Weiner's work, Maureen Quilligan explores aristocratic women's efforts to capitalize on the wealth and prestige of their natal families in *Incest and Agency in Elizabeth's England* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). All citations to Clinton are to Elizabeth Clinton, *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie* (London, 1622) rpt. in Travitsky, *Mother's Advice Books*.

39. See Marilyn Lueck's valuable study, which suggests how Clinton not only naturalizes the mother's role but also elevates it above the father's. "The Reproduction of Culture and Culture of Reproduction in Elizabeth Clinton's *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie*," in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart*

*Britain*, eds. Mary E. Burke, Jane Donawerth, Linda L. Dove, and Karen Nelson, 238–52 (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2000).

40. I am grateful to John Archer for the distinction between an open and closed system of exchange; Jane Donawerth makes a similar distinction in a broader study of early modern women's gift exchanges in "Women's Poetry and the Tudor-Stuart System of Gift Exchange," in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture*, 5. For additional details on Grymeston, see Randall Martin's notes in *Women Writers in Renaissance England* (New York: Longman, 1977), 101; and Betty S. Travitsky, "The Possibilities of Prose," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1500–1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox, 234–66 (New York: Cambridge UP, 1996), 236.

41. In extraordinary detail Gail Kern Paster explores some of these early-modern fears about bodies and fluids. See *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

42. Irigaray's phrase is quoted by Donawerth (18). Such a community of women is typified, at least temporarily, by the one that takes shape during the period of childbirth and lying-in, when mothers and mother-in-laws, sisters, aunts, and neighbors surround and support the new mother and child. For additional details about this community, see Valerie Fildes, ed., *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

43. Susan Frye describes pattern books that themselves circulated as valuable commodities, treasured forms of female wealth: "the intergenerational ownership of books explains why so few pattern books are extant and why those that remain are so heavily cut up." See "Sewing Connections: Elizabeth Tudor, Mary Stuart, Elizabeth Talbot, and Seventeenth Century Anonymous Needle Workers," in *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England*, eds. Susan Frye and Karen Robertson, 176.

44. Cf. Paster's description of Cleopatra suckling an asp: "Its suckling keeps the maternal body from paternal appropriation; it participates in a conspiracy that uses the nursing bond to defeat and embarrass father, to deny his disciplinary goals for the maternal body" (239–40). Perhaps Paster's image of the nursing Cleopatra contrasts so sharply with my picture of the depriving mother because Paster never describes breast milk as a kind of female property or wealth passed down to descendants: like blood, breast milk leaks or flows, according to Paster: it is never shared or given.

*Merry Wiesner-Hank's essay is based on her plenary remarks at the meeting of the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women at the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, on October 22, 2005.*

## A Renaissance Woman (Still) Adrift in the World

MERRY E. WIESNER-HANKS

Nearly a decade ago, at the 1997 Attending to Women conference, Deirdre Keenan and I organized a workshop exploring the problems and opportunities presented by crossing geographic and disciplinary boundaries to enter new and unfamiliar intellectual territories in teaching and research.<sup>1</sup> We were both trained as scholars of early modern Europe, she in English and I in history. Our graduate training was completely Eurocentric, but by 1997 we were both teaching and writing in areas far removed geographically, and in Deirdre's case chronologically, from what we had been prepared to do. Deirdre was teaching Milton and Shakespeare, but also post-colonial literature; along with the Renaissance, the Reformation, and European women; I was teaching comparative early modern courses and developing a world history course. Thus we rather irreverently titled our workshop "Renaissance Women Adrift in the World."

From conversations with colleagues around the country, we realized that our situation was not unique. As department sizes were shrinking, many people were being asked to teach courses for which they had no graduate training, not simply in a closely-related field (Milton along with Shakespeare, the Middle Ages along with the Renaissance) but in completely different cultural traditions or time periods. As more and more colleges and universities added world history to their offerings in Western civilization (or substituted world history for Western civilization) and added world literature to courses in American and English literature, historians and literary scholars were increasingly required to become comparativists, or to teach about cultures in which they had little background. The same thing was happening in departments of art history.

A spirited discussion at the 1996 Berkshire Conference on Women's History suggested that a disproportionate number of women were being asked—or compelled—to be border crossers. Female faculty were concentrated at junior ranks and thus frequently given challenging teaching assignments, or were teaching a huge variety of courses as adjuncts. Women were often perceived to be somehow more “sympathetic” to non-Eurocentric approaches, even if they were trained in European or American history or literature, and so were more often asked or required to teach broader surveys than were their male colleagues.

As we expected, our *Attending to Women* workshop provoked a lively response, with participants discussing questions we had posed. Some questions were very basic. How do we begin? What do we seek to gain? Other questions resulted from our first attempts at crossing geographic and disciplinary boundaries: How do we fully integrate new types of materials and not simply view them as “context”? How can we ask the right kinds of questions, so that we are not simply dabbling in an unfamiliar area? How do we measure the credibility of a newly-informed perspective? To what extent can we escape our own cultural perspective, especially one reinforced by graduate training?

Some questions arose from our sense of responsibility toward the material. Knowing that whatever texts or individuals we select to discuss will become representative of a culture, how do we choose? How do we balance difference and familiarity to avoid orientalizing and exoticizing and yet not erase otherness? Are there any borders that cannot or should not be crossed? Others rose from our sense of responsibility toward our students. Should our teaching be affected by the increasing numbers of students with non-European backgrounds in our classrooms, or is this generalized stereotyping and false identity politics, akin to the over-generalizations about “women’s role” and “women’s experience” we have all learned to avoid? How can we balance a wider perspective with the need to prepare students for course work or subsequent tests that are much more traditional in their scope? Finally, we asked, how should and can our teaching and writing about areas beyond Europe shape our approach to European topics?

If issues of boundary-crossing were pressing in 1997, they have only become more so since. As colleges and universities face budget crises, full-

time faculty are replaced by much cheaper part-time or non-tenure-track lecturers, many of whom teach a far wider range of courses than their tenure track colleagues because they are in no position to say “no” to department chairs seeking to hire them. Many of us are now teaching courses for which we not only lack graduate training, but may lack anything at all beyond the “peoples of the world” curriculum we had when we were eight or nine. These changes have also resulted, at both the secondary and post-secondary level, from universities, departments, schools, or school districts deciding that they wish to broaden their offerings beyond Europe and North America. This sometimes means new people are hired, but just as often means that we who are already there are just expected to widen our areas of expertise, or at least of competence. Or these changes arise from state mandates, as states try to figure out how best to prepare students for the “global” economy, or as they respond to various pressure groups seeking to shape the curriculum.

This drive to expand geographically has come from inside as well as outside. Shortly after the 1997 conference, I started work on a book on Christianity and sexuality in the early modern period, and was working on another project with a group of people who were specialists in Southeast Asia.<sup>2</sup> One of them asked me why I was limiting my book to Europe, and I found I did not have a good answer—somehow “because that’s what I know” wasn’t satisfying. Christian ideas and institutions shaped sexual attitudes and activities in much of the world in this era, with the most interesting challenges—and responses to those challenges—posed by colonial areas. Thus the book came to include every continent, and was part of a widening of geographic scope among many early modernists, reflected in increasing research on the Atlantic World, colonial experiences, and global transformations. The book allowed me to venture in terms of more specialized research into areas I had increasingly been teaching, a pattern I was seeing in a number of colleagues and friends.

Various combinations of such political, institutional, and personal factors mean that the number of courses and the enrollment in world history, comparative history, or the histories of parts of the world that used to be called the “third world” is growing steadily, as is the case in global and comparative art history courses, and literature courses that include

works by previously non-canonical writers or from a wider area. Deirdre, for example, now regularly offers Native American and Afro-American literature, along with post-colonial (and an occasional Milton course). Looking just at history (which I know best): within this decade, according to many publishers, enrollment in introductory world history courses in the United States and Canada will equal or surpass that in introductory Western Civilization or European history courses. World history is now required for those seeking certification to teach in United States secondary schools in many states, a pattern that started in California. The largest enrollments in college history courses in the United States are still in U.S. history, but as the saying goes—though people from New York or Paris try to forget it—whatever happens in California eventually comes to the rest of the world.

New York and Paris may actually have an easier time accepting the expansion of world history than either one of the Cambridges. Elite schools have lagged behind the trend toward internationalization and globalization of the humanities curriculum. Harvard and Columbia, for example, continue to require courses in Western civilization or European history of all history majors, and Columbia still requires all students to take six specific courses in the Western tradition.<sup>3</sup> They do offer many courses on other parts of the world, of course, but history departments at elite schools are large enough to allow faculty to remain in field even with a broader curriculum. This was brought home to me during the discussion at the 1997 workshop, in fact, when a prominent literary scholar from an Ivy League school was stunned to learn that people at less distinguished schools have to teach whatever they are asked to do. Her doubts about the wisdom of this occasioned rather uncharitable guffaws and comments of “get real” from most of the discussants.

Beyond North America, introductory history courses increasingly provide a comparative or broad geographic framework. Kobe University in Japan has a whole Faculty of Cross-Cultural Studies, in which one can take courses in “cultural interaction” and “transcultural studies.”<sup>4</sup> Students at Witwatersrand University in South Africa start their history with a year-long course on world history after 1945 that until a few years ago was titled “systems in collision,” and is now titled “living with the USA.”<sup>5</sup> Students in

the history program at Stockholm University begin with three courses in world history, and those at the Free University of Amsterdam are required to take non-Western history as one of four subjects in their first year.<sup>6</sup>

The picture is not uniformly broad, of course. Like Harvard and Columbia, most European and Latin American universities are not global in their introductory course offerings. At Oxford, Frankfurt, and São Paulo, all introductory history courses focus either on their respective national histories, or on general European history. At all three, students can focus almost exclusively on national history during their course of study, though at São Paulo they are required to take a two-semester course in European history.<sup>7</sup> Specialization begins much earlier there, and continues, of course, much longer, particularly in countries such as Germany and Denmark that have maintained the second dissertation, which is usually guaranteed to be so long and so narrow that no one but one's advisor and one's mother—if she lives so long—will read it.

This means that Europeans are late-comers to global history, and, judging by a conference I was at in Leipzig in September 2005, they have far to go. This was billed as the first conference on world or global history ever held in Europe, which I think is true, but the continued Eurocentrism, exclusionary language, and old-boy chumminess took me back twenty years. One of the opening talks, by Patrick O'Brien, a prominent economic historian of the University of London, compared the traditions of history writing in Europe and China, managing to name about thirty European historians from Herodotus to Mommsen (often with annoying comments about "as we all know from reading Gibbon" or something similar) and mentioning not a single Chinese writer by name. Though there were women on the organizing committee—thus doing the work of the conference—no woman spoke at either the opening or closing plenary sessions (at which there were ten speakers), nor were the words "women" or "gender" mentioned by any plenary speaker. O'Brien certainly did not include Catherine Macauley or Lydia Maria Child or any other woman who wrote world history in his survey of Western traditions. The opening plenary led one young Dutch woman to denounce the "half-dead white men" who had spoken, and her words were affirmed by nods at the one session at the conference that focused on gender.



Despite these limitations, however, the trend toward a more global curriculum and more global approaches is certainly continuing, as is the trend toward interdisciplinarity. A quarter century ago, there were some programs in American studies and medieval studies, and “area studies” centers that were funded as part of anti-Soviet moves in the Cold War. But now there are also programs in women’s studies, modern studies, Renaissance studies, cultural studies, liberal studies, Celtic studies, gay and lesbian studies, and on and on.

Cross-disciplinary work has totally altered the way we look at certain things. To cite just one example, look at women’s monasticism in the period of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations. Art historians have explored how convents acted as patrons of the visual arts, ordering paintings and sculpture with specific subjects and particular styles for their own buildings and those of the male religious institutions they supported, thus shaping the religious images seen by men as well as women; music historians have shown how women sang, composed, and played musical instruments, with their sounds sometimes reaching far beyond convent walls; religious historians have examined the ways in which women circumvented, subverted, opposed, and occasionally followed the wishes of church authorities; social historians have explored the ways in which women behind convents walls shaped family dynamics and thus political life.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, scholars in all these fields have thought about the ways their stories intersect; as art and music both shape devotional practices and are shaped by them; as family chapels and tombs—often built by women—represent and reinforce power hierarchies; as artistic, literary, political, and intellectual patronage relationships influence and are influenced by doctrinal and institutional changes in the church.<sup>9</sup> This scholarship has changed our narrative of the Catholic Reformation, changed the way we compare Protestants and Catholics, and changed how we talk about women’s history.

This interdisciplinarity is not only a matter of scholarship and research interests, but also of teaching. Twenty years ago historians thought themselves daring if they included a novel among their required readings in a history course, but now many regularly include all sorts of literary evidence, visual materials, songs, popular culture, and material objects. Along with discussing their content, they also try to provide much

wider contexts for the more traditional types of materials that they use, noting, for example, the ways in which letters follow literary conventions or woodcuts use iconography.

As scholars and teachers we thus continue to enter new intellectual territories, but as we cross disciplinary and geographic boundaries, we often perceive ourselves as frauds or interlopers. In our 1997 workshop, Deirdre and I described ourselves as “Renaissance women adrift in the world,” and that nautical metaphor seems more applicable than ever, for we often feel as if we are floating around in a huge ocean of material without a compass. Every single question we asked then is still open, and the best answers are those that are being developed communally, through listserves, web resources, and actual face-to-face (F2F) talking. This is exactly what has happened in the cross-disciplinary work on women’s convents, which can provide guidance to those in other research areas seeking to enter new disciplinary territories in their own work. Sailing into new geographic areas can be similarly rewarding, for we will bring to global scholarship our deep understanding of women and gender, and return home to what we know best with exciting new goods. Here are just a few examples of what can happen when, as scholars of early modern women, gender, and sexuality, we set ourselves adrift in the world, instead of staying moored in Europe.

We can use our expertise to re-examine well-known sources about global encounters. For example, in a letter from his first voyage, Columbus describes the men and women of what is now Hispaniola: “These are the men who form unions with certain women, who dwell along in the island Matenin [this is one of the Virgin Islands], which lies next to Española on the side toward India; these latter employ themselves in no labor suitable to their own sex, for they use bows and javelins as I have already described their paramours as doing, and for defensive armor they have plates of brass, of which metal they possess in great abundance.”<sup>10</sup> Comments such as this have been used as evidence of Columbus’s preconceived ideas of what he would find on his voyages; that is, of the invention of America before its discovery.<sup>11</sup> We would immediately highlight the gendered nature of that invention; Columbus is viewing the Caribbean through a classical lens, and expects to find unruly women living without men in these lands beyond

the borders of civilization. After subsequent voyages, the location of such women shifts, until ultimately Europeans decide they must live somewhere in the South American interior, and thus name the major river of the area after them—the Amazon.

Sources about the intellectual world surrounding the voyages can similarly benefit from our gendered readings. Martin Waldseemüller, a German mapmaker, was the first to use the word “America” on his maps of the new world in the early sixteenth century, naming it after an enterprising Italian who claimed he had played a major role in “discovering” it. The name stuck because of Waldseemüller’s influence, and he justified his decision like this: “I see no reason why, and by what right, this land of Amerigo should not be named after that wise and ingenious man who discovered it, America, since both Europe and Asia had been allotted the names of women.”<sup>12</sup> The misnaming of the Americas is noted in every book on the period, but Waldseemüller’s comment is only rarely cited. We can be sure to include it, for in a single sentence it brings together so much that we teach about the Renaissance and early modern periods: the importance of the classical tradition, the tendency to mythologize the past (whether the ancient past of Greek myths or the very recent past of Amerigo Vespucci), the celebration of the individual man with *virtù*, and the deeply gendered nature of learned culture.

We can use our expertise to transform the story of colonization and global interactions from one of men in ships to one that includes women as subjects and agents. Neglecting the women in this story began in the sixteenth century. Machiavelli, for example, ignores Isabella of Castile in *The Prince*, though he talks about Ferdinand of Aragon a great deal.<sup>13</sup> We can make sure that Isabella and the many other women who sponsored, went along on, profited from, or confronted the European voyages get the credit they are due.

We can also investigate the global implications of many topics concerning early modern women for which there is now a solid body of research on Europe. Isabella is significant not only for her sponsorship of Columbus, but also because she was the first in a long line of female monarchs in early modern Europe, a line that became so long and powerful that subsequent political theorists could not avoid the topic. Dynastic accidents

in many areas led to women serving as advisers to child kings or ruling in their own right—Isabella in Castile, Mary and Elizabeth Tudor in England, Anne in Brittany, Mary Stuart in Scotland, Catherine de Medici and Anne of Austria in France. The debate about female rule that ensued, about which there is a steadily increasing body of scholarship, involved not only somewhat marginal political theorists such as John Knox, the reformer of Scotland and the author of *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*.<sup>14</sup> It also involved as central a figure as Jean Bodin, who argued in *The Six Books of the Republic* (1576) that the state was like a household: “So we will leave moral discourse to the philosophers and theologians, and we will take up what is relevant to political life, and speak of the husband’s power over the wife, which is the source and origin of every human society.”<sup>15</sup>

Husbandly authority came from God, for Bodin, and royal power was an extension of this. Resisting either would lead to anarchy, which was worse than the worst tyranny. Bodin’s ideas about royal power are usually included in discussions of the development of political theory, and his ideas about the power of husbands figure in analyses of the debate about female rule. In just this one sentence from *The Six Books of the Republic*, however, we find ample demonstration of the point made by Carole Pateman and Sarah Hanley, among others: that all power is gendered, not simply power in the family or power held by women, and that the ideology and reality of power in the family and power in the state are interwoven.<sup>16</sup> As with the new scholarship on convents, exciting interdisciplinary scholarship on the gendered nature of power in early modern Europe has emerged in the last several years, which is broadening our understanding of the depth and the contradictions of patriarchy.<sup>17</sup>

As we continue to examine the connections between gender and power in Europe, we can also explore their global resonance. Bodin’s opponents were French Protestants, the originators of what has come to be called “resistance theory,” a body of ideas that is increasingly seen as central to the eighteenth century revolutions—French, certainly, but also American and Haitian. But did his opponents, and their intellectual heirs around the world, also oppose Bodin’s ideas about the power of husbands? The radical English Parliamentary Henry Parker definitely did not, writing:

"The wife is inferior in nature, and was created for the assistance of man, and servants are hired for their Lord's mere attendance; but it is otherwise in the State between man and man, for that civill difference . . . is for . . . the good of all, not that servility and drudgery may be imposed upon all of the pompe of one."<sup>18</sup> A better-known resistance theorist continued this line of thought, noting: "Were our state a pure democracy . . . there would still be excluded from our deliberations . . . women, who to prevent deprivation of morals and ambiguity of issue, should not mix promiscuously in the public meetings of men."<sup>19</sup> Those are the words of Thomas Jefferson, a man who knew quite well about "ambiguity of issue," as the genetic research on the descendants of Sally Hemings has demonstrated.<sup>20</sup> Thus despite their diametrically opposed ideas about the rights of men to rebel against tyrants, defenders of divine-right monarchy such as Bodin and proponents of forceful resistance such as Jefferson agreed on the proper political role for women - none.

To follow another line of Bodin's thought to the New World, along with writing the *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, Bodin wrote several books about witchcraft, in which his horror at wives' revolts against their husbands or subjects' revolts against earthly monarchs is matched by his horror at the witches' supposed rebellion against God and the divinely ordained order: "Those too who let the witches escape, or who do not punish them with the utmost rigor, may rest assured that they will be abandoned by God to the mercy of the witches. And the country which shall tolerate this will be scourged with pestilences, famines, and wars; and those which shall take vengeance on the witches will be blessed by him and will make his anger to cease."<sup>21</sup> Such enemies of God were not only to be found in Europe, but also in the Americas, where native women practiced the same kind of witchcraft that women did at home. Bodin makes this comparison several times in his work, and Jean de Léry, a French Calvinist explorer, adds a description of the witches' sabbat taken directly from Bodin to the third edition of his travelogue about the Tupinambá of Brazil.<sup>22</sup> Léry comments: "I have concluded that they have the same master; that is, the Brazilian women and the witches over here were guided by the same spirit of Satan; neither the distance between the places nor the long passage over the sea keeps the father of lies from working both here and there on those

who are handed over to him by the just judgment of God.”<sup>23</sup>

This link was also portrayed visually, and our interdisciplinary efforts have taught us to pay attention to the visual record. An engraving from the 1580s or 1590s by Crispin de Passe after Martin de Vos shows the god Saturn in his chariot pulled by two dragons through the sky, with different groups over which he holds sway depicted below; on the right are Native Americans mining gold and silver and cooking human body parts on a grill, while on the left a magician casts spells before a cauldron and witches dance through the air.<sup>24</sup> Thus the artists connect the extraction of precious metals by natives of the New World with the production of such metals through alchemical cooking by European sorcerers, and links cannibalism with witchcraft. Both Native Americans and witches are under the power of a false god in this image, and neither worships the true Christian god.

Pierre de Lancre, a French magistrate appointed in 1609 by King Henry IV to investigate the activities of witches in the Basque region of France, saw a specific causal connection between the voyages of discovery and the increase in witchcraft in Europe. He asserted that the coming of European missionaries to the New World had resulted in more witches in his day than earlier, because the arrival of missionaries had forced more of Satan’s demons to return to Europe. The demons traveled, in Lancre’s opinion, with Basque fishing ships, remaining with “impudent and undisciplined” Basque women when their husbands left again in search of cod. These women’s only marketable agricultural commodity was apples; they sold the fruit, and also “ate with abandon this fruit of transgression, which caused the trespass against God’s commandment, and they ignored the prohibition made to our first father.”<sup>25</sup> Thus the independent economic activities of Basque women were a sign of their connection to Eve, who was often described as the first witch in European demonology. Their husbands’ fishing brought New World demons right to them; the men’s absence also left them more vulnerable to demonic wiles because they lacked men as protectors and as sexual partners.

One can go on and on with quotations from leading European intellectuals about the connections between witchcraft, women, and indigenous American beliefs, just as one can go on and on with quotations about women’s rule in the state or household. The *Malleus Maleficarum*, the

guide to demonology and the interrogation of witches that shaped the witch-trials in much of continental Europe, was published only five years before Columbus's first voyage, a voyage sponsored by one of those "monstrous" ruling queens.<sup>26</sup>

And speaking again of that queen—what an opportunity she provides for seeing how family and sexuality operate in world history! Along with backing Columbus, Isabella made astute marriages for her children. Her son John died before she could find him a spouse, but the marriages of her daughters linked Spain with every country that could assist them against their most powerful neighbor, France: her oldest daughter Isabella married King Manoel of Portugal; Catherine married Arthur and then Henry, the sons of Henry VII of England; and Joanna married Archduke Philip of Habsburg, who was heir to the Burgundian Netherlands through his mother and to vast holdings of the Habsburg family in central Europe through his father, and eventually elected Holy Roman Emperor. These marriages are mentioned in the most traditional of political histories (the kind that we and our students are so often bored by), but we need to make sure we (and our students) understand that these are *marriages*. That is, they are heterosexual unions designed to create children and pass down inheritance, including the right to rule countries. To paraphrase James II, "No children, no king." Those traditional histories tried to ignore the fact that politics was really all about sex and families, but Isabella (and the American presidency) shows you can not really separate them.

The connections between family, sex, and politics were just as clear in the first European colonies as they were in European dynastic linkages. Christian officials—Portuguese, Spanish, and later French and English—tried to impose European gender patterns of monogamous marriage, male-headed households, and limited (or no) divorce. Where these conflicted with existing patterns, however, they were often modified, and what emerged was a blend of indigenous and imported practices.<sup>27</sup> In some areas, such as the Andes of South America and the Philippines, women had been important leaders in indigenous religions, and they were stronger opponents of conversion than were men; this pattern was enhanced by male missionaries' focus on boys and young men in their initial conversion efforts.<sup>28</sup> In other areas, women became fervent Christians, confessing and



doing penance for their sins so intensively that they harmed their health, and using priests and church courts to oppose their husbands or other male family members.<sup>29</sup>

Religious and secular officials also established and maintained racial hierarchies, regulating marriage and other types of sexual activities so as to maintain boundaries between population groups. Like Thomas Jefferson, they worried about “ambiguity of issue,” and the encounters they were most concerned about were sexual.<sup>30</sup>

There were some deviations from this advocacy of maintaining sharp boundaries, however. An early nineteenth-century Colombian liberal, Pedro Fermin de Vargas, begins a discussion of the “problem” of indigenous people with standard racist assertions: “To expand our agriculture it would be necessary to hispanicize our Indians. Their idleness, stupidity and indifference towards endeavors causes one to think that they come from a degenerate race which deteriorates in proportion to the distance from its origins . . . it would be very desirable that the Indian be extinguished.” His proposal for how to accomplish this extinguishing was not extermination or isolation on reservations, however, but “miscegenation with the whites, declaring them free of tribute and other charges, and giving them private property in land.”<sup>31</sup> Vargas’s ideas were fairly common in Latin America in the early to mid-nineteenth century, and would become even more commonplace in many places by the early twentieth century, particularly in Mexico and Brazil. About ten years ago, Eve Sedgwick commented: “making heterosexuality historically visible is difficult because under its institutional pseudonyms such as Inheritance, Marriage, Dynasty, Domesticity, and Population, heterosexuality has been permitted to masquerade so fully as History itself.”<sup>32</sup> Statements like Vargas’s provide a chance to strip off the mask, to ask questions about and to historicize heterosexuality in a global context, in the same way that whiteness is currently being historicized.<sup>33</sup>

My examples have wandered through time and space, but that is what happens when you drift off into unfamiliar territories—you see new things, and the resulting insights allow you, no, force you, to see very familiar things in a new way. This is what “attending to women” has done—it is hard to read Machiavelli the same way once you pay attention to the

sentence about beating fortune like a woman, or read More's *Utopia* the same way once you notice the scene where wives bow down before their husbands "to confess all sins of commission and omission, and ask to be forgiven," or read Rousseau the same way once you learn that he spent much of his adult life with an illiterate seamstress, by whom he had five children, all of whom he sent to orphanages.<sup>34</sup> It is hard to read "all men are created equal" in anything but a gender specific way once you understand what the author of those words thought about women.

After beginning with "all men are created equal," later in the same document Jefferson writes: "Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." If you are looking for a way to introduce the idea that power is gendered in the early modern period, you can place this sentence alongside the one I quoted above from Jefferson. In fact, it would be better to place this sentence alongside the entire paragraph from which I took the earlier quotation:

Were our State a pure democracy, in which all its inhabitants should meet together to transact all their business, there would yet be excluded from their deliberations, 1. Infants, until arrived at years of discretion. 2. Women, who, to prevent depravation of morals and ambiguity of issue, could not mix promiscuously in the public meetings of men. 3. Slaves, from whom the unfortunate state of things with us takes away the rights of will and of property. Those then who have no will could be permitted to exercise none in the popular assembly; and of course, could delegate none to an agent in a representative assembly. The business, in the first case, would be done by qualified citizens only.<sup>35</sup>

We often begin our discussion of early modern patriarchy and ideas about women with Aristotle, but here is a thinker with whom our students are much more familiar, exactly replicating Aristotelian categories about those who lack free will and are thus excluded from the body politic. Incorporating examples drawn from beyond Europe provides strong evidence for our arguments about the longevity and depth of hierarchical notions of gender, and sometimes, as in this example, allows our students to see ways in which early modern ideas continue to shape their own world.

Developing a global perspective can parallel the process of first noticing that women's experience differed from men's. I certainly do not teach the Renaissance or the Reformation in the same way that I did when I thought of them as European events—or even more narrowly, as Italian or German events. I certainly do not think about my beloved German working women (when I get the chance to think about them at all, which I still try to) without thinking about where the linen cloth they were weaving was going, what the guns they helped to make were doing, and where the diseases they were treating might have come from.<sup>36</sup> This does not mean that I no longer have doubts, or am no longer struck by the hubris of the enterprise—who can pretend to know the history or the literature or the art of the whole world?—but I can not imagine being stuck on the shore.

Sailing in unfamiliar waters is not only exciting; it is also essential. My recent experience in Leipzig shook me out of an ill-founded complacency about how much all of our work has transformed the scholarly enterprise. History, art history, literature, music, philosophy, and every other field are constantly going off in new directions, but we can not assume these new routes will be any more welcoming than were the long-established ones when we first tiptoed along them. If we do not make sure that we travel along those routes—traveling as scholars asking questions about women and about gender, and many of us traveling as women—we will be like the wives in Utopia, watching men and their scholarship sailing away while we women kneel before them, our scholarship stranded on the beach.

## Notes

1. The summary of this workshop may be found in Jane Donawerth and Adele F. Seeff, eds., *Crossing Boundaries: Attending to Early Modern Women* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), 280–82. The discussion at Attending to Women was so interesting and helpful that we took our show on the road, and presented various expansions and variations at the 1998 Wisconsin Women's Studies conference, 1999 Berkshire Women's History Conference (a session sponsored by EMW, and in which we were joined by Sheila ffolliott and Martha Craig), and the 2000 New York State Association of European Historians conference.

2. The book became *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice* (London: Routledge, 2000). The project with Southeast Asian historians led first to a conference, and then to a collected volume of

essays, Barbara Watson Andaya, ed. *Other Pasts: Women, Gender and History in Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).

3. According to the Harvard History Department's website, all majors are required to take a two-semester sequence in western history, though they are also required to take one course in non-western history. ([http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~history/Ugreq\\_basic.cgi](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~history/Ugreq_basic.cgi); accessed 1/15/06). At Columbia, all undergraduate students are required to take the Core Curriculum, which includes two specific courses in Introduction to Contemporary Civilization, two courses in Western literature, one in Western art, and one in Western music. As part of the Core Curriculum, students are required to take two courses on Asia, Africa, or Latin America, a requirement labeled "Major Cultures," but there are no specific courses taken in common to fulfill this requirement; instead students choose from a long list, as they do with other "distribution" requirements such as science and physical education. (<http://www.college.columbia.edu/students/academics/core/>; accessed 1/15/06). The Introduction to Contemporary Civilization course was first taught in 1919, and is generally regarded as the ancestor of the Western Civilization curriculum that later spread to most United States colleges and universities. Columbia's website occasionally labels this course "Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West," though generally the last three words are omitted. The website describing the "Major Cultures" requirement includes vigorous language about the "permeability" of boundaries between the "West" and the "non-West"; the posted syllabi of Core Curriculum courses do not reflect this, however, and all introductory survey courses in the history department cover Europe or the United States (<http://www.college.columbia.edu/bulletin/depts/history.php?tab=courses>; accessed 1/15/06).

4. <http://ccs.cla.kobe-u.ac.jp/Kohou/eigo/>; accessed 1/15/06.

5. <http://www.wits.ac.za/fac/arts/history/courses/hist109.html> and <http://www.wits.ac.za/fac/arts/history/courses/hist105.html>; accessed 1/15/06.

6. <http://www.info.su.se/english/edu/ECTS/Departments.View.asp?InstNr=104> and <http://www.let.vu.nl/english/degreeProgrammes/history.htm>; accessed 1/15/06.

7. <http://www.history.ox.ac.uk/prosundergrad/courses/modhist.htm>;

<http://www.uni-frankfurt.de/fb/fb08/hs/studium/anfaenger.html>

<http://www.fflch.usp.br/dh/FLH/moldura%20esquerda.html>; accessed 1/15/06.

8. For convent residents and the arts, see Craig Monson, ed., *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion and the Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Craig Monson, *Disembodied Voices: Music and Culture in an Early Modern Italian Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Isabelle Poutrin, *Le voile et la plume: Autobiographie et saintete feminine dans l'Espagne moderne* (Madrid: University Press of the South, 1995); Robert Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens: Nuns and Their Music in Early Modern Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Ann Matter and John Coakley, eds., *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Elissa B. Weaver, *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 2002); K.J.P. Lowe, *Nuns' Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Charlotte Woodford, *Nuns as Historians in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Helen Hills, ed., *Architecture and the Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Anne Winston-Allen, *Convent Chronicles: Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (College Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004). For the economic and political patronage of religious women, see María Leticia Sánchez Hernández, *Patronato, regio y órdenes religiosas femeninas en el Madrid de los Austrias* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1997); Monica Chojnacka, "Women, Charity and Community in Early Modern Venice: the Casa dell Zitelle," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998): 68–79; Elizabeth A. Lehfeldt, "Discipline, Vocation, and Patronage: Spanish Religious Women in a Tridentine Microclimate," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30 (1999): 1009–1030; Sharon T. Strocchia, "Sisters in Spirit: the Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio and their Consorority in Early Sixteenth-century Florence," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 33 (2002): 735–768; Silvia Evangelisti, "We do not have it, and we do not want it': Women, Power, and Convent Reform in Florence," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34 (2003): 677–700. The relationship between family politics and women's entry into convents has been explored in: Elizabeth Rapley, "Women and the Religious Vocation in Seventeenth-century France," *French Historical Studies* 18 (1994): 613–631; P. Renée Baernstein, *A Convent Tale: A Century of Sisterhood in Spanish Milan* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Barbara Diefendorf, "'Give us back our children': Patriarchal Authority and Parental Consent to Religious Vocation in Early Counter-Reformation France," *Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996): 265–307; Joanne Baker, "Female Monasticism and Family Strategy: the Guises and Saint Pierre de Reims," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997): 1091–1108; Thomas Worcester, "'Neither married nor cloistered': Blessed Isabelle in Catholic Reformation France," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30 (1999): 457–476; Gabriella Zarri, *Recinti: Donne, clausura, e matrimonio nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2000); Jutta Gisela Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic in Renaissance Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); and Elizabeth Lehfeldt, "Gender, Order, and the Meaning of Monasticism in the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 93 (2002): 145–171.

9. Gabriella Zarri, ed., *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo: studi e testi a stampa* (Rome: Edizione de storia e letteratura, 1996); Jeryldene M. Wood, *Women, Art, and Spirituality: The Poor Clares of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Cynthia Lawrence, ed., *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe: Patrons, Collectors, and Connoisseurs* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Helen Hills, *Invisible City: Aristocratic Female Convents in Baroque Naples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Barbara Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Amy Leonard, *Nails in the Wall: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Elizabeth Lehfeldt, *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005);

Laurence Lux-Sterritt, *Redefining Female Religious Life: French Ursulines and English Ladies in Seventeenth-Century Catholicism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

10. *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus*, ed. R.H. Major (London: Hakluyt Society, 1847), 14.

11. Examining the ways in which Columbus's cultural assumptions shaped both his own and other Europeans' responses to the New World, the Mexican historian and philosopher Edmundo O'Gorman coined the phrase the "invention of America." His pioneering study of European ideas about the New World was published first in Spanish as *La invención de América: de la Cultura del Occidente* (Mexico City: Fondo Cultura Económica, 1958); an expanded and modified version in English appeared as *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of its History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961).

12. Martin Waldseemüller, *Introduction to Cosmography* (1507), translated in George Kish, *A Source Book in Geography* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1978), 319.

13. The only female figure for whom Machiavelli gives an actual name is the goddess Fortuna, or Fortune, the one force that even the greatest prince with the most *virtù* cannot conquer, though he might try. Machiavelli describes this attempt in highly gendered terms: "It is better to be impetuous than cautious, for fortune is a woman, and if one wishes to keep her down, it is necessary to beat her and knock her down." (Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Leo Paul de Alvarez [Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1980], 149. For an excellent analysis of Machiavelli's ideas about gender, see Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

14. A useful survey of the English part of this debate is Amanda Shepherd, *Gender and Authority in Sixteenth-Century England: The Knox Debate* (Keele: University of Keele Press, 1994). For Spain, see Theresa Earenfight, ed., *Queenship and Political Power in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

15. Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Republic*, translated and quoted in Christine Fauré, *Democracy Without Women: Feminism and the Rise of Liberal Individualism in France*, trans. Claudia Gorbman and John Berks (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 40.

16. Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) and *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Sarah Hanley, "Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France," *French Historical Studies* 18 (Spring 1989): 4–27.

17. Mihoko Suzuki, *Subordinate Subjects: Gender, the Political Nation, and Literary Form in England, 1588–1688* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch, and Power in Seventeenth Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Dena Goodman, ed., *Marie Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen* (London: Routledge, 2003); Carole Levin, Debra Barrett-Graves, and Jo Eldridge Carney, eds., "High and Mighty Queens" of Early Modern England: Realities and Representations



(London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003); Katherine Crawford, *Perilous Performances: Gender and Regency in Early Modern France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Ulrike Strasser, *State of Virginity: Gender, Religion, and Politics in an Early Modern Catholic State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Mary E. Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Lisa Forman Cody, *Birthing the Nation: Sex, Science and the Conception of Eighteenth-century Britons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

18. [Henry Parker], *Observations upon some of his Majesties Late Answers and Expresses* [1642], 14.

19. Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Samuel Kerchival (1816), in Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *The Works of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 10: 46.

20. The official Monticello website has an excellent list, with links, to many articles on the DNA research. [http://www.monticello.org/plantation/hemingscontro/hemings\\_resource.html](http://www.monticello.org/plantation/hemingscontro/hemings_resource.html) (accessed 2/5/06).

21. These include *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (1580) and *Vom aussgelasnen wuetigen Teuffelsheer*, trans. Johann Fischart (1591) (Graz: Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 1973). The quotation is from the second, p. 256. My thanks to Gerhild Scholz Williams for alerting me to this work and providing the translation.

22. Bodin's parallels between European and American witchcraft are discussed at length in Gerhild Scholz Williams, *Defining Dominion: The Discourses of Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern France and Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

23. Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Otherwise Called America* (1585), ed. and trans. Janet Whatley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 248, n. 14.

24. Charles Zika, *Exorcising our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003).

25. Pierre de Lancre, *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons, ou il est amplement traicté des sorciers et e la sorcelerie* (Paris: J. Berjon, 1612), translated and quoted in Gerhild Scholz Williams, *Defining Dominion: The Discourses of Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern France and Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 111.

26. A facsimile of the original 1497 edition has recently been published: *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1992). There is no English translation of the entire text available; every English-language edition is based on the somewhat problematic 1928 translation of Montague Summers.

27. For a fuller discussion of this process, see my *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice* (London: Routledge, 2000).

28. For the Philippines, see Carolyn Brewer, "From 'Baylan' to 'Bruha': Hispanic Impact on the Animist Priestess in the Philippines," *Journal of South Asia Women's Studies*: 1995–1997 (Milan: Asiatica Association, 1997), 99–117, and *Shamanism, Catholicism, and Gender Relations in Colonial Philippines, 1521–1685* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). For



Peru, see Irene Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) and "Andean Witches and Virgins: Seventeenth-century Nativism and Subversive Gender Ideologies," in Margo Henricks and Patricia Parker, eds., *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period* (London: Routledge, 1994), 259–286.

29. Luis Martin, *Daughters of the Conquistadores: Women of the Viceroyalty of Peru* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

30. See my *Christianity and Sexuality* for an extended discussion of this issue. The concern with racial mixing continued, of course, with the next wave of European colonialism; a British official stationed in Kenya in the early twentieth century, Robert Baden-Powell, worried that contacts between British boys and indigenous people would cause them to "go native" and eventually lead to masturbation, effeminacy, and homosexuality. To counter this, he founded the Boy Scouts, for which he was knighted. Lord Baden-Powell's ideas were stated clearly in the early literature for scouts: "You have been given a sacred trust for carrying on the race, and if you engage in the solitary vice you are throwing away the seed that has been handed down to you as a trust instead of keeping it and ripening it for bringing a son to you later on." (*Scouting for Boys*, 1930, quoted in Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1986], 184). The current Boy Scout manual no longer has that sentence, though it does begin with a section on improper touching and other unacceptable behavior, inserted in a way that parents can tear it out if they wish. Scholarship on gender and sexuality in the context of nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonialism is exploding. Patrick Manning includes a discussion of some recent works in *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 209–210; further references can be found in Temma Kaplan, "Revolution, Nationalism, Anti-colonialism" in *The Companion to Gender History*, ed. Teresa A. Meade and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (London: Blackwell, 2004) and in the chapters on political life and sexuality in my *Gender in History* (London: Blackwell, 2001).

31. Quoted in John Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolution, 1808–1826* (New York: Norton 1973), 260.

32. Eve Sedgwick, "Gender Criticism," in Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn, eds., *Redrawing the Boundaries* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1992), p. 293.

33. See many of the essays in Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, eds., *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997) and Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Irene J. Nexica, Eric Klinenberg, and Matt Wray, eds., *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

34. Machiavelli comments, "It is better to be impetuous than cautious, for fortune is a woman, and if one wishes to keep her down, it is necessary to beat her and knock her down" (Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Leo Paul de Alvarez [Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1980], 149). As noted above, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin's, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Berkeley: University of

California Press, 1984) provides a stimulating analysis of Machiavelli's ideas about gender. The quotation from *Utopia* is found at: Thomas More, *Utopia* (London: Penguin, 1965), 126. An excellent new biography of Rousseau is Leo Damrosch, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Restless Genius* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 2005).

35. Jefferson, *Works*, 10: 46.

36. My first book was *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986).



## **Book Reviews**

***Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice.* Wendy Heller. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. 405 pages. \$65.00. ISBN 0-520-20933-8.**

In recent years, academics in musicology and related disciplines have begun to consider more interdisciplinary research questions, such as the social history of music, performativity, gender representation, vocality, and ephemera with respect to seventeenth-century arts and culture. Studies such as Ellen Rosand's magisterial work *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (University of California Press, 1991) chronicled the social, theoretical, and practical definitions of Venetian opera, charting how its conventions shaped twentieth-century productions. Likewise, Eric Chafe's book *Monteverdi's Tonal Language* (Schirmer Books, 1992) offered new ways to analyze seventeenth-century music and reconstruct operatic performance practices. Indebted to these works and studies on the representations of gender in opera pioneered by Susan McClary, Suzanne Cusick, Mary Ann Smart, and Anne MacNeil in the nineties, Wendy Heller moves beyond this scholarship to present opera as the medium for representing the seventeenth-century controversy about women, the myths of Venice herself, and female speech or eloquence in the aptly titled *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice*. Through an examination of music, libretti, and seventeenth-century sources on gender and sexuality, Heller demonstrates the ways in which composers, the mechanisms of carnival, and Venice's own

“creation” mythologies produced vociferous, emblematic female characters who resisted easy definition or categorization. She unifies these seemingly disparate threads more completely and organically than her predecessors, creating a study accessible to both musicologists and scholars of early modern cultural studies.

Borrowing English transvestite theater methodologies from early modernists such as Katherine Park, Stephen Orgel, Ann Rosalind Jones, and Peter Stallybrass, Heller weaves together the strands of Venetian culture, history, and feminine mythologies to create a fascinating interdisciplinary portrait of the mechanisms that shaped musical characterizations of exemplary women on the operatic stage. She locates the creation of the Venetian opera heroine as stemming from abstract conventions of masculine and feminine virtue born out of mythological or historical figures, and the “extraordinary woman,” or courtesan, from everyday Italian life. After this compact and succinct discussion of carnival, theories on the body, courtesan culture, and the representations of female speech, Heller discusses the literary foundation for her arguments over two chapters by examining the mythologies of emblematic women played out in public debate through the Accademia degli Incogniti’s both antagonistic and celebratory writings on female sexuality and proto-feminist responses by writers such as Arcangela Tarabotti (chapter 2). While these introductory chapters may rehearse discussions that are quite well known to literary scholars, they serve as an important foundation for the chapters that follow and present crucial summaries and cultural connections perhaps unfamiliar to musicologists. Here, Heller teases out the complex sexual politics and fluid gender boundaries that led to the creation of musical sirens, empresses, widows, scorned lovers, chaste maidens, and madwomen.

The author then examines the musical characterizations of the abandoned woman, the suffering queen, the provocative nymph, the Amazonian warrior, and the dangerous courtesan. Heller offers new interpretations of seventeenth-century Venetian operatic works over which much academic ink has been spilled. In Francesco Cavalli’s *La Didone*, the composer musically portrays the emblem of chastity in Didone’s lament by avoiding sensual chromaticism and denying the character a “heroically sympathetic lyric voice” in the hour of her death (135). Monteverdi blurs the line between

performer and character in *La coronazione di Poppea*, with his ambiguous portrayal of the seemingly “unfeminine” Ottavia and the siren-like Roman prima donna for whom the part was written. Cavalli’s *La Calisto* presents the transformation of “female sexual desire into spiritual fulfillment” with clashing dissonances, obsessive repetitions, and musical contradictions (218). These musical signifiers of desire are, by the end of the opera, quelled as Calisto is summoned to the heavens. Heller focuses on Pietro Ziani’s *La Semiramide* as an example of “musical transvestism” and the compositional techniques used by Venetian composers to typify a cross-dressed character. Obscuring the boundaries between everyday Venetian life and operatic heroines, Carlo Pallavicino composes strains for his Messalina that mimic the exceptional musical skills and siren-like seductive qualities for which seventeenth-century courtesans were legendary. Using mournful, sighing motives in an otherwise cheerful aria, Pallavicino’s conclusion to *Messalina* reveals the empty pleasure of the emblematic courtesan and, through this musical contradiction, warns his audience as to the “dangers of feminine sexuality” (294).

In a concise and eloquent conclusion, Heller stresses that these emblematic, operatic women tell the story of Venice, each one—Didone, Ottavia, Semiramide, Messalina—“reflecting a single element of the mosaic that comprised the Venus/Virgin icon that stood for Venice herself” (296). Heller suggests that the feminine constructions in these operatic works are an amalgamation of rich musical, rhetorical, artistic, literary, historical, and theatrical traditions that speak volumes about early modern conceptions of women both represented on the stage and in everyday life. The author rightfully refrains from modern musical analysis in her explanations of the scores, relying instead on more appropriate seventeenth-century readings of the tonal language, rhythmic structure, and vocal rhetoric. Refreshingly free from excessive academic and musical jargon, Heller’s tightly crafted multi-disciplinary work is an important contribution to the growing body of scholarship on representation and the voice, as well as an exemplar of a cross-over study valuable to various fields of academic discourse, including history, literary theory, musicology, the history of rhetoric, and gender studies.

SARAH F. WILLIAMS



***Nails in the Wall: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany.* Amy Leonard. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005. 217 pp. \$45.00. ISBN 0-226-47257-4.**

Amy Leonard's *Nails in the Wall*, part of the extensive series, *Women in Culture and Society*, is a welcome addition to recent literature exploring the ways in which early modern nuns maintained strong ties to the communities outside their walls, and actively participated in shaping the Reformations of the sixteenth century.

Leonard's book examines three Dominican convents in the city of Strasbourg that survived and perpetuated the Catholic faith despite the city's official conversion to Protestantism. The process by which these convents avoided dissolution and maintained their Catholicism depended upon numerous and diffuse factors, including the nuns' personal tenacity, their gender, ties to the people of Strasbourg, the uniqueness of German politics, and, ultimately, compromise between Protestants and Catholics.

Protestants gained a majority in Strasbourg's governing city council in 1524, and by 1529 the magistrates abolished the Latin Mass and secularized the city's religious institutions. The council sought to dissolve the monasteries, and offered Strasbourg's professed religious annual pensions to draw them out of the cloister. While nearly all the men's houses within the city's walls succumbed, three of the seven women's houses extant in 1525 resisted the council's offer. Although many of the nuns of SS. Margaret and Agnes, St. Mary Magdalene, and St. Nicholas-in-Undis accepted the pensions and left, others insisted upon remaining in their communities. These three convents were the only ones of their order in Strasbourg to fully implement the Dominican reforms of the late fifteenth century, a fact that Leonard argues contributed to their survival. These reforms perhaps bolstered the nuns' confidence in the righteousness of their cause and the uprightness of their houses, and the women set a crucial precedent of council involvement in their affairs when they petitioned the magistrates for help in implementing the reforms. Overlapping jurisdictions and the peculiar nature of politics in the Holy Roman Empire meant that the nuns could appeal to Strasbourg's governing body rather than the bishop, who might not have been as sympathetic to their desire for reform. Leonard

suggests that this association between the reformed nuns and city council bred a familiarity and affinity that perhaps contributed to the magistrates' reluctance to close these particular convents.

Protestant leaders' initial uncertainty as to what should become of nuns also aided the Strasbourg convents. Leonard's second chapter admirably mines the famously prolific sixteenth-century German pamphlet literature for Protestant theories on the utility of the cloister, and she determines that while most Protestants advocated the dissolution of monastic institutions, some could indeed envision a role for convents in Protestant society. Luther advised that a woman should be like "a nail driven into the wall," firmly attached to the home, holding it and her family together, but even he recommended allowing "each nun's own conscience to guide her" decision to leave or remain in her community, as long as no perpetual vows were involved (54).

The nuns' gender, as well as their ties to the community, was also essential to their houses' survival. Men's houses closed more frequently throughout Germany than women's, owing in part to a perception of male religious as more of a threat to reform, but also because Protestant leaders knew women had fewer options outside the cloister. Many nuns were too old to marry, some too sick to leave their convents. Also, Strasbourg families still wanted a place for their daughters. Leonard emphasizes a link between the nuns and some of the city's leading families, and argues that the council did not wish to alienate influential people by ostracizing their female relatives (87).

Unable to convince the nuns to leave and unwilling to force them out, the council sought to make the convents useful to the newly Protestant city by redefining their purpose and character. Recalling a mythical past in which monastic institutions functioned solely as centers of learning, the magistrates determined to serve the "common good" by converting the convents into schools for girls, thus meeting the needs of the nuns and the community at large. The council and the nuns thus reached a compromise. The nuns had to hear Protestant sermons, wear lay clothing, forgo the Latin Mass, sing in German, and do without vows or novices. In exchange, they could open schools, teach girls to be good wives and mothers, and continue to live communally with the council's blessing and protection.

The nuns ostensibly agreed, accepting the council as their authority. However, throughout the century they smuggled in priests to perform Catholic rites, and accepted new novices without the council's permission. Although little evidence remains to indicate what occurred in the schools, that most students chose to remain as nuns suggests that the sisters were not teaching Protestant doctrine. The council was aware of the nuns' infractions, yet while the magistrates frequently issued warnings, they did little to enforce their regulations. The Protestant clergy complained bitterly that the Catholic Mass still took place in the convents' chapels, with many citizens of Strasbourg in attendance, effectively making the convents little bastions of Catholicism in the city. Despite the clergy's outrage, however, the magistrates seemed unwilling to intervene. Only when St. Nicolas-in-Undis became involved in a financial and sexual scandal in the 1590s did the council step in, closing it down and moving some of the sisters to another house. Despite the serious (and rather propagandistic) charges against the nuns of St. Nicolas-in-Undis, the council did not seize the opportunity to dissolve the two remaining convents.

One of Leonard's most significant arguments is that the case of Strasbourg demonstrates how Protestants and Catholics could compromise with one another to achieve a common good, and that their willingness to do so highlights some of the limitations of the confessionalization model for understanding the local dynamics of reform. Individuals often played a greater role in dictating the terms of reform in their communities than the confessionalization model, with its emphasis on elite-imposed religious identity, implies. One wonders by the end of her book, however, whether Strasbourg might have seen compromise between Protestants and Catholics on an even larger scale than her focus on the nuns as the agents of the Catholic compromise presents. Leonard consistently cites pressure from important Strasbourg families as motivating the councils' decisions regarding the convents, and while she emphasizes the connections between reformed families and several nuns, she also notes briefly in Chapter Four that most of the "influential" families with daughters in the convents retained ties to Catholicism. The Catholic ties of the nuns' relatives are implied in places throughout the book, but seldom made explicit, although these were the same families who pressured the council to maintain the

convents, and whose daughters continued to join the convents. Some discussion of the extent of Catholic influence in Protestant Strasbourg, especially as it may have pertained to the council's stance towards the convents, might have added an important dimension to the compromise between Protestants and Catholics that Leonard highlights. Overall, however, *Nails in the Wall* sheds important light on social dynamics during the early days of the Protestant Reformation, and provides welcome insight into women's influence over the shape reform took at the local level.

REBECCA CLARK NYKWEST

***Women in Early Modern Polish Society, Against the European Background.* Maria Bogucka. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004. 192 pp. \$94.95/£47.50. ISBN 0-7546-3241-5.**

Maria Bogucka's book surveys the situation of women in Poland from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, providing a window into this world for those of us who cannot read the primary and secondary source materials in Polish. Bogucka, an historian and member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, focuses particularly on economic, religious, cultural, and political systems and how women interacted with them. Throughout most of the eight chapters, she reviews developments in these systems in Western Europe and then describes how the situations in Poland either paralleled or diverged from Western ones.

In her chapter on women and economic life, for example, Bogucka explains that the market economy and other features of capitalism that developed in Western Europe did not emerge on a large scale in Poland until much later. While serving as "a granary of Europe" in the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century, Poland did so with a traditional manorial system based on serf labor. This "backwardness of the Polish economy," she claims, provided "wider opportunities for women's economic activity" (31) than in the Western countries, since the value of women's

work in the home, farm, and even small town was not diminished in Poland as it was elsewhere when economic production shifted to manufacture and factory. Bogucka interestingly hypothesizes that this continued high value on women's work "could be one of the explanations for the lack of mass-scale witch-hunting and witch persecution" (33) in Poland compared to neighboring countries.

In regards to religion, Bogucka claims more similarity between Poland and Western Europe in that religion offered women "the only such broad opportunities" (74) for activity outside home and family. In Poland, women were active in the work of the Reform, Catholic, Uniate, and Orthodox churches. She gives specific attention to Antitrinitarianism, arguing that the high level of education of women in these Protestant families, the group's different view of original sin, which did not blame the woman more than the man for succumbing to temptation, and especially its view of marriage as partnership "contributed to the . . . partnership model of marriage which began to dominate in Poland," particularly in the seventeenth century (75).

A chapter on women and culture surveys developments in the education of women, their increasing ability to travel, and their growing involvement in literary culture. Another rather short chapter on women and politics discusses the interest Polish noblewomen took in politics, particularly starting in the seventeenth century.

Bogucka's book's strength lies in its detail. She gives dozens of examples in each chapter of individual women, gleaned mostly from Polish archives, early modern primary texts, and secondary literature in Polish. The frustration for Western readers, however, is that these details often feel like lists that have little larger narrative woven from them; the chapters read not so much as arguments or developed narratives as compilations of details. Furthermore, the broad claims about trends and features of early modern life often presented at the start of paragraphs are supported usually by a few of these isolated and specific examples, which, though interesting in and of themselves, usually do not provide sufficient information for drawing such large or firm conclusions.

In the extensive bibliographical footnotes, titles of Polish sources are helpfully translated into English. Collectively considered, these titles

demonstrate the range of scholarly work already produced in Polish, though Bogucka acknowledges that scholarship in Poland on the situation of women in this time period is less extensive than similar research in Western Europe and the United States. The text is complemented by more than two dozen illustrations, mostly sixteenth century woodcuts and eighteenth century drawings relevant to each chapter.

In each chapter, it is Bogucka's attention to the Polish situation specifically that is of greatest interest. The sections that survey or summarize developments in Western Europe cover material that is generally already familiar to scholars of the early modern era. The introduction, for example, which should perhaps be labeled as a chapter in its own right, reviews briefly the controversies surrounding the writing of history, including the changes in approaches to historiography and in the concept of gender itself in the last thirty years that have resulted in much greater attention to women. Similarly, the first half of the chapter on "Great Debates about Women," covers mostly well-known material as it traces medieval and Renaissance writings on the nature and role of women, including those by Christine de Pisan, Erasmus, and Vives, and also various theological and medical treatises. The subsequent examples of Polish writing on these topics expand our knowledge by bringing new names into the discussion and illustrating the range of opinions about the nature of women to be as wide in Poland as in more familiar territories.

The last chapter, "Polish Women in Comparative Context," by far the least satisfying portion of the book, comprises only six paragraphs and makes only the broadest of generalizations about the status of early modern women in Poland compared to those of Hungary, Russia, and England. Here especially one wishes for a more developed argument in order to help us better understand the rich collection of information and examples that this book presents.

ELIZABETH DRIVER

***Women of God and Arms: Female Spirituality and Political Conflict, 1380–1600.* Nancy Bradley Warren. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. 264 pp. \$55.00 ISBN 0-8122-3892-3.**

Nancy Bradley Warren has written a fine interdisciplinary book that examines the close connections between the religious and political spheres inhabited by women in late medieval and early modern Europe. She seeks to challenge traditional disciplinary divides and argues that boundaries between the medieval and early modern eras are artificial and unhelpful, that studying specific regions in comparison to one another yields richer results than studying them in isolation, and that bringing together the methodologies of literary criticism and historical research offer a richer explanation of events than does embracing a single mode of analysis. Warren's goal is to examine her topic from many places and perspectives, and she is aided by her use of diverse sources, including monastic records, hagiographies, devotional works, political propaganda, military manuals, and literary texts.

Warren convincingly suggests that women and men in positions of political authority used religious practices and patronage to make some of their actions palatable to their people. The book begins with Colette of Corbie's foundation of the reformed branch of the Poor Clares in the early fifteenth century. The author defines Colette as a "political saint" (5) and details the support she received from John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, and popes on both sides of the Schism (Benedict VIII and the antipope Felix V). Benedictine monks and their allies, including the Parlement of Paris, continually stymied Colette's efforts to establish reformed houses. Warren is careful to point out that the Duke of Burgundy did not support Colette simply for political purposes, but she insists that his patronage of, and support for, her establishments afforded him significant symbolic and religious capital. She examines Colette's struggle by analyzing the "politics of gender." Pope Benedict granted Colette the authority to reform first and second order Franciscans, which meant that some male communities fell under her authority. Franciscan friars objected, since they did not want a woman to hold such a position of power.



Warren then considers the complex relations between Burgundy, England, and France after the ascension of Henry VII through the life of Margaret of York and her husband Charles the Bold, who was a blood relative of the Lancasters. According to Warren, Margaret was not a political pawn during her marriage; rather she crafted “political agency through pious practices, especially [in her] pursuit of diplomatic success by means of monastic foundation and reform” (53). Warren elegantly proves her thesis that in Margaret of York, political and religious agencies unite as she uses monastic patronage in England and France to forge connections between the religious communities within the rival states. Furthermore, Warren asserts that Margaret of York was not uniquely savvy in uniting religious and dynastic achievements, and she states that Anne d’Orléans accomplished the same ends as abbess of Fontevraud when she encouraged relationships between the English monarchy and her abbey.

Chapter Three offers a critique of efforts to remove female actors from the political arena by examining Joan of Arc, Christine de Pizan, and Margaret of Anjou. Warren explains that Margaret owned a copy of Pizan’s *Faits d’armes*, and Pizan wrote *Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc*, thereby establishing one element of the relationship between the women. Warren explores the meaning of the legacy of Joan of Arc and efforts to rid her of her authority through accusations of witchcraft. Other texts discredit Pizan by cloistering her, and discredit Margaret of Anjou by depicting her solely as a reproductive agent for the royal family. In each case texts challenge female authority. Warren then shifts her attention to Spain in the fourth chapter to suggest that Isabel of Castile manipulated traditional practices of piety, and written accounts of those practices, to make her military exploits and empire building more acceptable to her people. As part of that discussion, Warren returns to the subject of Joan of Arc and convincingly demonstrates how a fifteenth century text considers Joan of Arc a chivalric and spiritual model for Isabel.

In the fifth chapter, the author investigates Henrician England from the perspective of the visionary Elizabeth Barton, a Benedictine nun who became a critical actor opposing the king’s divorce, and whom the State accused of fraudulent visions and executed. Warren examines a critical moment when Henry VIII forged an alliance with France’s Francis I, in an

effort to thwart Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor and an opponent to Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Barton had a vision that undermined the king's efforts to propagandize his new alliance. Warren is curious as to why the king dedicated considerable resources to attacking Barton's vision when he allowed male Catholic activists to escape England. Warren tells her reader that Barton's vision "became publicly known" (137), but she does not explain the process by which a private vision became public knowledge, nor does she explain how public the vision became; it would be helpful if she could speculate as to the size of the informed public.

In Chapter Six, Warren examines Elizabethan England from the perspective of the Briggittine nuns of Syon in order to illuminate differences between Catholic and Protestant understandings of English identity. Warren states that under Elizabeth I "medieval religion became the displaced native Other of the official, 'colonizing' Protestant religio-political system" (139). She understands the dissolution of the monastery at Syon, and the nuns' activism on the Continent and in England, as part of a textual battle to "own" history. Warren makes the point that medieval religious practices persisted in England into the seventeenth century, an important one that others have made before. Warren's telling the story of Syon from the perspective of colonial theory was not particularly persuasive. The book ends with an exploration of the exercise of power by Isabel and Elizabeth in the New World in which Warren provocatively argues that they exemplify traditional medieval female spirituality.

Warren has written a thoughtful and wide-ranging book. She brings together sources traditionally mined separately by historians and literary critics, and effectively sets them in conversation with one another. Warren seeks to transcend borders in this work, but she forgets that most scholars work within borders, often regional and temporal. She expects her readers to come to her text with a solid background in the history of Spain, England, Flanders, and Burgundy, and offers insufficient background information for those not expert in these regions. Without an appreciation for the complexities of late medieval Burgundian politics, for example, it is hard for Warren's reader to appreciate the significant role played by Colette of Corbie. As it stands, the book moves between regions with something of an "it's chapter one so it must be Burgundy" feel. While Warren draws

upon texts that both historians and literary critics value and is innovative in bringing these sources together, she continues to consider the texts themselves within the framework of literary scholarship. Historians will ask different questions of these texts, and art historians will consider them from still other perspectives. Nonetheless, to see these documents set against one another is useful, and the project itself is ambitious.

Throughout this book, Warren discusses many sources; unfortunately, she does not tell her reader the distribution of these texts. How does she know that the sources she cites depict how populations understood female political leadership? Can she explain to her audience who the readers of the texts might have been and how many people they might have touched? These questions aside, Warren has written a persuasive and rich book about gender, religion, and politics that scholars in a wide range of fields will find exciting and thought-provoking.

SUSAN DINAN

*Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400–1700: Form and Persuasion.*  
Ed. Jane Couchman, and Ann Crabb. Aldershot and Burlington, VT:  
Ashgate Publishing, 2005. 336 pp. \$94.95. ISBN 0-7546-5107-X.

This impressive collection of essays makes a substantial contribution to the study of early modern letters. Growing out of a session at the 1994 *Attending to Early Modern Women* symposium at the University of Maryland, this volume demonstrates that the interdisciplinary strengths of that conference have created the foundation for a work that genuinely bridges the gap between multiple fields of study. Not only do the authors hail from a wide array of disciplines, including history, English, French, Spanish, humanities, art history, theology, philosophy, and women's studies, but their scholarship also spans six European countries and seven languages. Nine of the essays concern sixteenth-century women, with three chapters each devoted to the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Moreover, the women studied here represent different classes, from noblewomen to merchants to paupers, and adhere to different faiths, including

the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religions. The result is a volume that facilitates comparative analysis and encourages readers to draw connections across time and space.

For all the variety of its subject matter, one of the many strengths of this volume lies in its dual emphasis on form and context in each essay. Editors Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb have asked each author to investigate both language and historical background, and in doing so demonstrate that a concern with epistolary conventions and rhetorical positioning forms a common thread among these disparate women writers. Equally, many of the essays stress the material conditions of the letter, from its creation to its delivery and reception. The contributors consider the education of the letter-writers, the varying degrees of literacy, the ability to read and write various hands, the choice of language, and the method of delivery, including whether the letter was accompanied by oral messages, read privately, or circulated through manuscript or print publication. This concern with the material text is reflected in the twelve illustrations of manuscript documents and in the authors' provision of excerpts from original letters. Although they offer English translations of the letters, most of the contributors, recognizing the inaccessibility of many of these texts, provide detailed transcriptions of the manuscript material in its original language. Such thorough scholarship generates provocative insight into women's interactions with the epistolary genre, especially with regard to issues of collaboration between scribes and authors, the rhetorical manipulation of language and form, the complication of public versus private spaces, and the varying degrees of political influence women were able to wield through letters.

Couchman and Crabb's introduction situates the collection well within the growing field of study of early modern women's letter-writing. Following the work of scholars such as Natalie Zemon Davis and Sara Jayne Steen, who discuss the paradox of the letter as a crafted text that is rooted in everyday experience, they consider the importance of studying such texts as both literary creations and historical documents. Their essay also provides a valuable overview of different letter-writing models, as well as a *précis* of scholarly concerns regarding early modern letters.

The volume is divided into three sections: "Persuasion for Family and Personal Goals," "Public and Private Intersecting," and "Validated by God

and by Reason." Part I opens strongly as Ann Crabb situates the letters by the widow Alessandra Macigni Strozzi to her exiled sons within merchant letter-writing traditions and demonstrates that Alessandra constructed a rhetorical stance based on her maternal status, religious proverbs, and use of irony. Malcolm Richardson's detailed analysis of the rhetorical strategies of Elizabeth Stonor includes valuable information about fifteenth-century epistolary practices, but although he rightly cautions readers to avoid applying contemporary aesthetic standards to medieval letters, his criticism of scholars who search for women's voices in letters seems unfairly reductive. Erin Henriksen and Mark Zelcer's study of the seventeenth-century German Jewish author Glikl of Hameln considers her *Memoirs* as a record of lifelong reading and analyzes the importance of Jewish epistolary traditions to Glikl's text, especially since she conceived her memoirs as a letter to her children. The essays by Deborah Strott on Cornelia Collonello's letters to Michelangelo and by Christina Antenhofer on the correspondence of Barbara of Brandenburg and her son-in-law, Leonhard of Grz, each pay close attention to the relationship between a woman letter-writer and her scribes. Strott's essay examines the changes in tone and language that occur when Cornelia switches amanuenses. Antenhofer notes the active role that Barbara played in her letters' composition, emphasizing that whether or not the language of intimacy Barbara employed was genuine, she drew on the expected rhetoric of familial connections for persuasive effect. Deanna Shemek's contribution concludes the section by exploring letters that reflect Isabella D'Este's concern with protecting the property rights of women from all social classes.

James Daybell's provocative essay on the reading practices of sixteenth-century Englishwomen's letters opens the second section, "Public and Private Intersections." Building on his earlier work on women's ability to write different hands to consider their ability to read different hands, Daybell poses important questions about the subsequent implications for public and private reading. Jane Couchman's fine work on Louise de Coligny demonstrates women's ability to manipulate events through the epistolary genre, as she traces Louise's attempts to mediate relations between Henry IV and her family through letters. Barbara Stephenson analyzes the correspondence between Marguerite de Navarre and François

I to argue that Marguerite is not subservient to her brother but rather that she employs a rhetoric of service to emphasize his continued need of her. Similarly revisiting French history, Elizabeth McCartney contends that the letters of Catherine de Medicis reveal that officeholders during Catherine's regency supported her authority as regent for her son, despite previous conceptions to the contrary. Susan Broomhall's excellent work on the paupers of Tours illustrates that, although women asking for poor relief needed to conform to certain conventions, individual women tailored their narratives to reflect their specific situations and shaped their letters to elicit a sympathetic reaction.

Devoted to religious women's epistolary practices, Part III opens with Alison Weber's engaging study of Theresa of Ávila's letters to her prioresses. Weber not only demonstrates the wide-ranging influence a cloistered nun could possess but also provides a valuable context for Theresa's actions and beliefs, situating her ideas against a variety of discourses about religious life and reform. Elena Levy-Navarro considers the remarkable life and letters of Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, a Spanish noblewoman who served as a missionary in England during the reign of James I; in her letters Luisa regularly figured herself as a soldier for Christ. Peter Matheson provides a broad introduction to Argula von Grumbach, a sixteenth-century Protestant reformer who published letters challenging the scholars of the University of Ingolstadt to debate Lutheran ideas. Anne Larsen's work on the reception of Anna Maria van Schurman's letters arguing for women's education concludes the volume strongly as she traces the changes Guillaume Colletet made to van Schurman's work as he translated it from Latin into French.

In their introduction, Crabb and Couchman characterize women's letters as "a window on their worlds." Through this superb collection of essays, we gain a far better understanding of the complexities of the views one might see through those windows. Not only is the book an engaging read, but its thorough scholarship, broad-ranging subject matter, and provocative questions make it a substantial contribution to the field of early modern studies.

ERIN A. SADLACK

*Women Players in England, 1500–1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage.* Ed. Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2005. 348 pp. \$99.95/£50.00. ISBN: 0-754-60953-7.

A book dedicated to early modern women players recalls Virginia Woolf's lament for Judith Shakespeare. Yet Woolf also muses, as does Phyllis Rackin in this volume's afterword, that "I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman. It was a woman . . . who made the ballads and the folk-songs, crooning them to her children, beguiling her spinning with them, or the length of the winter's night." These women players find new life in this collection, which firmly grounds Woolf's guesses in archival evidence gathered from around Western Europe.

Although the volume's title suggests a conceptual focus beyond the all-male stage, the collection centers primarily on places such as county, region, city, and court. Exemplars of this geographic approach include James Stokes, Gweno Williams, and Alison Findlay, whose beautifully researched work about regional performance outside of London spotlights the broad array of women's theatrical participation. In his essay, "Evidence of Universal Cultural Suffrage in Medieval and Early Modern Lincolnshire," Stokes locates ample evidence of women performing in, sponsoring, producing, and watching performances, while shorter linked essays by Williams, Findlay, and Stephanie Hodgson-Wright—"Payments, Permits, and Punishments: Women Performers and the Politics of Place"—offer thoughtful explanations of both the consistencies and strange variances in the evidence of female performance across England.

Pieces by Natasha Korda and Bella Mirabella consider the marketplace's temporary stages, which featured performances by healers and hempstresses in the social dramas of buying and selling. Korda's essay, "Women's Work and the 'All-Male' Stage," focuses on the women-run second-hand clothing industry as a likely source of costumes for the public theaters—and suggests interesting economic associations between cross-dressing entrepreneurs like Moll Frith and the playhouses who tried to represent them. Mirabella's extrapolations in "Quacking



Delilahs': Female Mountebanks in Early Modern England and Italy" excavate the economics and explicit theatrics surrounding the lively tradition of itinerant healers. These two essays uncover professional communities that encouraged female participation in theatricality, a topic deserving greater study.

Looking beyond the Channel, the volume offers pictorial and textual evidence of the fame and respect surrounding actresses in the *commedia dell'arte* troupes. Essays by M.A. Katritsky ("Regarding the Actress in Commedia Imagery"), Julie D. Campbell ("Merry, nimble, stirring spirit[s]': Academic, Salon and Commedia dell'arte Influence on the *Inamorate* in *Love's Labour's Lost*"), Rachel Poulsen ("Women Performing Homoerotic Desire in English and Italian Comedy: *La Calandria*, *Gl'Ingannati* and *Twelfth Night*"), and Melinda Gough ("Courtly *Comédiantes*: Henrietta Maria and Amateur Women's Stage Plays in France and England")—all argue for the influence of Italian actresses such as Vittoria Pisimi and Isabelli Andreini upon both playwrights and players, particularly the amateur performers found in the French and English courts. This section of the volume provides an admirable overview of Italian *commedia*, and argues persuasively that the skills of the Italian actresses, particularly those playing the *inamorate*, led directly to an increase in and expansion of the number of substantial female roles. The "actress effect," as Poulsen terms this influence, possibly also influenced the development of roles such as Rosalind and Viola.

While most of the essays aver the influence of women upon a variety of performances and spaces, two pieces argue for the power of theater upon women. In "The Venetian Theater of Aletheia Talbot, Countess of Arundel," Peter Parolin considers how the Countess stage-managed her Venetian legal battles. Julie Crawford argues that Margaret Cavendish used her plays as personal petitions to the English court in "Pleaders, Attorneys, Petitioners and the like': Margaret Cavendish and the Dramatic Petition." Both essays suggest that early modern women's social skills were guided by watching or performing in court masques and other drama. Some focus on female audiences is critical to a volume such as this one, but the evidence that these two sophisticated women required stage time to polish their public roles remains tenuous.

The volume concludes with several strong essays that address performances of femininity. Jean Howard describes how playwrights sought to present and define women on stage in "Staging the Absent Women: The Theatrical Evocation of Elizabeth Tudor in Heywood's *If You Known Not Me, You Know Nobody, Part I*," her excellent piece on the theatrical representation of Princess Elizabeth as a woman, a royal, and as a Protestant. Studying early modern ballads allows Bruce Smith to tackle the slippery potential of the female voice in "Female Impersonation in Early Modern Ballads." Smith suggests that first-person ballads evoked female speakers even when they are sung by boys or circulated in print. Pamela Allen Brown's essay on female joke-tellers, entitled "Jesting Rights: Women Players in the Manuscript Jestbook of Sir Nicholas Le Strange," articulates how women played both entertainer and audience in family performances that then were disseminated beyond the domestic realm. Together, these three essays acknowledge that while there were no actresses on the stage in England, real women were inextricably involved with cultural production—on stage, in song, or in print.

That this volume cannot fully explore the topic at hand shows in part the coming of age of the study of early modern women. As the editors note, this particular volume lacks essays considering women in the theatrical traditions of Spain, Scotland, and Ireland. More troubling, however, is the volume's very broad definitional thesis that "a performance is any act of embodied display or representation intended for an audience" (5). This inclusiveness too frequently results in the attachment of superfluous theatrical metaphors to otherwise fascinating historical work about female economies, socio-religious guilds, royal biography, and law. Making every act performance and every woman a player threatens to empty both performance and player of significance. However, by gathering together so many varieties of female performances, the editors succeed in shattering any notion that acting was an all-male business in England.

This volume illuminates the "hidden tradition of female performance," and its call for new descriptions of performative traditions in England can be more easily answered based on these sixteen scholars' efforts (1). The interdisciplinary and international work of the essayists is valuable reading for theater historians, cultural historians, and specialists in literature,

music, and art. Cultural participation transcended gender in England, and the exclusion of women actors on the professional London stage appears to have been an anomaly. This is excellent news for those who have had little to offer students looking for women players in the early modern period. To questions like those posed by Noah's Wife in the York pageant, "Wher are nowe all oure kynne / And companye . . . ?"; feminist educators can now respond, "Everywhere."

MEG PEARSON

## Notes

1. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), eBooks@Adelaide, 2004, The University of Adelaide Library, U of Adelaide, <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/complete.html> (accessed 17 May 2006).

## Contributor Bios

Cristelle Baskins joined Tufts University in 1997. She published *Cassone Painting, Humanism and Gender in Early Modern Italy* (1998), co-edited *Medieval Marriage: Prudence, Passion, Policy* with Sherry Roush (2005), and is currently co-editing *Early Modern Allegory: Embodying Meaning* with Lisa Rosenthal (forthcoming 2007). She is also planning an exhibition on the “Triumph of Marriage” for the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (2008).

Richard Chapman is a graphic designer and prepress specialist for Document Services at the University of Maryland, College Park. He has designed the brochures for the “Attending to Early Modern Women” symposia since 1994.

Rev. John J. Conley, SJ, is professor of Philosophy at Fordham University and visiting professor of Philosophy at Loyola College in Maryland. He is the author of *The Suspicion of Virtue: Women Philosophers in Neoclassical France* (Cornell, 2002), and has translated and edited both *Jacqueline Pascal: A Rule for Children and Other Writings* (Chicago, 2003) and *Madame de Maintenon: Dialogues and Addresses* (Chicago, 2003).

Susan Dinan is the director of the University Honors College at William Paterson University and an associate professor of History. She is author of *Women and Poor Relief in Seventeenth Century France* (Ashgate, 2006) and editor of *Women and Religion in Old and New Worlds* (Routledge, 2001).

Elizabeth Driver has been teaching early modern literature in the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary, since 2003.

Jane Donawerth, professor of English and affiliate in Women's Studies at the University of Maryland, is author of *Shakespeare and the Sixteenth Century Study of Language*, co-translator of the EMW-prize-winning *Selected Letters, Orations, and Rhetorical Dialogues of Madeleine de Scudéry*, and co-editor of two volumes of essays on early modern women. She has held NEH and Wisconsin Humanities Center fellowships, is a University of Maryland Distinguished Scholar-Teacher, and also publishes on science fiction and on rhetorical theory by women.

Margaret Hannay, professor of English at Siena College, is the author of *Philip's Phoenix: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke*, and with Noel Kinnamon and Michael Brennan has edited Pembroke's works and the letters of Roberts Sidney to Barbara Gamage Sidney.

Susan Laningham is assistant professor of History at Tennessee Technological University. Her essay, "Making a Saint out of a Sibling," appears in *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World* (Ashgate, 2006). She is currently editing a translation of Maria Vela's autobiography for the University of Chicago Press.

Elizabeth Mazzola, professor of English at the City College of New York, is author of many essays on early modern women. She is currently working on a book about women's wealth and maternal legacies in the early modern period.

Karen Nelson is associate director of the Center for Renaissance & Baroque Studies at the University of Maryland. With Jane Donawerth, Linda Dove, and Mary Burke she co-edited the volume *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain*. She has published essays on Elizabeth Cary, Henrietta Maria, and Elizabeth of Bohemia. Her research interests include pastoral

literature, religious reform and counter-reform in England, and women's writing.

Rebecca Nykwist is currently a doctoral candidate at UC Irvine. Her dissertation is entitled "Women's Education and the Cultural Politics of Marriage in Sixteenth-Century Toledo."

Meg Pearson is assistant professor of English literature at the University of West Georgia. She earned her PhD from the University of Maryland in 2006 and is currently researching spectacle in early modern English drama.

Erin A. Sadlack is assistant professor of English at Marywood University in Scranton, Pennsylvania. In 2005, she earned her PhD at the University of Maryland, where her dissertation, "In Writing It May Be Spoke': The Politics of Women's Letter-Writing, 1377-1603," won the Alice L. Geyer Dissertation Prize.

Adele Seeff directs the Center for Renaissance & Baroque Studies at the University of Maryland, home to the "Attending to Early Modern Women" symposium series. She is co-editor of the Center's *Attending to Early Modern Women* volume series, has published on the history of Shakespeare production and reception, and is currently researching a book-length manuscript, *South Africa's Shakespeare*.

Merry Wiesner-Hanks is a professor of History and former director of the Center for Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She is the author or editor of 20 books, including, most recently, *Early Modern Europe, 1450-1789* (Cambridge, 2006).

Sarah F. Williams received a PhD in Historical Musicology from Northwestern University. Her work focuses on representations of early modern English witchcraft in sound and music. She is currently the Executive Director of the Women's History Museum and Educational Center and resides in San Diego, California.

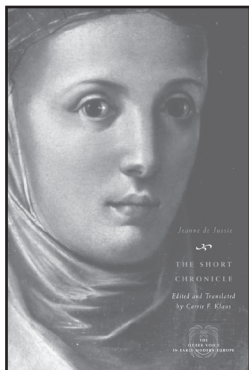
Diane Wolfthal is professor of Art History at Arizona State University. Her books include *Picturing Yiddish: Gender, Identity, and Memory in Illustrated Yiddish Books of Renaissance Italy*; *Images of Rape: The "Heroic" Tradition and its Alternatives*; and *Framing the Family: Narrative and Representation in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (co-edited with Rosalynn Voaden). She is currently writing *In and Out of the Marital Bed: Seeing Sex in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art*.



## Other Voices from Chicago

"*The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* goes far to establish a tradition of women authors and a literature for women at a time when the best evidence suggests that most women could neither read nor write."

—Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Quarterly*



### THE SHORT CHRONICLE

**Jeanne de Jussie**

*Edited and Translated by Carrie F. Klaus*

In her impassioned and engaging *Short Chronicle*, Jeanne de Jussie (1503–61) offers a singular account of the Reformation as she experienced it from within the walls of the Convent of Saint Clare in Geneva.

PAPER \$21.00

### CHURCH MOTHER

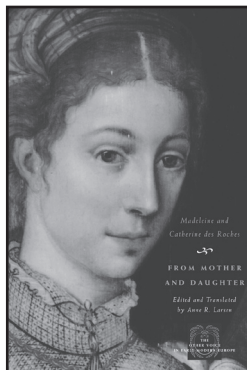
The Writings of a Protestant Reformer in Sixteenth-Century Germany

**Katharina Schütz Zell**

*Edited and Translated by Elsie McKee*

Katharina Schütz Zell (1498–1562) was an outspoken religious reformer in sixteenth-century Germany who campaigned for the right of clergy to marry and the responsibility of lay people—women as well as men—to proclaim the Gospel.

PAPER \$22.00



### FROM MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

Poems, Dialogues, and Letters of Les Dames des Roches

**Madeleine and Catherine des Roches**

*Edited and Translated by Anne R. Larsen*

Madeleine (1520–87) and Catherine (1542–87) des Roches were celebrated not only for their uncommonly strong mother-daughter bond but also for their bold assertion of poetic authority for women in the realm of *belles lettres*.

PAPER \$24.00

### ZAYDE

A Spanish Romance

**Marie-Madeleine Pioche de La Vergne, Comtesse de Lafayette**

*Edited and Translated by Nicholas D. Paige*

Standing at the critical juncture between traditional romance and early novelistic realism, *Zayde* is both the swan song of a literary tradition nearly two thousand years old and a harbinger of the modern psychological novel.

PAPER \$18.00



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS • [www.press.uchicago.edu](http://www.press.uchicago.edu)

Ashgate congratulates  
the Center for Renaissance  
& Baroque Studies on their  
inaugural issue of *Early Modern  
Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal*



**WOMEN AND GENDER  
IN THE EARLY MODERN WORLD**

Series Editors: Allyson Poska and Abby Zanger

In the past decade, the study of women and gender has offered some of the most vital and innovative challenges to scholarship on the early modern period. Ashgate's series of interdisciplinary and comparative studies, *Women and Gender in the Early Modern World*, takes up this challenge, reaching beyond geographical limitations to explore the experiences of early modern women and the nature of gender in Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa.

Submissions of single-author studies and edited collections will be considered.

Book proposals or letters of inquiry regarding this series should be sent to:

Erika Gaffney  
Publisher  
Ashgate Publishing Company  
101 Cherry Street, Suite 420  
Burlington, VT 05401-4405  
E-mail: egaffney@ashgate.com

Allyson Poska  
Department of History  
University of Mary Washington  
1301 College Avenue  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401-5358

Abby Zanger  
Department of History  
East Hall  
Tufts University  
Medford, MA 02155



Ashgate Publishing  
PO Box 2225  
Williston VT 05495-2225 USA  
Toll-free: 800-535-9544  
Email: orders@ashgate.com  
Web: www.ashgate.com

**ASHGATE**

**THE EARLY MODERN  
ENGLISHWOMAN  
1500-1750:**

**CONTEMPORARY  
EDITIONS**

General Editors:  
Betty S. Travitsky, City  
University of New York  
and Anne Lake Prescott,  
Barnard College

*Contemporary Editions* shares with the facsimile series a desire to recover neglected or unknown texts. It provides distinguished editions, in both modernized and old-spelling format, of writings not only by but also for and about early-modern women.

**THE EARLY MODERN  
ENGLISHWOMAN:  
A Facsimile Library  
of Essential Works**

Series Editors:  
Betty S. Travitsky,  
Anne Lake Prescott,  
and Patrick Cullen,  
Series Editor Emeritus

This series reproduces literature by all too often lost female voices of the early modern world in facsimile form. The scholarly introductions set the context for the facsimiles that follow and the bibliography gives guidance for further investigation.



\*essays • roundtable discussions • book reviews on women and gender during the years  
1400 to 1700

Interdisciplinary essays consider art history, cultural studies, history, history of philosophy, history of science, literature, music, politics, religion, theater, and any global region.

To subscribe to *EMWJ*, send the form below to

*Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal*  
Center for Renaissance & Baroque Studies  
0139 Taliaferro Hall  
University of Maryland  
College Park, MD 20742-7727  
USA

We cannot take credit cards or non-USA currency at this time.

Please make checks payable to **The University of Maryland Foundation, Inc.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 Regular Subscription USA

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20.00 Student Subscription USA

\_\_\_\_\_ \$35.00 Outside USA Subscription

\_\_\_\_\_ \$5.00 to subsidize a Student Subscription

\_\_\_\_\_ Tax-Exempt Gift to found and sustain EMWJ

\_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL

Email queries may be addressed to [emwjourn@umd.edu](mailto:emwjourn@umd.edu).

*EMWJ* is sponsored by the Center for Renaissance & Baroque Studies, the College of Arts and Humanities, the Department of Women's Studies, and the Department of English at the University of Maryland, the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Arizona State University, and the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women.

This journal is a project of the University of Maryland Foundation, Inc., and funds earned will be managed by the Foundation for the benefit of *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal*.