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Dissident Metaphysics in Renaissance Women’s Poetry
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Submitted for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature
University of Sussex
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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:..........................................................
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Dissident Metaphysics in Renaissance Women’s Poetry

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

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

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

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

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

(Margaret Cavendish)¹

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

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

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

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¹ Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *Youths Glory, and Deaths Banquet, in Playes* (London, 1662), pp. 121-80 (p. 158).
love by aligning the movement of lovers’ souls to a pair of mathematical ‘twin compasses’ (V, 5 26):

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

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

Such wilt thou be to mee, who must
Like th’other foot, obliquely runne;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begunne.

(V, 26-36)

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

But Dryden is wrong to assume that women of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could not read or comprehend metaphysical love poetry. One celebrated seventeenth-century reader of Donne’s verse is the writer, Katherine Philips (1632-1664). Donne’s above-quoted poem, ‘A Valediction: forbidding Mourning’, was widely circulated in manuscript and printed in 1633. Donne’s speaker in this love lyric is free to ‘rome’ and ‘runne’ (V, 30, 34), whilst the female beloved can only ‘hearke[n]’ (V, 31), listen without a voice, waiting for the male spirit to ‘com[e] home’ (V, 32). In a direct allusion to Donne, Philips writes back:

Friendship in Emblem,
or the Seale,
to my dearest Lucasia

[...]

The compasses that stand above

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

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

[...]

And like to them, so friends may own
Extension, not division:
Their points, like bodys, separate;
But head, like soules, knows no such fate.

(DIE, 8 21-24, 27-28, 49-52)

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

And as when one foot does stand fast,
And t’other circles seeks to cast,
The steddy part does regulate
And make the wanderer’s motion streight [.]

(DIE, 29-32)

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

8 Katherine Philips, ‘Friendship in Emblem, or the Seale, to my dearest Lucasia’, in The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: The Matchless Orinda, Volume I: The Poems, ed. by Patrick Thomas (Stump Cross: Stump Cross Books, 1990), pp. 106-108 (pp. 107, 108). This edition has been used throughout this study and has been abbreviated as The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I. From henceforth ‘Friendship in Emblem, or the Seale, to my dearest Lucasia’ has been abbreviated as FIE and is proceeded by the line reference. Patrick Thomas dates the composition of this poem to 1651-1652. See Patrick Thomas, ‘Introduction’, in The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume 1, pp.1-68 (p. 65).
According to the sixteenth-century French polymath, Symphorien Champier (1472-1539), there are ‘four basic principles’ in metaphysics (‘methaphisicum’): essence (‘essentia’); being (‘esse’); power (‘virtus’); and motion (‘actio’).\(^{10}\) Philips expands this metaphysical theory in ‘Friendship in Emblem, or the Seale, to my dearest Lucasia’, as she focuses specifically on the essence, being, power and motion of the female soul, body and mind:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And like to them [the compasses], so friends may own} \\
\text{Extension, not division:} \\
\text{Their points, like bodys, separate;} \\
\text{But head, like soules, knows no such fate.}
\end{align*}
\]

(FIE, 49-52)

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

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


\(^{11}\) Rosalind Smith argues that there are ‘partial’ and ‘strange’ feminine literary traditions in the Renaissance and my use of these adjectives here is indebted to her. Rosalind Smith, *Sonnets and the English Woman Writer, 1560-1621: The Politics of Absence* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 11.
nature of early modern female intertextuality, whilst challenging male Anglocentric definitions of the Renaissance ‘metaphysical tradition’.

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

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

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

\(^\text{13}\) Smith, *Sonnets and the English Woman Writer, 1560-1621*, p. 11.
\(^\text{15}\) Stevenson, ‘Still Kissing the Rod? Whither Next?’, p. 290.
Medicis were high-ranking statesmen and patrons of the arts. In 1487 Ficino became Canon of Florence Cathedral.\textsuperscript{17}

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

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

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

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{18} Parker, \textit{A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie}, p. 74.

\textsuperscript{19} Parker, \textit{A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie}, p. 73

\textsuperscript{20} Ficino, \textit{The Letters of Marsilio Ficino}, III, p. 30.

\textsuperscript{21} Ficino, \textit{The Letters of Marsilio Ficino}, III, p. 30.

\textsuperscript{22} Ficino, \textit{The Letters of Marsilio Ficino}, V, p. 75.

\textsuperscript{23} Ficino, \textit{The Letters of Marsilio Ficino}, III, Note 6, p. 149.

\textsuperscript{24} Ficino, \textit{The Letters of Marsilio Ficino}, VI, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{25} Sergius Kodera, \textit{Disreputable Bodies: Magic, Medicine and Gender in Renaissance Natural Philosophy} (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010), p. 48.
published in Latin in 1484. Ficino’s own Italian translation of this work was published posthumously in 1544. The first French translation of the De amore was carried out by Jean de La Haye and printed in Poitiers in 1545 and 1546. Another French translation was undertaken by Guy Le Levre de la Boderie and printed in Paris in 1578 and 1588.

Translating the complete works of Plato in the fifteenth century was a controversial and risky business. In 1455 the Byzantine Aristotelian, George of Trebizond, wrote: ‘O slothful minds [...] of the powerful friends of Plato, locked up most shamefully within the thighs of boys! [...] if only they [would] despise Plato and leave the buttocks alone’. George of Trebizond here seems to refer to the sanctioned homosexuality found in Plato’s dialogue on love, the Symposium (c. 384 BC). In the Symposium, Aristophanes declares that there are some men who are attracted to men and enjoy sleeping with men and being embraced by them. These are the best of their generation, both as boys and as young men, because they are naturally the bravest. Some people say that they are shameless, but that isn’t true. It’s not out of shamelessness that they do this but because they are bold, brave and masculine, and welcome the same qualities in others.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[...]

33 Ficino, *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love*, p. 163.
34 Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 163.
38 Ficino, *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love*, p. 120.
When anyone sees a man with his eyes, he creates an image of the man in his imagination [...]. Then he raises the eye of his intellect to look up to the Reason of Man which is present in the divine light. Then suddenly from the divine light a spark shines forth to his intellect and the true nature itself of Man is understood. [...] The whole fertility of the soul clearly consists in this: that in its inner being shines that eternal light of God.\(^{39}\)

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

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

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

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

\(^{39}\) Ficino, *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love*, pp. 132, 134-35.


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

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

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

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

45 Stanton J. Linden, ‘Introduction’, in The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton,
ed. by Stanton J. Linden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-23 (pp. 10-11). For the
dating of the Hermetica, see also Røstvig, ‘Andrew Marvell’s ‘The Garden’: A Hermetic Poem’, p. 67
and Margaret Healy, ‘Protean Bodies: Literature, Alchemy, Science and English Revolutions’, in
Renaissance Transformations: The Making of English Writing (1500-1650), ed. by Margaret Healy and
49 Hermes Trismegistus, Asclepius, cited by Marsilio Ficino, Three Books on Life, trans. by Carol V.
50 Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius, trans. by Copenhaver, pp. 69, 70,
71.
It is a passage such as this that arguably led to the seventeenth-century philosopher, physician and poet, Henry Vaughan, to remark that ‘Hermetists [...] observe nature in her workes [...] by the mediation of nature [...] they may produce and bring to light [...] rare effectual medicines’. For Vaughan and his fellow Hermeticists, ‘rare effectual medicines’ could be attained through the distillation, conservation and transmutation of telluric ‘herbs, trees, stones, and spices’. Hermes was thus regarded as the father of physical and spiritual alchemy. The seventeenth-century German alchemist, Martinus Rulandus, for instance, argued that ‘to obtain a knowledge of the mysteries of the art [of alchemy], it is necessary to be acquainted with all the works of Hermes’. Rulandus’s use of the Ficinian term ‘mysteries’ suggests that this ‘art’ of alchemy is physical and exoteric, spiritual and esoteric.

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

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

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

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

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

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55 Rulandus, A Lexicon of Alchemy or Alchemical Dictionary, p. 393.
ignored throughout the seventeenth century and philosophers such as Ralph Cudworth continued to insist that Hermes Trismegistus initiated the prophet, Moses, into ‘Hieroglyphick Learning and Metaphysical Theology’. As we shall see in Chapters 3 and 5 of this study, a pronounced strand of ‘Metaphysical’ philosophy in the Renaissance stemmed from spiritual Hermetic alchemy.

It was not only the *De amore* and the *Hermetica* that were circulating in Renaissance Europe, but Ficino’s influential *Epistolae* – his twelve books of letters first printed in Latin in Venice in 1495. An Italian translation was undertaken by F. Figliucci and printed as *Le Divine Lettere del Gran Marsilio Ficino* in Venice in 1546 and 1563. Another Latin edition was printed in Paris in 1641. The *Epistolae* offered a highly accessible form by which to digest Ficino’s syncretic blending of Christianity with pagan philosophies. Ficino tells us explicitly in the *Epistolae*: ‘I am imitating Jesus […] I am also following Pythagorus, Plato and […] Aristotle’.  

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

I burn with the fire of love [...] if ever we [Marsilio and Lorenzo] appear to grow cool, [...] our coolness burns with more heat than the passion of others [...]. Your [Lorenzo’s] bite is sweeter than sweetness. Oh how sweetly you bite, how sharply you kiss! You mingle a magic sweetness with the sharp, and a sharpness with the sweet, as does Nature in the most succulent tastes. [...] you ought to remember that if Lorenzo is not absent, neither is Marsilio, for Marsilio dwells in Lorenzo [...].

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60 ‘Translators’ Note’, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, VI, pp. xxiii-xxiv (p. xxiv).
63 Parker, *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosopher*, p. 74.
I love my own in you. I praise you in art, and I value art in you. I honour you in nature, and I marvel nature in you. I revere you through God, and I reverence God through you.\textsuperscript{64}

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

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

\textsuperscript{64}Ficino, \textit{The Letters of Marsilio Ficino}, I, pp. 69, 70, 71. 
\textsuperscript{67}Ficino, \textit{The Letters of Marsilio Ficino}, IV, p. 56; VI, 54. 
\textsuperscript{68}Parker, \textit{A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie}, p. 74. 
Samuel Parker’s critique of Ficinian metaphysics was far from being universally accepted. There were, in fact, many enthusiastic readers and disseminators of Ficino’s writings throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The seventeenth-century Cambridge Neoplatonist, Henry More, for instance, stated that he was rescued from a sense of ‘[d]issapointment’ in his studies by reading ‘the Platonick Writers, Marsilius Ficinus, Plotinus himself, [and] Mercurius [Hermes] Trismegistus’.

Ben Jonson owned a Latin copy of the *De amore*. The sixteenth-century philosopher-alchemist, John Dee, had a complete set of Ficino’s works. The sixteenth-century Scots humanist, Hector Boeke, owned a Latin copy of *De triplici vita* (Paris, c. 1496). These surviving records suggest that Ficino’s writings were being avidly read in the British Isles during the Renaissance. We only have to turn to Robert Burton’s popular treatise, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), to find evidence of Ficino’s impact on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century philosophical, literary, anatomical and erotic culture. *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is peppered with Burton’s own vernacular translations of Ficino’s *De amore* and the Epistolae:

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

[...]

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

[...]

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

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75 Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) ran into seven editions by 1652 (*STC*).
selfe, my deare bowels. And Phædrus again to Lycias, O my light, my ioy, my soule, my life.

[...]

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

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

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

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

[...]

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

\textsuperscript{76} Robert Burton, \textit{The Anatomy of Melancholy} (Oxford, 1621), pp. 496, 497, 562, 713.

\textsuperscript{77} Burton, \textit{The Anatomy of Melancholy}, p. 562.

\textsuperscript{78} Ficino, \textit{Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love}, p. 120.


\textsuperscript{80} Burton, \textit{The Anatomy of Melancholy}, pp. 497, 562.

\textsuperscript{81} Burton, \textit{The Anatomy of Melancholy}, p. 497.

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

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

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

Batter my heart, three person’d God; for, you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o’erthrow mee,’and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new. [...] Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you’enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.

(XIV,85 1-4, 12-14)

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

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

86 Healy, Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination, p. 2.
shines out, especially through the eyes [...]. It flies onward, through the air, and penetrating the eyes of an older man, pierces his soul, kindles his appetite, then leads the wounded soul and the kindled appetite to their healing and cooling [.] 88

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

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

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

88 Ficino, Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love, p. 126.
But is captiv’d, and proves weake or untrue,  
Yet dearely’I love you’, and would be lov’d faine,  
But am betroth’d unto your enemie,  
Divorce mee,’untie, or breake that knot againe,  
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I  
Except you’enthrall mee, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.  
(XIV, 5-14)

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

She [Jerusalem] wepeth continually [...] amo[n]g all her louers, she hathe none to comfort her: all her friends haue delt vnfaithfully with her, & are her enemies.  
[...]  
the Lord hathe afflicted her, for the multitude of her transgressions, & her children are gone into captiuitie before the enemie.  
[...]  
Ierusalém hathe grieuously sinned, therefore she is in derision: all 'y honoured her, despise her, because thei haue sene her filthines:  
[...]  
The enemie hathe stretched out his ha[n]d vpon all her pleasant things:  
[...]  
For the iniquitie of the daughter of my people is become greater then the sinne of Šodóm [.]'92

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

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

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

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

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

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

[...]

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

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

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

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

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94 Ficino, *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love*, p. 130.
95 Ficino, *Commentary*, pp. 130, 136.
97 Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 126.
98 Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 126.
the Angel, and from the Angel to God'. But Diotima is a sophist and magician, as she facilitates upwards movement to the divine and nurtures a transformative ‘healing and cooling’. But Diotima’s voice is manipulated to articulate male-male love and the ‘benefits’ this love ‘entails for men’. Ficino’s/Benci’s Diotimian prosopopoeia stems from Plato’s Symposium where Socrates declares: ‘She [Diotima] is […] the one who taught me the ways of Love. I’ll report what she said.’

The ‘Socratic ventriloquism’ of Diotima’s voice in the Symposium has been criticized by twentieth-century critics. Luce Irigaray, for instance, states that Diotima ‘herself does not speak. Socrates reports or recounts her views. He borrows her wisdom and power, declares her his initiator, his pedagogue, on matters on love, but she is not invited to teach or to eat’. Andrea Nye, on the other hand, contextualizes Diotima’s presence in the Symposium through Minoan culture. Nye argues that in ancient Greece women had an inferior status, but they still ‘retained some of their old’ Minoan ‘power in religion’. Women in ancient Greece continued to fill important ‘sacerdotal roles as priestesses of Athena or Demeter; they participated publicly in religious festivals and initiations; […] they performed as prophetesses at oracular shrines such as Delphi’.

Within this historical context, according to Nye, it is ‘neither surprising nor anomalous that Diotima would appear in an authoritative role as the teacher of Socrates’. As ‘prophetess/priestess’ she was part of a ‘religious order that had maintained its authority from the Minoan/Mycenaean times’. Diotima, for Nye, speaks out of a tradition of ‘female power and female thought’ that was still alive in Plato’s Greece.

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

99 Ficino, Commentary, p. 136.
100 Ficino, Commentary, p. 126.
101 Ficino, Commentary, p. 130.
This is how the female figure of Sapientia (the wisdom of God) is presented in Proverbs in the Bible:

Is not Wisdom calling?
Is not Understanding raising her voice?

[...]
she takes her stand;
[...]
she cries out,
‘I am calling to you, all people,
my words are addressed to all humanity.
[...]
All the words from my mouth are upright,
nothing false there, nothing crooked,
[...]

I, Wisdom, [...]
I am mistress of the art of thought.
[...]

From everlasting, I was firmly set,
from the beginning, before the earth came into being.’

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

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

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

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

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110 *The New Jerusalem Bible* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), The Proverbs 8. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 12, 23.
this tradition of sacrosanct female wisdom. Moreover, the aforementioned mosaic of Hermes in Siena Cathedral depicts the male prophet, Hermes, as being flanked by two female sibylline figures.\textsuperscript{114} These sibylline figures imply that Hermetic knowledge will be disseminated by women. Indeed, according to the renowned seventeenth-century alchemist, Michael Maier (1568-1622), the Hermetic succession passed to Maria the Hebrew, who was closest to Hermes [...] the whole secret, she [Maria] says, is in the knowledge of the Vessel of Hermes, because it is divine [...] He who understands this properly grasps the truest mind of Maria, and she will open up to him those secrets of chemistry which [...] all have wrapped in dark silence.\textsuperscript{115}

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

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

\textsuperscript{113} Ficino, \textit{The Letters of Marsilio Ficino}, I, pp. 186-87.
\textsuperscript{114} Santi, \textit{The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena}, pp. 19, 20.
\textsuperscript{116} According to Raphael Patai, the chief source for Maria is the ancient Greek alchemical author, Zosimos, who lived in Hellenistic Egypt at about 300 CE. Patai argues that Maria must have lived at least two generations before Zosimos himself. See Patai, \textit{The Jewish Alchemists}, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{117} Frances A. Yates, \textit{The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century} (London: Routledge, 1988, 1\textsuperscript{st} pub. 1947), p. 76.
\textsuperscript{119} Simon du Bois’s translation of Ficino’s \textit{De amore} was printed after 1540. Patricia F. Cholakian and Rouben C. Cholakian, \textit{Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 204.
\textsuperscript{120} Patricia F. Cholakian and Rouben C. Cholakian, \textit{Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance}, pp. 204-205.
and read and disseminated Ficino’s writings in their original Latin. We only have to turn to Marguerite of Navarre’s manuscript poem, *Les Prisons* (c. 1549), to find a mystical blazon of Ficino’s metaphysical medical practice:

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

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

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

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

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

Likewise, Marguerite’s praise for the sacred doctor, the ‘minister of will divine’, recalls Ficino’s *Epistolae*:125

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

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

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

129 We have no record about the performers and the scenery for *La Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*. However, the sixteenth-century courtier and memorialist, Pierre de Bourdeilles, abbot of Brantôme, records that Marguerite of Navarre often had her comedies and morality plays ‘performed by the ladies of the court’. Pierre de Bourdeilles, abbot of Brantôme, *Recueil des dames*, cited in Patricia F. Cholakian and Rouben C. Cholakian, *Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance*, p. 180.
bergère). Here Marguerite evokes Luce Irigaray’s theory of ‘parler femme’ (‘womanspeak’). Irigaray argues that ‘womanspeak’ emerges ‘spontaneously when women communicate together’.

Marguerite (in the *Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*) uses a ‘parler femme’ to challenge the male homosocial world of Plato’s *Symposium*. The *Symposium* is made up of a dialogue between men—philosophers, soldiers, physicians and satirists. Plato’s Apollodorus tells us, ‘whenever I discuss philosophy or listen to others doing so, I enjoy it enormously’.

Apollodorus speaks here of discussions between men, which exclude women—no women are invited to speak at Plato’s banquet. In contrast to the *Symposium*’s male philosophical world, Marguerite in the *Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan* assembles a metaphysical ‘parler femme’ that contemplates the interconnections between soul and body and the transcendental consequences this has for women and men. Marguerite’s Diotimean Wise Woman (la Sage) proclaims:

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

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

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

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

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

Marguerite of Navarre’s inclusive philosophy of love was made available to a wide readership through her published poem, Le miroir de l’âme pêcheresse (The Mirror of the Sinful Soul, 1531). Le miroir de l’âme pêcheresse was republished eleven times in Marguerite’s lifetime, and in 1539 a Geneva publisher produced an edition of two thousand copies, an astounding print-run for the times. Le miroir de l’âme pêcheresse was translated into English by Elizabeth Tudor (1533-1603) in 1544 and printed in 1548. In Le miroir de l’âme pêcheresse, Marguerite of Navarre explicitly uses a female contemplative voice to access the divine:

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

\(^{132}\) Marguerite de Navarre, La Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan, pp. 368-69, lines 1010-18.  
\(^{133}\) Ficino, The Letters of Marsilio Ficino, VI, p. 9.  
\(^{134}\) Ficino, The Letters of Marsilio Ficino, VI, p. 3.  
\(^{135}\) Patricia F. Cholakian and Rouben C. Cholakian, Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance, p. 163.  
\(^{136}\) Elizabeth Tudor’s manuscript translation of Le miroir de l’âme pêcheresse was printed in 1548, 1568, 1582 and 1590. See Anne Lake Prescott, ‘Introductory Note’, in The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Series I. Printed Writings, 1500-1640: Part 2, Vol. 5. Elizabeth
Pere, pere, las! que puis je penser?
Osera bien mon esperit s’avancer
De vous nomme Pere?
[...]
Mais, Monseigneur, si vous estes mon pere,
Puis je penser que je suis vostre mere?
Vous engendrer? vous par qui je suis faicte?

[Father, O Father, what must I think?
Will my spirit be so bold
as to name you father?
[...]
But, Lord, if you are my father,
may I think of myself as your mother,
give birth to you, you by whom I am created?]

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

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

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

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

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

—and Mary Tudor, selected by Anne Lake Prescott, general eds. Betty S. Travitsky and Patrick Cullen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. ix-xiii (pp. x-xi).
139 Ficino, The Letters of Marsilio Ficino, I, p. 189.
It is Marguerite of Navarre’s distinctively female meditative practice that Elizabeth Tudor chooses to stress in her translation of *Le miroir de l’âme pêcheresse*. Elizabeth Tudor’s translation of *Le miroir de l’âme pêcheresse* was a New Year’s gift for her step-mother, Katherine Parr (1512-1548). Elizabeth decorates the hand-sewn cover of the manuscript copy of her translation with Katherine Parr’s initials. On each corner of this hand-sewn cover, Elizabeth embroiders four pansies. As Lisa Klein observes, the pansies on this book cover are a pun on the French word ‘pensee’, meaning ‘thought’ or ‘idea’. Moreover, Jacques Derrida notes that ‘la pensée’ is a feminine noun. Elizabeth’s pun on pansy/‘pensee’ harks back to Marguerite of Navarre’s repetition of ‘penser’ in *Le miroir de l’âme pêcheresse* and thus draws attention to a specifically female act of contemplation, meditation and prayer.

The action or practice of profound spiritual reflection or mental contemplation is what the seminal critic, Louis Martz, labels as the ‘poetry of meditation’. According to Martz, the meditative poem creates an ‘interior drama of the mind’, whereby the mind grasps a situation, ‘evoked by [...] memory’, brings it forward to ‘consciousness’ and concludes with ‘illumination’ where the speaker’s self has ‘found an answer to its conflicts’. Martz posits that Donne is the ‘master and father’ of a new kind of English meditative poetry and is closely followed by his contemporaries, Robert Southwell, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan and Richard Crashaw. Martz states that meditative poetry is concerned with ‘inward man’ and his ‘intellectual faculties’. He ends by citing T. S. Eliot, who praises the way ‘our [literary] fathers and grandfathers expressed themselves’.

Chapter 2 of this study argues that the metaphysical meditative tradition is not purely a male tradition, but a male *and* female tradition. I argue in Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis that Renaissance women writers such as Marie Maitland, Elizabeth

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

*Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse* embodies Marguerite of Navarre’s reformist and tolerant attitude towards religion. As Carol Thysell notes, Marguerite of Navarre remained a Catholic throughout her life, but she continued to offer refuge to many reformers, including John Calvin, at her court in Nérac during times of persecution.149

The 1533 edition of *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse* includes a French translation of the biblical Psalm 6 by Marguerite’s Lutheran protégée, Clément Marot. As Rouben Cholakian observes, the French Catholic church fathers considered vernacular translations of biblical texts as a ‘serious threat to their authority’ and thus regarded the 1533 edition of *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse* as a dissident text that queried the hegemonic religious order.150 What is more, in *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse*, Marguerite of Navarre foregrounds an overtly amorous female dialogue with Christ and God that is not interrupted by any male priest or intercessor:

Car son amour est de si bonne sorte,  
Que sans l’aymer il m’ayme, et est l’aymant  
Par son amour (sans l’aymer) douplement.  
Mon amour n’est pour l’aymer, mais la sienne  
En moy ame, que je sens comme mienne.  
Il s’ayme donc en moy et par m’aymer,  
Il faict mon cœuer par amour enflammer.  
Par ceste amour il se faict aymer tant,  
Que son effect (non moy) le rend content.  
Se contentant, toujours il multiplie  
Trop plus d’amour, qu’amour ne luy supplie.  
O vray aymant, de charité la source,  
Et du tresor divin la seule bourse,  
Doib je penser, ny oseroie je dire  
Que c’est de vous? le puis je bien escripre?  
Vostre bonté, vostre amour se poeut elle  
Bien comprendre de personne mortelle?  
Et s’il vous plaist ung petit l’imprimer  
Dedans ung cœuer, le poeut il exprimer?  
Certes, nenny! car la capacitée  
N’est pour tenir la grande immensité [.]

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

My love does not love him, but his love in me loves him, which I feel as my own.
He loves himself in me and by loving me, he fills my heart with love.
In such loving he makes himself to be loved that its consequence (not mine) brings him joy.
Making himself happy, he endlessly multiplies greater love than love can give.
True lover, source of all devotion,
the unique font of heavenly riches,
may I believe, dare I say
that it comes from you? Am I able to write it?
Your munificence and love,
can a human heart understand them?
And whatever small amount you implant
in a heart, can the heart express it?
Surely not. For it is not large enough
to contain your vastness.[151]

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

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

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

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

and the English Imagination, ed. by Baldwin and Hutton, pp. 163-77 (p. 163).
Catholic church fathers found to be dangerously dissident. Marguerite’s focus on a transcendental religion of ‘amour’ is reminiscent of Ficino’s Platonic philosophy of love. In the Epistolae, Ficino claims that he witnesses ‘nothing [...] except arms made for [...] destruction [...] the clash of weapons, [...] the thundering of canon’. Ficino here is referring to the ongoing war between Florence, Pope Sixtus IV and King Ferdinand of Naples (Ferrante), which began in 1478. In order to surpass this external conflict, Ficino searches for a ‘concord within’ – a philosophy of love that challenges secular factionalism:

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

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

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

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

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

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156 Ficino, The Letters of Marsilio Ficino, V, p. 4.
159 Ficino, The Letters of Marsilio Ficino, VI, p. 3.
opening herself to men. In *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse*, however, Marguerite’s speaker adopts the voice of the bride from the biblical Song of Songs to access the capacious ‘vastness’ of Christ. Marguerite thus creates an active (rather than passive) female sensual-spiritual agency:

> Or doncques, puis que nous n’avons qu’ung pere
> Je ne craindray de vous nommer mon frere.
> Vous l’avez dit en lieu bien au ternique
> Par Salomon en vostre doulyx cantique,
> Disant: Ma soeur tu as navré mon cueur,
> Tu as navré mon cueur par la douceur
> D’ung de tes yeulx, et d’ung de tes cheveulx.
> Las! mon frere, aultre bien je ne veulx
> Que vous navrant navrée me sentir;
> Par vostre amour bien m’y veulx consentir.

> Pareillement espouse me clamez,
> En ce lieu là monstrant que vous m’aymez;
> Et m’appellez par vraye amour jalouse:
> Ma colombe, lieve toy mon espouse.
> Parquoy diray par amoureuse foy
> Qu’à vous je suis, et vous estes à moy.
> Vous me nommez amye, espouse, et belle.
> Si je le suis, vous m’avez faicte telle.
> Las! vous plaist il telz noms me departir?
> Ilz sont dignes de faire ung cueur partir,
> Mourir, brusler, par amour importable,
> Pensant l’honneur trop plus que raisonnable.

> [Therefore, since we have but one father,
> I do not hesitate to call you [Christ] brother.
> You have stated as much in a reliable source
> which is your sweet Song of Solomon,
> saying: Dear Sister, you have broken my heart.
> By the sweetness in but one of your eyes,
> in but one hair, you have smitten me to the quick.
> Dear brother, I seek no other joy
> than that in breaking your heart, I should break my own.
> Because of your love, I gladly submit.
>
> In the same manner you call me wife,
> proving thus your affection for me.
> And because of true love, you call me jealous.
> My dove and wife, arise.
> And in so loving faith, I say
> I am yours, and you mine.
> You call me friend, wife, and beautiful one.
> If I am all these, it is because you made me so.
> Does it please you to give me such names?

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

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

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Vous me nommez amye, espouse, et belle.
Si je le suis, vous m’avez faicte telle.
Las! vous plaist il telz noms me departir?
Ilz sont dignes de faire ung cueur partir,
Mourir, brusler, par amour importable,
Pensant l’honneur trop plus que raisonnable.
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[You call me friend, wife, and beautiful one. 
If I am all these, it is because you made me so. 
Does it please you to give me such names? 
They are enough to make a heart flee, 
burn, and expire from intolerable longing, 
thinking the honor beyond reason.\[163\]

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

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Mais mon ame traictez (si dire l’ouze) 
Comme mere, fille, soeur, et espouse.
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[But, if I may say so, you [God] treat my soul 
like that of a mother, daughter, sister, and wife.]\[166\]

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

\[162\] Marguerite de Navarre, _Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse,_ pp. 92-93, lines 325-46.
\[163\] Marguerite de Navarre, _Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse,_ pp. 92-93, lines 341-46.
\[164\] _De Imitatione Christi_, Books I-III trans. by William Atkynson, Book IV trans. by Margaret Beaufort, 
\[165\] Donne, ‘Holy Sonnet XVIII’, p. 15, line 12.
\[166\] Marguerite de Navarre, _Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse,_ pp. 84-85, lines 171-72.
which few women in this period had’.

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

Marguerite of Navarre’s feminization of Ficinian metaphysics was continued not only by royal women (such as Elizabeth Tudor), but other Renaissance women who existed on the peripheries of court culture. This is exhibited by the sixteenth-century Italian Protestant writer, Olympia Morata (1526-1555). The principal patron of Morata’s youth was Renée de France, Duchess of Ferrara (1510-1575). Renée de France had been a protégée of Marguerite of Navarre and travelled with Marguerite to Nérac in 1527. In Renée’s own royal court, Morata wrote dialogues in Greek and Latin, in imitation of Plato. Unfortunately, the manuscripts of Morata’s Platonic dialogues were lost in the siege of Schweinfurt (1553). However, we only have to turn to Morata’s mid-sixteenth-century published letters and dialogues with fellow female humanist, Lavinia della Rovere Orsini (1521-1601), to find Ficino’s influence at work:

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

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172 Parker, ‘Introduction’, p. 16.
laden to Him to give them rest. [...] He Himself will strengthen you and give you, as He promised, the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{173}

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

However, for a woman to appropriate a Ficinian sensual-spiritual agency could lead to scandalous accusations of sexual dissidence. This is demonstrated by Marguerite of Navarre’s great-granddaughter, Henrietta Maria (1609-1669), who became queen consort to Charles I in 1625. According to Sears Jayne, Henrietta Maria circulated Guy Le Levre de la Boderie’s French translation of the \textit{De amore} in her court in England.\textsuperscript{174}

Indeed, Henrietta Maria’s public use of Ficino is evinced by the court masques in which she performed. For instance, Henrietta Maria plays the role of Indamora in William D’Avenant’s masque, \textit{The Temple of Love} (1635). Indamora raises

\begin{quote}
strange doctrines, and new sects of

Love:
Which must not woo or court the person, but
The mind; and practice \textit{generation not}
Of bodies but of souls.\textsuperscript{175}
\end{quote}

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

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{174} Jayne, ‘Introduction’, p. 22.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{176} Ficino, \textit{Commentary}, p. 135.}
\end{footnotes}
the centre for the Arch-Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, which the queen led.\textsuperscript{177} In her chapel at Somerset House, Henrietta Maria exercised forms of prayer ‘dissident from the common’ practices of the Church of England.\textsuperscript{178} Indamora’s/Henrietta Maria’s ‘strange doctrines, and new sects of / Love’ are infused with dissident Catholic undertones. ‘Sect’ denotes a religious or philosophical order (\textit{OED}) and ‘strange’ pertains to persons, languages and customs belonging to foreign territories (\textit{OED}). ‘Strange’, in this context, has the additional connotation of being ‘exceptionally great’ (\textit{OED}). Indamora’s ‘strange doctrines [...] of / Love’ thus presumably refers to Henrietta Maria’s foreign and seductive Catholicism. Henrietta Maria thus uses her role as a Diotimean Indamora to publicly affirm her religio-political power.

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

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

\textsuperscript{178} Collins, \textit{Ephhata to F. T.}, p. 283.

\textsuperscript{179} William Prynne, \textit{Histrio-mastix} (London, 1633), title-page.

\textsuperscript{180} Prynne, \textit{Histrio-mastix}, p. 215.

\textsuperscript{181} Prynne, \textit{Histrio-mastix}, p. 215.

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

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

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

But Marie Maitland is a sixteenth-century Scottish poet. What relevance does sixteenth-century Scotland have to Renaissance conceptions of the ‘metaphysical’? As already mentioned, there is archival evidence to suggest that Ficino’s metaphysical writings were circulating in sixteenth-century Scotland. The Scots humanist, Hector Boece (c. 1465-1536), owned and circulated a Latin copy of Ficino’s De triplici vita (Paris, c. 1496). Boece’s copy of De triplici vita was passed on to (and annotated by) the Scots mediciner, Robert Gray (Second mediciner at King’s College, Aberdeen c. 184 Sir Philip Sidney, An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy, ed. by Geoffrey Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002, 1st pub. 1965), p. 84. Sidney’s An Apology for Poetry was first published in 1595, but composed in circa 1579-1580. See R. W. Maslen, ‘Introduction’, in Sidney, An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy, ed. by Shepherd, pp. 1-78 (p. 2).
185 Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, p. 86.
186 Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, p. 85.
191 Durkan and Ross, Early Scottish Libraries, p. 105.
1522-1550). Moreover, prior to Boece’s acquirement of the *De triplici vita*, extant records indicate that the fifteenth-century Scots scholar-cleric, William Turnbull (c.1400-1454), travelled to Pavia and mixed with Ficino, before returning to the Bishopric of Glasgow in 1447. Furthermore, church library inventories show that the Scotsman, William Chisholm (1525/6-1593), Bishop of Dunblane and Vaison, owned a copy of Ficino’s *De Religione Christiana* (Paris, 1559). The examples of Turnbull, Boece, Gray and Chisholm demonstrate that Ficinian metaphysical texts and ideologies were trickling through to Scotland from France and Italy as early as the fifteenth century. We only have to consult the 1569 and 1578 inventory of books that Mary, Queen of Scots held at Holyrood Palace and Edinburgh Castle to find further evidence of Scottish accessibility to metaphysical Hermetic and Platonic writings. Mary, Queen of Scots, had at Edinburgh Castle a printed edition of Marguerite of Navarre’s writings, *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses* (1547). Mary also owned a Greek quarto edition of the ‘Mercurii Trismegisti Poemander’ (Paris, 1554). She also possessed the complete works of Plato ‘with a volume of commentaries besides’. It is likely that Mary brought these texts over to Scotland from France on her return to the Scottish court in 1561. Mary’s collection of books held in Scotland was inherited by James VI and I. As Theo van Heijnsbergen and Nicola Royan point out, the inventories of Mary’s and James’s royal libraries indicate that a number of books were ‘borrowit’ or given away and this suggests that book circulation in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scotland was common.

196 Sharman, *The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots*, pp. 175-77; *Inventaires de la Royne Descosse Douairiere de France*, pp. cii-ciii.
197 *Inventaires de la Royne Descosse Douairiere de France*, p. cii; Sharman, *The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots*, p. 171. See also John Durkan, ‘The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots’, *The Innes Review*, 83 (1987), 71-104 (p. 82).
198 Durkan, ‘The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots’, p. 93.
One Lowland Scottish literary family connected to Mary, Queen of Scots were the Maitlands of Lethington. From the Maitland family coterie two verse miscellanies survive – the Maitland Folio (c. 1570-1585) and the Maitland Quarto (c. 1586). Both books of poems contain verse by Sir Richard Maitland (1496-1586), a Scottish writer, keeper of the Great Seal of Scotland, courtier to the Scottish King James V, and supporter of Mary, Queen of Scots. Sir Richard was educated at St Andrews (c. 1510) and studied law at Paris (c. 1514). In 1559 Sir Richard was made commissioner to Elizabeth I, his role to settle disputes in the Scottish and English borders. Sir Richard’s son, William Maitland (1525x30-1573), acted as Secretary of State to Mary Stewart and married one of Mary’s ladies-in-waiting, Mary Fleming. William Maitland formed a close bond with Elizabeth I’s Secretary of State, William Cecil, and stayed at Cecil’s London house during diplomatic missions. According to John Guy, the friendship between William Maitland and Cecil was based partly on their ‘shared religious beliefs’, and partly on their ‘mutual admiration for classical literature’. William Maitland was known in England as ‘the Scottish Cecil’. Sir Richard’s other son, John Maitland (1543-1595), became James VI’s chief minister in 1587. As Peter Herman notes, John Maitland was a contributor to Alexander Neville’s published volume of Latin verse commemorating the death of Sir Philip Sidney, Academiae Cantabrigiensis Lachrymae Tumulo Nobilissimi Equitis, D. Philippi Sidneii Sacratæ (1587). Sir Richard also had four daughters, two of whom seem to be involved in the creation of the Maitland verse miscellanies: Marie Maitland and Helyne (Helen) Maitland. The Maitland Folio comprises of poems by a variety of writers including Sir Richard Maitland, William Dunbar (1460?-1513x30) and Alexander Arbuthnot (1538-1583). The Maitland Quarto seems to be a companion codex that contains poems by Sir Richard's family.

200 Both these manuscripts are held in the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge. Maitland Folio, MS 2553; Maitland Quarto, MS 1408.
202 Spiller, ‘Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586), courtier and writer’, ODNB.
203 Spiller, ‘Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586), courtier and writer’, ODNB.
204 Mark Loughlin, ‘Maitland, William, of Lethington (1525x30-1573), courtier and diplomat’, ODNB [accessed 22 May 2009].
205 John Guy, My Heart is My Own: The Life of Mary Queen of Scots (London: Fourth Estate, 2004), p. 128.
206 Guy, My Heart is My Own. p. 128.
207 Guy, My Heart is My Own. p. 128.
Richard, perhaps copied from the Folio. The Quarto also contains numerous poems that do not appear in the Folio, including works by, among others, Alexander Montgomerie (early 1550s-1598) and ‘Iacobus Rex’. Additionally, the Quarto consists of a number of anonymous female-voiced lyrics that do not appear in the Folio. On the title-page of the Quarto, Marie Maitland’s name is transcribed twice – once in Italian majuscule and once in Roman letter. Marie’s name is proceeded by the date ‘1586’ – the year of Sir Richard’s death and Marie’s marriage. This is how Marie Maitland is described in one of the anonymous lyrics from the Quarto:

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

And now of lait that lustie ladie rair
Olimpia o lampe of latine land
[...]
A thrid o Maistres Marie maik I pray
[...]
for famous is your fleing fame
[...]

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

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

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

210 MS 1408, title-page.
211 The Maitland Quarto Manuscript: Containing Poems by Sir Richard Maitland, Arbuthnot, and Others, ed. by W. A. Craigie (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1920). This edition uses the spelling of the original manuscript, MS 1408. All alterations in spelling from the original manuscript are indicated by square brackets. I have modernised the long ‘s’ and the ‘z’ which represents the phoneme ‘y’. This edition has been used throughout this study and is abbreviated as MQ. From henceforth all references to the Maitland Quarto will appear in the main text, proceeded by the poem number in roman numerals and the line reference.
Marguerite of Navarre and Elizabeth I. Marie Maitland in the lyric, ‘To your self’, is compared to the ancient Greek poet, Sappho (‘sapho saige for saphic songe so sueit’ [MQ, LXXXV, 1]), and the sixteenth-century Italian scholar and writer, Olympia Morata (‘Olimpia o lampe of latine land’ [MQ, LXXXV, 6]). In this way, the speaker in ‘To your self’ points to a polyglottal female Respublica litterarum to which Marie Maitland belongs. As we shall see in Chapters 1 and 2 of this study, further evidence survives from the Maitland Quarto to suggest that Marie Maitland was an influential female Ficinian metaphysical poet.

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

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Chapter 1

‘Thair is mair constancie in o[u]r sex / Then euer ama[n]g men hes bein’:

The Metaphysics of Authorship in the Maitland Quarto Manuscript (c. 1586)

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

(Katherine Parr)

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

(Mary, Queen of Scots)

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

(Michel Foucault)

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

1 Anon., ‘Poem XLIX’, MQ, lines 67-68.
how two contrasting forms of ‘authorship’ develop in this Quarto: the patriarchal, dominant voice of Sir Richard Maitland (1496-1586), and a dissident, female voice associated with Sir Richard’s daughter, Marie Maitland (d. 1596). I analyse Marie’s presence in the Quarto in three ways: her physical presence as scribe and ‘maker’; her ‘metaphysical’ presence as vision and muse; and finally her presence as voice.

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

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

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

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10 Petrarch’s Ascent of Mount Ventoux, pp. 95, 99, 105, 107.
11 Petrarch’s Ascent of Mount Ventoux, p. 105.
states: ‘Know thyself [...] return unto thyself, for thus shalt thou return unto greatness’. Building on Petrarch’s claim, Ficino posits that self-knowledge can lead to a form of self-authority or divine ‘greatness’.

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

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

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

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13 Sidney’s An Apology for Poetry was first published in 1595, but composed in circa 1579-1580. See Maslen, ‘Introduction’, in Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, ed. by Shepherd, pp. 1-78 (p. 2).
14 Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, ed. by Shepherd, p. 84.
15 Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, p. 86.
16 Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, p. 85.
the ‘metaphysics of presence’: writing that engages with spoken words, individual ‘mental experience’, ‘voice’, hearing, ‘sound’ and breath.22

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

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

24 Katherine Parr, ‘1544 to Princess Mary’, p. 78.
25 Even before Katherine Parr has seen a copy of Mary Tudor’s translation of Erasmus, she states that ‘all the world knows that you [Mary Tudor] have toiled and laboured much in this business [of writing/ translating]’. However, Parr goes on to suggest that for the sake of ‘posterity’ Mary Tudor must print her translation ‘under the auspices of your [Mary’s] own name’. Parr, ‘1544 to Princess Mary’, p. 78. Mary Tudor’s translation of Erasmus’s paraphrase on St John was completed by Francis Mallett and published in 1548. The sixteenth-century editor of this translation, Nicholas Udall, refers in his preface to ‘Ladye Maries [...] greate studie, peine and trauayll in translatyng this paraphrase’. Desiderius Erasmus, The first tome or volume of the Paraphrase of Erasmus vpon the Newe Testamente, ed. by Nicholas Udall (London, 1548), sig. 2r.
27 Derrida, Of Grammatology, pp. 7, 10, 22.
ascribed to the anti-Marian propagandist, George Buchanan. This text contains letters and sonnets that are said ‘to be written with the Scottishe Quenis awne hand’.  

The *Detectiovn* attacks Mary for her *auctoritas*:

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

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

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

> I'ay mis la main au papier pour escrire  
> D'vn different que ie voulu transcrire.  
> Ie ne scay pas quel sera vostre aduis  
> Mais ie scay bien qui mieux aymer scaura [.].

[...]

I put my hand to the paper to write,  
Of ane differens that I haue willit copye.  
I can not tell what shalbe your iugement,  
But I know well quho can best loue [.].\(^{31}\)

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

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29 *Detectiovn*, sig. Miiv.  
30 Mary declined to grant her husband, Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, the crown matrimonial in parliament (Julian Goodare, ‘Mary [Mary Stewart] (1542-1587), queen of Scots’, *ODNB* [accessed 4 March 2011]). Yet throughout the *Detectiovn* Darnley is referred to as the ‘king’ (see for instance, *Detectiovn*, sig. Diuir).  
31 *Detectiovn*, sigs Rijv, Sir.  
32 Dunnigan here cites the historian, Louise Fradenburg, who argues that there is a ‘long-standing construction of powerful emotion as [being] a threat to rule, whether self-mastery or public governance’. Dunnigan, *Eros and Poetry*, p. 7.
woman’. 33 Amorous female ‘words’ and written ‘letters’ run counter to accepted modes of queenship and female ‘modesty’. 34

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

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

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

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

34 Buchanan, Detectio Mariae Reginae Scotorum, p. 167; Detectiovn, sig. Miiv.
36 Dunnigan, Eros and Poetry, Note 17, p. 176.
The case of the casket sonnets demonstrates the difficulty in establishing an explicitly female sensual-spiritual voice in sixteenth-century Scotland. How can a woman write love poetry without being branded a ‘whore’? Nevertheless, as Mary purports in her defence, there is a writing culture in Scotland at the time to which both men and women contribute: writing in similar forms to their Queen in the ‘cumpanie’ of ‘thameselfis’ (either by themselves or in the company of others).

One family involved in the communal writing culture of Scotland during the sixteenth century are the Maitland family of Lethington, from which two verse miscellanies survive – the Maitland Folio (c. 1570-1585) and the Maitland Quarto (c. 1586). Both books of poems contain verse by Sir Richard Maitland (1496-1586), a Scottish writer, keeper of the Great Seal of Scotland, courtier to the Scottish King James V, and supporter of Mary, Queen of Scots. Sir Richard was educated at St Andrews (c. 1510) and studied law at Paris (c. 1514). In 1559 Sir Richard was made commissioner to Elizabeth I, his role to settle disputes in the Scottish and English borders. Sir Richard’s son, William Maitland (1525-1573), acted as Secretary of State to Mary Stewart and married one of Mary’s ladies-in-waiting, Mary Fleming (1542-c.1600). William Maitland formed a close bond with Elizabeth I’s Secretary of State, William Cecil, and stayed at Cecil’s London house during diplomatic missions. According to John Guy, the friendship between William Maitland and Cecil was based partly on their ‘shared religious beliefs’, and partly on their ‘mutual admiration for classical literature’. Elizabeth I described William Maitland as the ‘flower of the wits of Scotland’. Sir Richard’s other son, John Maitland (1543-1595), became James VI’s chief minister in 1587. As Peter Herman notes, John Maitland was a contributor to Alexander Neville’s published volume of Latin verse commemorating the death of Sir Philip Sidney, Academiae Cantabrigiensis Lachrymae Tumulo Nobilissimi Equitis, D.

40 Both these manuscripts are held in the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge. Maitland Folio, MS 2553; Maitland Quarto, MS 1408.
41 Spiller, ‘Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586), courtier and writer’, ODNB.
42 Spiller, ‘Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586)’, ODNB.
43 Spiller, ‘Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496-1586)’, ODNB.
44 Loughlin, ‘Maitland, William, of Lethington (1525x30-1573), courtier and diplomat’, ODNB.
45 Guy, My Heart is My Own, p. 128.
46 Guy, My Heart is My Own, p. 128.
47 Elizabeth Tudor cited by Loughlin, ‘Maitland, William, of Lethington (1525x30-1573)’, ODNB.
48 Jun, ‘Maitland, John, first Lord Maitland of Thirlestane (1543-1595), lord chancellor of Scotland’, ODNB.
Sir Richard also had four daughters, two of whom seem to be involved in the creation of the Maitland verse miscellanies: Marie Maitland (d. 1596) and Helyne (Helen) Maitland. The Maitland Folio comprises of poems by a variety of writers including Sir Richard Maitland, William Dunbar (1460?-1513x30) and Alexander Arbuthnot (1538-1583). The Maitland Quarto seems to be a companion codex that contains poems by Sir Richard, perhaps copied from the Folio. The Quarto also contains numerous poems that do not appear in the Folio, including works by, among others, Alexander Montgomerie (early 1550s-1598) and ‘Iacobus Rex’. Additionally, the Quarto consists of a number of anonymous female-poised lyrics that do not appear in the Folio. On the title-page of the Quarto, Marie Maitland’s name is transcribed twice – once in Italian majuscule and once in Roman letter (Figure 1). Marie’s name is proceeded by the date ‘1586’ – the year of Sir Richard’s death and Marie’s marriage.

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

50. ‘Iacobus Rex’ is likely to be James VI/I. Poem LXVII attributed to ‘Iacobus Rex’ in the Maitland Quarto (MS 1408, fols 105v-106r) is included by James Craigie in his edition of James VI’s poetry. The Poems of James VI of Scotland, ed. by James Craigie, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1955-1958), II, p. 133.
51. MS 1408, title-page.
by the select audience. The Maitland Quarto’s title-page is read by W. A. Craigie as a sign of manuscript ownership. Yet if we turn to the Maitland Folio, evidence of ownership is described in explicit terms: ‘This buke pertainis to helyne m.’ – Helyne M. being Sir Richard’s other daughter, Helen Maitland. Marie’s name does not appear to have this explicit tie to ownership on the title-page of the Quarto and is thus ambiguously placed. W. A. Craigie goes on to argue that the Quarto was written for Marie by ‘some expert penman’, but as Evelyn Newlyn rightly points out, the pre-eminent scribe in Scotland at that time was not a man, but a woman, Esther Inglis (1570/71-1624). Inglis acted as scribe to her husband, Bartholomew Kello (d. 1631), a minor government official in charge of passports, testimonials and letters of commendation. Inglis also worked as a professional calligrapher and used as many as forty different scripts, including French secretary hand, chancery script and mirror-writing. Inglis’s manuscript psalter, Livret contenant diverses sortes de lettres, has the date ‘1586’ inscribed on it, which indicates that she was scribing in and around the time of the Maitland Quarto’s composition.

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

53 The Maitland Folio, MS 2553, p. 256.
There seem to be two scripts at work throughout the Quarto itself: a large italic lettering and a smaller cursive secretary hand. As Arthur Marotti points out, the italic script was the hand that literate women in the sixteenth century learned to write.\(^{59}\) Mary, Queen of Scots, for instance, uses italic hand.\(^{60}\) Yet women also adapt their hands for different uses. The scribe, Esther Inglis, uses sixteen different styles of handwriting in her *Pseaumes de David* (1599), including *ragnosa* and French secretary hand.\(^{61}\) The early-seventeenth-century writer and amateur calligrapher, Anna Walker, uses three different autograph scripts in her manuscript of a sermon and other biblical material, *A Sweete Savor for Woman* (c. 1606).\(^{62}\) As Suzanne Trill observes, Walker in this manuscript uses secretary hand for the dedications to Queen Anna and the reader, italic hand for poetry, and Gothic script for the material relating to Walker’s and the Queen’s Danish heritage.\(^{63}\) Given this varying usage, the scribe of the Maitland Quarto may well have intentionally used two different writing styles to indicate two contrasting aesthetics or voices. For instance, the greater part of Sir Richard’s poems are written in secretary hand, while the majority of other poems are written in italic.\(^{64}\)

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

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manfull men of mekill micht

valyeant warriour wicht

Hes With the pen the Poetis pairt weill playit
Quhairby your lordschip enlairgit hes thair fame
& to your self maid ane Immortall name.
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(MQ, I, 9, 11-14)

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

\(^{61}\) Scott-Elliott and Yeo, ‘Calligraphic Manuscripts of Esther Inglis’, p. 36.


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

\(^{64}\) This is not always the case. As Joanna Martin and Katherine McClune observe, some poems attributed to Sir Richard Maitland, particularly those of a religious or moral nature, are copied in italic script. Joanna M. Martin and Katherine A. McClune, ‘The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context’, *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, 15 (2009), 237-63 (pp. 251, 262, Note 97). Moreover, the anonymous female-voiced love lyric, Poem XLIX, is written in secretary hand, MS 1408, fols 78v-79v.
The celebrated author here is Sir Richard Maitland and the Quarto is described as being ‘his buik’, which indicates that he either owns this manuscript or is being offered this book. The placing of this poem at the beginning anticipates James VI and I’s patriarchal usurpation of auctoritas – the beginning of writing comes from the Creator, the father. The poet here evokes the classical bardic tradition stemming from Virgil’s Aeneid (29-19 BC): ‘I sing of arms and [...] the man’, stories which are told by men who are poets, warriors and ‘manly [...] knight[s]’ (MQ, XC, 6). Furthermore, Sir Richard’s ‘[i]mmortall name’ (MQ, I, 14) is reminiscent of William Dunbar’s ‘Lament for the Makaris’ (c. 1508) which is transcribed in the Maitland Folio. Dunbar laments that ‘makaris’ cannot transcend death: ‘I se ye maikaris ama[n]g the laif / [...] Sparit is no[ch]t thair faculte / Timor mortis conturbat me’ [fear of death disturbs me]. Yet Dunbar’s extensive quoting of dead poets – ‘The nobill chauseir of makaris flour / [...] The kny[ch]t [...] hew of eglintoun / [...] maister robben Rundredsoun’ – proves that poetic makers’ bodies may die, but their verse and fame will live on. The Maitland sonneteer, like Dunbar, implies that Sir Richard’s name will live on after death.

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

68 MS Sloane 987, fol. 2r.
69 Goldberg, Writing Matter, p. 245.
the Quarto before the sonnet glorifying Sir Richard’s masculinity to delicately conceal and reveal her own scribal and literary auctoritas.

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

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70 For an analysis of the Middle Scots sumptuary complaint tradition, see Roderick Lyall, ‘Complaint, Satire and Invective in Middle Scots Literature’, in Church, Politics and Society: Scotland 1408-1929, ed. by Norman Macdougall (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1983), pp. 44-64.
73 Dollimore, Sexual Dissidence, p. 119.
were women’. Sir Richard’s poem draws upon this increased visibility of the consuming independent woman of the ‘borroustoûn’ (MQ, II, 1). The women of Sir Richard’s poem are married – they are described as ‘wyfes’ (MQ, II, 1), yet they wander about the town as though they are masterless and single. The continuous refrain of ‘all for newfangelnes of geir’ (MQ, II, 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50), may allude to this new-found suspect female economic authority, which partly motivates the poet-speaker’s scorn. The male poetic voice does not merely observe these women, but offers moral judgement, council and warning: ‘My counsell I geve generallie / to all wemen quhat euer thay be / […] ladyis tak gud heid’ (MQ, II, 81-82, 96). Supreme moral authority (auctoritas principis) thus stems from the pater familias – the language of the father. Given this context, how can a daughter write or publish under her name, even within a coterie circle? Will she be accused of usurping the auctoritas of her father?

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Marie} & \text{ I thocht in this wod did appeir} \\
\text{mait land} & \text{ and gold scho gave aboûndantlie} \\
\text{Syne in hir hand ane flourishit trie did beir} \\
\text{q[uhai]rin wes writtin with letteris properlie [.]}
\end{align*}
\]

(MQ, LXIX, 41-44, my italics)

This is the only overt anagrammatic punning on a name that we find in the Quarto. The Quarto scribe uses several different forms of attribution for Sir Richard’s poems, the most common of which is ‘S. R. M.’. ‘Sum wyfes of the borroustoûn’, however, ends with ‘finis q Richart Maitland of lethingtoun knyt’ (MQ, II, 111) – an affirmation of male auctoritas and status. In Poem LXIX, this unequivocal reference is absent, yet a name is embedded within the poem itself, recalling Katherine Parr’s definition of female auctoritas: a presence that can be heard and felt, rather than explicitly authored.

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

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75 Ewan, ‘‘For Whatever Ales Ye’: Women as Consumers’, p. 125.
76 Martin and McClune have highlighted the methods of attribution for Poems I-XX in the Maitland Quarto in an Appendix, see Martin and McClune, ‘The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context’, pp. 255-56.
77 The etymology of the word ‘maer’ is outlined by the lexicographer Alexander Jamieson. Jamieson uses this etymology to explain Mary Stewart’s ladies-in-waiting being referred to as the ‘Four Maries’. This
sixteenth century, as Philippa Berry points out: Elizabeth I used her chastity to wield political and spiritual authority.\textsuperscript{78} The speaker of Poem LXIX draws upon Marie’s virginal power and puissance. This is connected to the punning on ‘land’ (MQ, LXIX, 42). As the \textit{Dictionary of the Scots Language} tells us, ‘land’ in this context can denote an open space in a wood, a clearing or glade and here Marie provides space for the poet in the redolent garden (\textit{DSL}\textsuperscript{79}). ‘Land’ of course also refers to ‘domain’ (\textit{OED}). The lyric that directly precedes Poem LXIX praises Sir Richard and his ‘nobill sonnis thrie’ (MQ, LXVIII, 149): ‘Maitland bliŭd / the best in all this \textit{land}’ (MQ, LXVIII, 141-42, my italics). In Poem LXIX, however, it is Marie, not her father or brothers, who has authority over land (MQ, LXIX, 42). It is also Marie who arguably constructs her own physical space within the Quarto, evinced in the title-page. ‘Mate’ meaning ‘fellow-worker’, ‘companion’, ‘associate’ or ‘consort’ was also spelt ‘mait’ in the sixteenth century (\textit{DSL}), an ambiguity the speaker draws upon: Marie is a ‘mait’ (MQ, LXIX, 42) to Sir Richard, skilled in scribning. The term ‘mait’ in this context is most likely to mean ‘meat’ (food), and recalls the prelapsarian ‘meat’ of Genesis in \textit{The Geneva Bible}: ‘the woman (seing that the tre was good for meat [...] & a tre to be desired to get knowledge) toke of the frute thereof’.\textsuperscript{80} Marie Maitland distributes the ‘mait’ of knowledge in Poem LXIX, but there is no Adam, serpent or fall here: ‘ressaue no fall’ (MQ, LXIX, 48).

The ‘flourishit trie’ (MQ, LXIX, 43) that Marie holds in her hand is not only a symbol for a branch from the tree of knowledge, but is synonymous to the art of limning. ‘Flourishit’ was associated with the embellishment or ornamentation of a book or illumination of manuscripts (\textit{OED}) and Marie’s hands are explicitly linked to ‘letteris’ (MQ, LXIX, 44). The ‘trie’ she holds betokens a flourishing writing instrument. This ‘trie’ could also be a laurel (a symbol of poetic achievement), bestowed by the goddess of chastity, Diana. Towards the end of the Quarto, we find an octave poem which refers to a female poetic tradition governed by the goddess Diana: ‘I call [...] diana ladye bricht / with nymphes of chastetie / Graunt me your favours [...] / to end this worthelie’ (MQ, LXXXVI, 4-8). This idea of female divine creativity is reinforced in Poem LXIX through the litany of female goddesses, whose presence etymology, however, is not cited in the \textit{OED}. Jamieson cited by Rosalind K. Marshall, ‘Queen’s Maries (act. 1548-1567)’, \textit{ODNB} [accessed 22 May 2009].


\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Dictionary of the Scots Language} (http://www.dsl.ac.uk/dsl [accessed 12 June 2009]). From henceforth the \textit{Dictionary of the Scots Language} (online edition) has been abbreviated as \textit{DSL}.

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition}, Genesis 3. 6.
Marie evokes: ‘Venus [goddess of gardens, love, beauty and fertility,] Iuno [goddess of marriage and childbirth,] and pallas / Minerua [goddess of wisdom, arts and trades,] […] / diana […] / Dame Beawtie […] and […] dame chastitie’ (MQ, LXIX, 59-62).

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

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

 [...] sodeynly, a turtur qhite as calk
So evinly vpon my hand gan lyght,
 [...] This fair bird ryght in hir bill gan hold
 [...] A fair[e] branche, quhare writtin was with gold
 [...] *Awak, awake, I bring, […]*

*The newis glad that blissfull ben and sure*  
*Of thy confort.*\(^{81}\)

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

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

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\(^{84}\) Linden, ‘Introduction’, in *The Alchemy Reader*, ed. by Linden, p. 16.
Hermes Trismegistus, was depicted in a fifteenth-century mosaic in Siena Cathedral as holding a sacred book, flanked by two Sibyls.\(^85\) Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson observe that Siena Cathedral had particular relevance for Renaissance Scotland because the frescoes of the Piccolomini Library in the cathedral of Siena (painted between 1502 and 1507) include a representation of James I of Scotland (1394-1437) receiving the papal envoy, Aeneas Sylvius, in the year 1435.\(^86\) It is not accidental that Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX is depicted as carrying ‘gold’ (MQ, LXIX, 42) and a ‘flourishit trie’ (MQ, LXIX, 43) inscribed with cryptic ‘letteris’ (MQ, LXIX, 44) – she is evocative of a Hermetic Sibyl imparting spiritual esoteric knowledge. The name ‘Marie’ (MQ, LXIX, 41) in Poem LXIX not only invokes the sacred (and sensual) figures of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, but is a tacit allusion to the Prophetess Maria, the mother of alchemy.\(^87\) Latin for ‘gold’ is *aureus* which is linked to the linguistic technique of ‘aureation’ – rhetoric that involves the heightening of diction by the introduction of Latinate or polysyllabic terms: ‘aŭreit termis and style most eloque[n]t’ (MQ, LXIX, 35). Thus Marie’s gift of ‘gold’ (MQ, LXIX, 42) in Poem LXIX is an allusion to her rhetorical power of female ‘aureation’.

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

\(^{86}\) Stevenson and Davidson, ‘Ficino in Aberdeen’, p. 76.
\(^{87}\) Linden, ‘Introduction’, p. 9. See also the Introduction of this study.
\(^{90}\) John Bullokar, *An English Expositor: teaching the interpretation of the hardest words vsetd in our language* (London, 1616), sig. K6r.
authorship that evokes Michel Foucault’s question ‘what is an author?’: an ‘author’ has numerous inferences in this poem including writer, a possessor/giver of poems, a scribe, a copier, a compiler, a literary muse, a woman who controls physical and textual space.\(^91\)

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{o Maistres Marie maik I pray} \\
\text{[…]}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{for famous is your fleing fame} \\
\text{[…]}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{This buik then bear & beat your branis therin} \\
\text{a plesant poet perfyte sall ye be} \\
\text{& lytill labour lost the laurell Win} \\
\text{adorn’d with cumlie croun of poesie.}
\end{align*}
\]

(MQ, LXXXV, 9, 11, 13-16)

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{If sapho saige for saphic songe so sueit} \\
\text{[…]} \\
\text{amids the gods dois duell that dame devyne.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And now of lait that lustie ladie rair} \\
\text{Olimpia o lampe of latine land} \\
\text{[…]} \\
\text{A thrid o Maistres Marie [.]}
\end{align*}
\]

(MQ, LXXXV, 1, 4-6, 9)

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\(^92\) Bawcutt, *Dunbar the Makar*, p. 6. ‘Maistres’ can also denote a woman who wields authority or dominion (*DSL*).
This establishes a distinct female ‘making’ tradition that departs from the male classical tradition of ‘manfull men’ of ‘micht’ (MQ, I, 9). It creates a female auctoritas. George Puttenham proposed in 1569 that ‘gentlewomen makers’ should not become ‘too precise poets’ lest they become ‘fantastical wives’ 93 Here the poet reclaims and celebrates a female ‘making’ tradition through the phrase ‘Marie maik I pray’ (MQ, LXXXV, 9). As demonstrated, Philip Sidney had declared that the male poet, through his poesis, can mirror his ‘heavenly Maker’, God, who made ‘man to His own likeness’ 94 However, in Poem LXIX and ‘To your self’ it is a female maker, Marie Maitland, who acts as an intermediary between the earthly and the sacred. Marie can potentially become a ‘dame devyne’ (MQ, LXXXV, 4) through her poesis.

Both Sappho and Olympia Morata are not only celebrated for the strength of their female voices, but are also known as creators of communities of women. The fragments of Sappho circulating in Europe via the sixteenth-century French printer, Henri Estienne, included Sappho’s ‘Ode to Aphrodite’ and ‘Phainetai moi’: ‘methinks, to sit before you and listen close by to the sweet accents and winning laughter which have made the heart in my breast beat so fast’. 95 Sappho confronts her audience with a female contemplative voice that delights in female speech, both her own and that of her female companions. 96 Likewise, Olympia Morata’s dialogues of her debates with fellow female humanist, Lavinia della Rovere Orsini (1521-1601), were posthumously published in Basel between 1558 and 1570. 97 The 1558 edition of Morata’s writings was held in William Drummond of Hawthornden’s library, which suggests that

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


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

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

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Thair is mair constancie in o[u]r sex} \\
\text{Then euer ama[n]g men hes bein} \\
\text{no troubill / torment / greif / or tein} \\
\end{align*}
\]


\(^{100}\) Luce Irigaray’s coinage ‘womanspeak’ cited by Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics, p. 144.


\(^{104}\) Newlyn, ‘A Methodology for Reading Against the Culture’, pp. 96-100.
The unified pronoun ‘o[u]r se’ (MQ, XLIX, 67) advocates female unity and community, distinct from the world ‘ama[n]g men’ (MQ, XLIX, 68). Through this sententia (maxim), the female speaker deconstructs a number of male discourses. Montaigne had famously stated that women are incapable of nursing the ‘sacred bond’ of ‘true friendship’, as their ‘mindes’ are not ‘strong enough to endure the pulling of a knot so hard, so fast, and durable’. Here the poet challenges such phallocentrism by pointing to the supremacy of female constancy: ‘Sic constancie sall ws mantein’ (MQ, XLIX, 71).

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

‘[T]roubill / torment / greif / or tein’ (MQ, XLIX, 69) may refer to the hazardous consequences of heterosexual relations as delineated by Ovid’s populist Heroides, for example.

Ovid’s classical heroines bombard us with a series of desperate suicide notes. Dido writes to Aeneas: ‘you will see the tears of your abandoned bride, / her shoulders bent in grief, hair undone, / all stained with blood. [...] [W]hile I write [...] / a Trojan knife nestles in my lap’. This is precisely the tormented, grieving female voice that the speaker in Poem XLIX seeks to deconstruct – her writing and speaking is

105 Montaigne, The Essays, p. 91.
106 Pontus de Tyard, ‘Elegy for One Woman Enamored with Another (1573)’, in Same-Sex Desire in the English Renaissance: A Sourcebook of Texts, 1470-1650, ed. by Kenneth Borris (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 329-31 (p. 330). Tyard’s ‘Elegie pour une dame enamourée d’une autre dame’ was published in his Oeuvres poétiques (Paris, 1573). Tyard’s 1573 Oeuvres poétiques was held in William Drummond of Hawthornden’s library. Mary, Queen of Scots also owned Tyard’s Erreurs Amoureuses (1549). These surviving records indicate that Tyard’s writings were circulating in early modern Scotland. The Library of Drummond of Hawthornden, ed. by MacDonald, p. 215, Item 1173; Sharman, The Library of Mary, Queen of Scots, pp. 76-77.
108 Between 1499 and 1580 forty-two editions of the Heroides were printed in France. See Paul White, ‘Ovid’s Heroides in Early Modern French Translation: Saint-Gelais, Fontaine, Du Bellay’, Translation and Literature, 13 (2004), 165-80 (p. 165). The first English translation of the Heroides was printed in 1567 (STC).
not motivated by an Aeneas. The torment and grief that the speaker cites also recollects the Gaelic female ballad tradition, where female voices lament their rape and abandonment by men:

mo leannan am chòmhdhail,

[...]
Bhagair e mo léine shróiceadh,
Rinn e liadan beag’ am chòta,

[...]
Rinn mi ’n diolanas ro’n phòsadh,

[...]
’S muladach caileag ’na h-ònar[.]

[my sweetheart came across me,

[...]
he made to rip down my bodice,
and left rents in my clothing,

[...]
I’ve got a baby without a promise,

[...]
sad is a woman all lonesome [.]]

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

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

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

(MQ, XLIX, 1-8)

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

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116 Jane Farnsworth, ‘Voicing Female Desire in ‘Poem XLIX’’, Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 36 (1996), 57-72 (p. 60).
117 Farnsworth, ‘Voicing Female Desire in ‘Poem XLIX’’, p. 60.
119 Farnsworth, ‘Voicing Female Desire in ‘Poem XLIX’’, p. 60; Francesco Petrarca, ‘Sonetto XVII’, in One Hundred Sonnets, Translated after the Italian of Petrarch and A Life of Petrarch, by Susan
XLIX imparts that her name and identity are instilled within her ‘madame’: she has been ‘rediviue[d]’ (MQ, XLIX, 8) and reborn in her, just like Athena’s own ‘cosmic transformation’ through Pallas/Palladion.\textsuperscript{120} This signifies that anonymity is an aesthetic choice in Poem XLIX, as individual names disappear and find new forms of expression through the identity of the beloved.

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

\textsuperscript{121} Berry, \textit{Of Chastity and Power}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{122} Berry, \textit{Of Chastity and Power}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{123} The Geneva Bible, 1560 Edition, Proverbes 8. 1, 4, 6, 8.
is a rich male contemplative tradition in the Renaissance stemming from Petrarch and Ficino and the poet in Poem XLIX takes this tradition further through her specific focus on female contemplative life.

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

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

\[
\text{Wald michtie Ioue grant me the hap} \\
\text{With yow to haue yo}[u]\text{r brutus pairt} \\
\text{and metamorp\text{hosing our schap}} \\
\text{My sex intill his vaill convert} \\
\text{No brutus then sould caus ws smart [.]}
\]

(MQ, XLIX, 41-45)

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

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

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

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

\(^{126}\) Farnsworth, ‘Voicing Female Desire in ‘Poem XLIX’’, p. 64.
political, literary and sexual inferences. Yet ‘vaill’ (MQ, XLIX, 44) could also be ‘veil’, ‘vail’ or ‘phial’. In The Geneva Bible, ‘vaile’ refers to Christ’s flesh: we enter the ‘Holie place By the new and liuing way, […] through the vaile, that is, his [Christ’s] flesh’. The speaker of Poem XLIX may be using this tacit Christian metaphor to meditate on spiritual-sensual female-female love. ‘Vail’ can also mean advantage, benefit, ‘[t]o have might or power’ (OED): the couple will covet Brutus’s ‘vaill’ (might/power) to control their own destiny. Consequently ‘vaill’ (MQ, XLIX, 44) becomes an apt metaphor for the ‘veiling’ gender fusion that we find in this stanza. The poet articulates this desire for sex change within the gender ambiguous ‘Crepusclein’ (twilight) where both ‘phœbus’ (sol) and ‘phœbe’ (luna) rule (MQ, XLIX, 1, 2, 3): gender and explicit auctoritas is thus veiled and unveiled simultaneously. Within this context, ‘vaill’ (MQ, XLIX, 44) could be a glass transforming vessel (‘phial’) which in alchemical discourses contained the chemical wedding of male and female, sol (‘phœbus’) and luna (‘phœbe’). This is an appropriate allusion given Marie Maitland’s association with alchemical ‘gold’ (MQ, LXIX, 42) in Poem LXIX.

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

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

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129 Abraham, A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery, pp. 35-36.
130 Thomas Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 25, 142.
131 Laqueur, Making Sex, p. 128.
132 Masten, Textual Intercourse, p. 35.
133 Montaigne, The Essays, p. 93.
of course, most famously, becomes a pun for phallic male *actoritas* in Shakespeare’s Sonnet 136: ‘And then thou lov’st me for my name is Will’.  

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

Within this context, the poet’s reference to her madame’s ‘will’ (MQ, XLIX, 15) in Poem XLIX evokes female literary agency and

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137 Wall here cites the historian, Pearl Hogrefe. Wall, *The Imprint of Gender*, p. 294.
139 Coutts, ‘Wife and Widow’, p. 177.
140 Coutts, ‘Wife and Widow’, p. 177.
142 Shakespeare, Sonnet 135, in *The Sonnets and A Lover’s Complaint*, ed. by Kerrigan, p. 144, line 5. See also Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, p. 35.
legal authority, as well as representing female sexual agency and female sexual *auctoritas*. Poem XLIX’s exaltation of the female textual/sexual ‘pairt’ (MQ, XLIX, 42) and ‘will’ (MQ, XLIX, 15) offers tantalizing evidence for the presence of a community of women in the Maitland circle who are collaborating in the ‘making’ of the Maitland Quarto.

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

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

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144 This definition of *heratio* is outlined by Sasha Roberts, ‘Women’s Literary Capital in Early Modern England: Formal Composition and Rhetorical Display in Manuscript and Print’, *Women’s Writing*, 14 (2007), 246-69 (p. 252).
Cicero accosts us with the root meaning of male homosociality – ‘social intimacies’ that exist between men for the functioning of the ‘commonwealth’ that are simultaneously tinged with ambiguous sensual undertones:147

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

147 Cicero, Laelius De Amicitia, pp. 147, 151. The term ‘homosociality’ is coined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
148 Cicero, Laelius De Amicitia, pp. 139, 161.
149 Cicero, Laelius De Amicitia, Note 1, p. 124; p. 125.
I wil dwel [...] Where yu dyest, wil I dye’. This is a Christian womanspeak ‘holie and religious’ (MQ, XLIX, 24) that emerges when husbands and sons have died – Ruth and Naomi travel solely in each other’s company in search for their promised land. ‘Die’, of course, had implicit orgasmic connotations in the Renaissance and the poet of Poem XLIX may be indirectly drawing upon this in her reference to Ruth and Naomi (MQ, XLIX, 35-36). However, this allusion to Ruth and Naomi in Poem XLIX is also negated by the poet: ‘Nor Ruth the kynd moabitiss’ (MQ, XLIX, 35, my italics). Ultimately the widowed Ruth marries Bóaz – womanspeak is interrupted by the appearance of the male. Thus the poet-speaker seeks to go beyond female homosociality and search for a language that transcends both male ‘historeis’ (MQ, XLIX, 38) and scriptural orthodoxy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

\(^{159}\) For further evidence of the circulation of Ficino’s writings in Renaissance Scotland see the Introduction of this study.
\(^{160}\) Ficino, *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love*, pp. 83, 126, 127.
Poem XLIX this male-male dynamic is replaced by the glorification of female-female erotic spirituality.

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sa greit Ioy dois my spreit fulfill} \\
\text{contempling your perfectioun} \\
\text{Ye weild me holie ar yo[u]r will} \\
\text{and raviss my affectioun.}
\end{align*}
\]

(MQ, XLIX, 13-16)

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

\(^{161}\) Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 53.
\(^{162}\) Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 53.
\(^{163}\) Ficino, *Commentary*, p. 53.
\(^{166}\) Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism*, p. 289.
way to an internal time. What Traub neglects to mention, however, is that the representation of earthly time in the Maitland Quarto has a specific aesthetic function. Joanna Martin and Katherine McClune have observed that the Maitland Quarto is a collection of verse that partly seeks to memorialize a dead father and head of household, Sir Richard Maitland. According to Martin and McClune, the scribe of the Maitland Quarto preserves poems in a chronological fashion, in a sequence that reflects the lifetime of the father-poet, Sir Richard. As indicated, this is evinced in the opening poem of the Quarto, ‘Ane Sonet to the Authour In cômendatioun of his buik’. Yet in Poem XLIX this ‘Father Time’ is interrupted, giving way to an alternative arguably anti-patriarchal form of being and existing.

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

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

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171 Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 22.
[Sir Richard]. But daughters can and do write back. Pinkerton’s paradigm of the perfect father-daughter literary collaboration is put under pressure once we analyse the divergent forms of authorship that exist in the Maitland Quarto. Most prominently in this manuscript we find a ‘hid [...] vnknawin’ (MQ, LXIX, 9) community of women that covertly resists patriarchal structures and strictures. As Jeffrey Masten argues, James VI and I genders ‘authorship’ by identifying it with the father in the ‘Authorized Version’ of the Bible. But James does this in reaction to the dangerous auctoritas of his mother, Mary Stewart. The case of Mary, Queen of Scots exhibits how definitions of auctoritas were in flux in the sixteenth century and I have shown how certain members of the Maitland circle may have been manipulating this shifting dynamic to authorize themselves. But is the Maitland Quarto simply circulating in a closed coterie? In the late seventeenth century Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) acquires the Maitland manuscripts from Sir Richard’s great-grandson, John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale (1616-1682), which prompts the question: just how far is the Maitland Quarto disseminated amongst other coteries on the Renaissance British Isles? It is to this issue that I now turn.

173 Masten, Textual Intercourse, pp. 66, 73.
Chapter 2
‘[T]wo nations, being both […] one Ile of Britaine’:¹ The Union of Crowns and the Metaphysics of a Female Tradition

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

‘[I]t seems unlikely that one shall ever have a precise idea of the extent to which sixteenth-century manuscript collections of Middle Scots verse continued to be consulted during the […] seventeenth century, such consultation certainly did occur, and very possibly with regularity.’
(A. A. MacDonald)²

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

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

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The Maitlands of Lethington were a Lowland Scottish family with border-crossing connections. In 1559 Sir Richard Maitland was made commissioner to Elizabeth I, his role to settle disputes on the English and Scottish borders. As Secretary of State to Mary, Queen of Scots, William Maitland travelled to both the French and English courts and maintained a relationship with William Cecil (at whose London house he stayed). Sir Richard’s third son, Thomas Maitland, had humanist interests and travelled to both France and north Italy, where he died in 1572. John Maitland was chief minister to James VI and was a contributor to Alexander Neville’s published volume of Latin verse commemorating the death of Sir Philip Sidney, Academiae Cantabrigiensiis Lachrymae Tumulo Nobilissimi Equitis, D. Philippi Sidneii Sacratae (1587). In 1588 John Maitland met the English ambassador to Scotland, Sir Philip Sidney’s brother, Robert Sidney. This suggests that the Maitland literary circle may have been known to its English counterpart, the Sidney circle. Additionally, the English poet-musicians, Thomas Hudson (d. in or before 1605) and Robert Hudson (d. 1596), both wrote epitaphs on Sir Richard Maitland’s death, which are transcribed in the Maitland Quarto (MQ, XC, XCI). The Hudsons held various positions at the Scottish court and were ‘frequently employed on missions to England’. The Maitlands’ links to sixteenth-century English manuscript culture are revealed by some of the poems collected in the Maitland Folio and Quarto, a number of which had an ‘English circulation or provenance’. For instance, the Maitland Folio contains the anti-woman punctuation piece, ‘All wemeine Ar guid noblle and excellent’, which also exists in the English miscellanies, the Devonshire Manuscript (c. 1530-1540) and the Arundel Harington Manuscript (c. 1550).
Extant scribal evidence from the seventeenth century indicates that the Maitland family manuscripts were enjoying circulation in Lowland Scotland. This is evinced through the Reidpeth Manuscript (c. 1622-1623), which is a partial transcription of the Maitland Folio and contains poems by William Dunbar, Sir Richard Maitland and others. The Reidpeth Manuscript’s copyist was John Reidpeth, who has recently been identified as being connected to the King’s Signet. The Reidpeth Manuscript was probably compiled for Master Christopher Cockburn of Clerkington, a servitor of John Maitland, Earl of Lauderdale. Sir Richard’s daughter, Helen Maitland, married Sir John Cockburn of Clerkington in 1560. Helen Maitland’s name (‘helyne m.’) appears on page 256 of the Maitland Folio and it may have been through her that the Maitland Folio came to the attention of the commissioner of the Reidpeth Manuscript. This indicates that the Maitland literary circle was not restricted to Lethington, but had regional links within East Lothian. Moreover, it is likely that the transmission of the Maitland family manuscripts was initiated in part by women such as Helen Maitland.

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


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


Drummond’s copy of the Maitland Quarto is held in Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Library, MS De. 3. 71.
Hawthornden, which points to the literary kinship between Lauder and Drummond.\textsuperscript{22} Of course Drummond had border-crossing connections. He kept up a correspondence with Ben Jonson, and Jonson himself visited Drummond in Scotland in 1619.\textsuperscript{23} As John Kerrigan points out, Ben Jonson was interested in his own Scottish-border ancestors and moved into Scottish households in London.\textsuperscript{24} Whether or not Ben Jonson obtained a copy of the Maitland Quarto via his associate, Drummond, is yet to be uncovered.\textsuperscript{25}

Evidence from the later seventeenth century survives to suggest the circulation of the Maitland family manuscripts through the diarist and antiquarian, Samuel Pepys (1633-1703). As indicated, the Maitland manuscripts physically reach England in the seventeenth century via Sir Richard’s great-grandson, John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale (1616-1682). Lauderdale was an associate of Samuel Pepys and had a house in north London which Pepys visited.\textsuperscript{26} As Joanna Martin and Katherine McClune observe, Pepys acquired the Maitland manuscripts from the sale of Lauderdale’s books in 1692.\textsuperscript{27} But why would Pepys have been specifically interested in Scottish manuscripts? One reason is because in 1667 he discovers his own Scots heritage.\textsuperscript{28} Roger Pepys tells Samuel Pepys that ‘we did certainly come out of Scotland’.\textsuperscript{29} Is this why Pepys is interested in Scottish literature and history? As Kate Loveman points out, members of the seventeenth-century English elite, such as Lord and Lady Hinchinbrooke, visited Pepys’s library and consulted his books.\textsuperscript{30} Pepys’s book collection ‘served a range of evolving social functions and [acted] as a locus for [seventeenth-century] sociability’.\textsuperscript{31} Thus the Maitland family manuscripts may have

\textsuperscript{25} Ben Jonson’s interest in Scottish literature and culture is currently being researched by James Loxley, Julie Sanders and Anna Groundwater. Loxley, Sanders and Groundwater are working on an annotated edition of a newly discovered manuscript account of Ben Jonson’s celebrated walk from London to Scotland in 1618 (forthcoming, 2014).
\textsuperscript{27} Martin and McClune, ‘The Maitland Folio and Quarto Manuscripts in Context’, p. 239.
\textsuperscript{28} Pepys, \textit{The Diary of Samuel Pepys}, VIII, p. 261.
\textsuperscript{29} Pepys, \textit{The Diary of Samuel Pepys}, VIII, p. 261.
\textsuperscript{31} Loveman, ‘Books and Sociability’, p. 214.
been circulating in seventeenth-century literary culture through Pepys and his connection to the Duke of Lauderdale.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and marked my voice afar’, she prophetically predicts that her voice will be heard beyond geographical boundaries.\footnote{Sappho, ‘To Aphrodite’, in Lyra Graeca, I, p. 183.} The poet in ‘To your Self’ is alluding to this female literary polyglottal voice and is implicitly appealing to other female literary polyglottal voices. Furthermore, ‘[t]his buik’, the Maitland Quarto, ‘bear[s]’ (MQ, LXXXV, 13) Marie’s name, and ‘bear’ has a number of connotations including to sustain, to bring forth and to have written or inscribed upon (\textit{OED}). ‘This buik’ (MQ, LXXXV, 13), the Maitland Quarto, will sustain and bring forth Marie Maitland’s literary reputation. Moreover, the term ‘Maistres Marie’ (MQ, LXXXV, 9) recalls and feminizes the role of the ‘maister poet’ of James VI’s court, Alexander Montgomerie (\textit{d.} 1598). By describing Marie Maitland as a ‘Maistres’ and ‘poet’ (MQ, LXXXV, 9-14), the speaker of ‘To your self’ intimates that Marie has a public literary status. Indeed, Matthew McDiarmid posits that Marie Maitland may be the anonymous female poet whom the Scots writer, John Stewart of Baldynneis (c.1545-c.1605), praises in his manuscript book of poems (composed in c. 1585-1588):

\begin{quote}
Thair is No Muse your ladischip [Marie Maitland?] misknaws,  
Bot honors yow as Patrone principall,  
The sisters thrie your famus fame furthblaws,  
Sibilla sayis ye salbe special.\footnote{Stewart, ‘ANE ANSUEIR’, p. 142.}
\end{quote}


But just how far did the Maitland Quarto lyric, ‘To your self’, travel? As indicated, members of the Maitland circle travelled throughout Scotland, France, England and Italy in the sixteenth century. Within this context, the statement, ‘famous is
your [Marie Matiland’s] fleing fame’ (MQ, LXXXV, 11), evokes a potential European literary reputation. As the Dictionary of the Scots Language tells us, ‘fleing’ meant ‘travelling fast’ (DSL), hence Marie’s name may be travelling beyond the borders of Lowland Scotland.

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

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

37 Kerrigan, Archipelagic English, p. 148; Yeo, ‘Inglis [married name Kello], Esther (1570/71-1624), calligrapher’, ODNB.
39 Esther Inglis, A New Yeers Guift for the Right Honorable and Vertuous Lord my Lord Sidnay (1606); Une Estreine pour tresillustre et vertueuse Dame la Contesse de Bedford (1606), cited in Scott-Elliot and Yeo, ‘Calligraphic Manuscripts of Esther Inglis (1571-1624): A Catalogue’, pp. 50-51.
41 Dunnigan, Eros and Love, p. 107.
The post-structuralist critic, Julia Kristeva, posits that texts are constructed as a ‘mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another […] poetic language is […] an infinity of pairings and combinations’. According to Kristeva, the task of the literary critic is to discover ‘different modalities of word-joining’ within the ‘dialogical space of texts’. She describes this theoretical stance as ‘metaphysical’ because she is examining the ‘hidden dialogue’ that exists between and beyond the explicit physical words on the page. Indeed, this notion of ‘silences’ or ‘metalinguage’ has particular resonance in the Renaissance, at a time where silences speak: that which is unwritten and unstated has a certain validity. This is exhibited by the fifteenth-century Neoplatonist, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who writes:

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

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

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

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43 Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 66.
44 Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, pp. ix, 73.
45 Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 88.
Rex Judeorum: ‘with none [of his persecutors] he [Christ] holdes Debate, / […] No answere would his holy wisdome make’ (SDRJ,49 603, 694). Christ does not physically speak in the events leading up to the Passion, but Lanyer’s readers are invited to hear his voice through the inner ear or ‘internall senses’.50

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

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

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

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

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


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

53 The Scots Peerage, IV, p. 467.

the seventeenth-century branch of the Maitlands, as Lady Anne Home eventually becomes Lady Maitland through her marriage to John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale in 1632.\(^5\) Furthermore, Elizabeth Cary is likely to have been tutored by the writer, Michael Drayton (1563-1631), who praises her ability as a linguist in *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1597).\(^6\) Drayton kept up a friendship and correspondence with the Scottish poets, William Alexander (1577-1640) and William Drummond of Hawthornden.\(^7\) Could Elizabeth Cary therefore have come across the Maitland Quarto through one of these Scottish links? One Kristevan silent allusion to Marie Maitland can be found in Elizabeth Cary’s dedicatory sonnet to her sister-in-law, also named Elizabeth Cary:\(^8\)

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

When cheerful Phoebus his full course hath run,
His sister’s fainter beams our hearts doth cheer;
So your fair brother is to me the sun,
And you his sister as my moon appear.
You are my next beloved, my second friend,
For when my Phoebus’ absence makes it night,
Whilst to th’Antipodes his beams do bend,
From you my Phoebe, shines my second light.
He like to Sol, clear-sighted, constant, free,
You Luna-like, unspotted, chaste, divine;
He shone on Sicily, you destined be
T’illumine the now obscured Palestine.
My first was consecrated to Apollo,
My second to Diana now shall follow.
E. C.\(^9\)

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

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\(^5\) Ronald Hutton, ‘Maitland, John, duke of Lauderdale (1616-1682), politician’, *ODNB* [accessed 17 March 2010].

\(^6\) Hodgson-Wright, ‘Cary [née Tanfield], Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland (1585-1639), writer and translator’, *ODNB*.


\(^8\) Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 73.

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

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

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    she one’s eyes had hidden in her lap,
    [...] with a bayte the other she beguiles,
    Ensnareing him that comes within her hands,
    And angleing him that furthest off her stands.
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She is thus a Siren-like Duessa, a seductress, foreign, invading, dangerous and compelling, associated with ‘double dealing’: ‘She seldom sells a momentary pleasure /
But for a bargain of some speciall treasure. To punish her and contain her, Jove places her in the ‘enclosure’ of the ‘Moone’. Indeed, Urania is a personification of the female mistress of the mind that exists within the male creative matrix: ‘this Dame [Urania] [...] represents this minde’. Although Urania possesses a Siren-like ‘strangenes’ and ‘dange[r]’, she is simultaneously endowed with a protean creative aspect, providing ‘precious balme[s] to cure the wounds of thought’.

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

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

transcribed in the Quarto in italic hand.\textsuperscript{78} The title of this lyric itself points to a polyglottal culture: it is a French translation, written in Scots, following an ‘English meter’ of decasyllabic rhyming couplets. As Sarah Dunningan observes, the ‘frenche’ text alluded to is the twentieth elegy of Clément Marot’s \textit{La Suite de l’Adolescence Clementine} (1533) in which a woman mourns the end of her marriage.\textsuperscript{79} The identity of ‘G. H.’ is yet to be ascertained. I would like to propose here that one potential candidate for ‘G. H.’ is the Lowland Scotswoman, Grizel Hay of Yester (born after 1560). Grizel Hay was the daughter of William Hay, fifth Lord Hay of Yester (1537/8-1586), who had a sasine of the lands of Lethington.\textsuperscript{80} The Maitlands may have been connected to the Hays of Yester in a literary/textual capacity. This is evinced through John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale, who owned an English religious miscellany that seems in the late fifteenth century to have belonged to the Hays of Yester.\textsuperscript{81} In 1576 a marriage contract was arranged by the Hays of Yester and the Homes of Heuch for Grizel Hay and Robert Home.\textsuperscript{82} This marriage contract was annulled in 1585.\textsuperscript{83} It is the end of an arranged marriage that the speaker of the Maitland lyric, ‘Ane Elagie’, mourns, as she censures both her husband’s ‘stonie hart’ (MQ, LXVI, 63) and the ‘negligence’ (MQ, LXVI, 123) of her parents:

\begin{quote}
for faithfull treuth & for ane honest pairt
I get dissait & doublines of hairt
for my chaist love & cheirfull coûtenance
I get againe bot anger & greifance
his [the husband’s] stonie hart to fauld can not be brocht
qhome I With all humilitie haue socht
[..]
qhomto sall I my cruell paine lament
to pleinyie to my parentis is bot Vaine
that quhilk is done can not be brocht againe
Quhen that ye mater wes not past remeid
O god give then thay had taine better heid
Alace quhair then we thair experience
I prayis thair mynd bot curs thair negligence
quhy wald thay not at leist seik my consent [..]
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{78} MS 1408, fols 102v-105r.
\textsuperscript{79} Dunningan, ‘Female-voiced Love Lyrics and Mary Queen of Scots’, p. 443.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{The Scots Peerage}, VIII, pp. 441, 442.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{The Scots Peerage}, VIII, p. 442; Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, Ref. GD110/169. I am grateful to Diane Baptie for transcribing this marriage contract for me.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{The Scots Peerage}, VIII, p. 442; Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, Ref. RD1/24/1, fols 299r-302v. I am grateful to Diane Baptie for finding and transcribing this annulment record for me.
G. H.’s assailment against her parents – ‘to pleinye to my parentis is bot Vaine / [...] I prayis thair mynd bot curs thair negligence / quhy wald thay not at leist seik my consent’ (MQ, LXVI, 118, 123-24) – is absent from Marot’s original French elegy.84 This intimates that the poet-speaker of the Maitland lyric, ‘Ane Elagie’, wishes to stress the non-consensual nature of her marriage contract. G. H. (Grizel Hay?) uses the semi-public/semi-private nature of the Maitland Quarto to subtly critique both her parents and the institution of non-consensual arranged marriage. What I am suggesting here is that the biographical context of Grizel Hay’s 1585 marriage contract annulment provides compelling evidence that Grizel Hay is the ‘G. H.’ of the Maitland lyric, ‘Ane Elagie’.

One reader of this Maitland lyric, ‘Ane Elagie’, may have been the Renaissance Fifeshire poet, Elizabeth Melville (fl. 1599-1631). As Germaine Greer and her fellow editors point out, Elizabeth Melville’s father, Sir James Melville (1535/6-1617), had been a successful diplomat for Mary, Queen of Scots, Henry II of France, and Queen Elizabeth and had been invited to accompany King James to London.85 Elizabeth Melville is likely to have encountered the Maitland Quarto through her father’s court connections. Elizabeth Melville may have had particular interest in ‘Ane Elagie translatit out of frenche in English meter [by] G. H.’ because it follows a political and religious aesthetic similar to her own poem, Ane Godlie Dreame. In particular, both Melville and G. H. develop a strategy for deconstructing the pejorative demarcation of the feminine found in John Knox’s The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruos Regiment of Women (1558). Knox propounds that women should have no ‘power’ or ‘authoritie’ to ‘speake, to reason, to interprete’ or ‘teache’.86 Woman’s ‘iudgeme[n]t’ and ‘opinio[n]’ must be corrected by ‘learned’ and ‘godlie’ men.87 Knox maintains that all women should regard themselves as ‘daughters of Heua [Eve]’.88 He cites the ‘godlie write[r]’, Tertullian, to substantiate his claim that women are the ‘porte

86 Knox, The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruos Regiment of Women, sig. 16v.
87 Knox, The First Blast […] Against the Monstruos Regiment of Women, sig. 17r.
88 Knox, The First Blast […] Against the Monstruos Regiment of Women, sig. 18r.
and gate of the deuil’. As Roger Mason explains, the premise on which Knox’s *First Blast* is based is hardly exceptional. Knox is merely articulating a prejudice common among his contemporaries. Indeed, the 1564 Scottish ‘Order of Baptisme’ states that it is not ‘permitted by Gods worde, that Women should preache or minister the Sacraments’. It is a woman’s ‘duetie’ to ‘studie’ to please ‘her husband’, for she is under his ‘subiection’ and ‘gouernance’. Yet this patriarchal hegemony was also subtly challenged and we find evidence for this in the Maitland lyric, ‘Ane Elagie’, and Melville’s *Ane Godlie Dreame*.

Contrary to Knox’s masculinist definition of the ‘godlie’, the female speaker of ‘Ane Elagie’ reaches God through ‘hir awin langage’ (MQ, LXVI, 91):

> I am phœnix of ladyis dissolat  
> the sillie bird full painfullie dois pyne  
> Evin so it is become now of me  
> taine in ye snair of fals subtilitie  
> & thocht the sillie bird into hir caidge  
> Wareis hir taker in hir awin langage  
> [...]  
> I knaw not ane bot the eternall lord  
> quha of my bitter paine can beir record  
> to the only I doe my plaint out pour  
> & ye I thank bayth of the sueit & sour  
> thow creat me & formit hes of nocht  
> thow hes me als to that perfectioun brocht  
> quhairin I am all Iustice is With the  
> thocht men be blind yit thow dois clerlie sie  
> the lust ressoun is patent in thy sicht  
> quhy thow me thoillis to be a Wofull Wicht  
> Quhen thou thinkis gud thow will redres my paine  
> & gif thow Will that I this still remaine  
> In paine & wo arme me With patience  
> & gif it pleis thy godlie providence  
> to send remeid send it In sicker sort  
> that efter paine I may resaue confort  
> With honestie without my syne or schame  
> Grant this o lord in Iesus chritis name.

89 Knox, *The First Blast [...] Against the Monstruos Regiment of Women*, sig. 18r.  
92 Church of Scotland, *The Forme of Prayers and administration of the Sacramentes used in the Eng. Church at Geneua, approved & receiued by the Churche of Scotland* (Geneva, 1584, 1st pub. 1564), sig. L5v.  
93 Church of Scotland, *The Forme of Prayers [...] receiued by the Churche of Scotland*, sig. O3v.  
94 Knox, *The First Blast [...] Against the Monstruos Regiment of Women*, sig. 17r.
The speaker here claims that she is part of God’s sacred creation: ‘thow creat me & formit hes of nocht / thow hes me als to that perfectioun brocht’ (MQ, LXVI, 132-33). The speaker declares that she will receive ‘confort’ (MQ, LXVI, 143) from Christ after earthly human suffering and, by implication, the original fall (‘efter paine’ [MQ, LXVI, 143]). Women may be ‘daughters of Heua [Eve]’ as Knox argues, but they too can attain salvation and ‘perfectioun’ (MQ, LXVI, 133) through God and Christ: ‘thow hes me als to that perfectioun brocht’ (MQ, LXVI, 133). The image of the ‘phœnix’ (MQ, LXVI, 11) in ‘Ane Elagie’ ultimately becomes a symbol for the rebirth of the soul and the resurrection of the female self through Christ: ‘I am phœnix of ladyis dissolat / [...] efter paine I may resaue confort / [...] Grant this o lord in Iesus christis name’ (MQ, LXVI, 11, 143, 145). The phoenix was also seen as an ideal androgynous figure in the Renaissance and is arguably being used in this context to recall Galatians from The Geneva Bible: ‘there is nether male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Iesus’. Furthermore, the phœnix image complicates the notion of ‘hir awin langage’ (MQ, LXVI, 91), as we ask the question: who precisely is speaking here? Marot ventriloquizes the female voice, while the female translator, G. H. (Grizel Hay?), reclaims and rewrites this voice. In this way an androgynous phoenix-like polyvocality can be heard: Marot’s voice, the voice of the female speaker, and the voice of the potential female translator. As Sarah Dunningan argues, this Maitland lyric, ‘Ane Elagie’, is an example of inventio rather than imitatio. Marot’s original French elegy leaves the plaintive woman in an ‘entirely secular realm’, yet the Maitland lyric grants the speaker spiritual transcendence. As indicated above, this transcendence emanates from ‘godlie providence’ (MQ, LXVI, 141). The speaker intimates that the divine is not simply a male prerogative, but is open to women.

The climactic meditative closure of the Maitland lyric, ‘Ane Elagie’, recalls both the De Imitatione Christi (c. 1426) and Marguerite of Navarre’s Le miroir de l’ame pécheresse (1531). In the De Imitatione Christi, the speaker’s self reaches the ‘perpetuall’ joy of heaven by meditating on Christ’s ‘peyne’ on the cross:

95 Knox, The First Blast [...] Against the Monstrvovs Regiment of Women, sig. 18r.
97 Dunningan, ‘Female-voiced Love Lyrics and Mary Queen of Scots’, p. 444.
98 Dunningan, ‘Female-voiced Love Lyrics’, p. 446.
why ferest thou to take the crosse [...] wherby thou mayst come suerly to the perpetuall ioyfull kyngdome [...] He [Christ] hath gone before the, beryng the crosse / & therupon for thy loue suffred deth / [...] if thou wilt be assembled to hym in pacientlye sufferynge peyne, trybulacion & deth / than thou shalt be pertener of his plesure, consolacion, & perpetuall lyfe & ioy. 99

The *De Imitatione Christi*’s emphasis on suffering, ‘peyne’ and ‘trybulacion’ is utilised by the speaker of the Maitland lyric, ‘Ane Elagie’, as she acquires the ‘confort’ (MQ, LXVI, 143) of Christ through her endurance of earthly pain:

I knaw not ane bot the eternall lord
quha of my bitter paine can beir record
[...]
Quhen thou thinkis gud thow will redres my paine
& gif thow Will that I this still remaine
In paine & wo arme me With patience
& gif it pleis thy godlie providence
to send remeid send it In sicker sort
that efter paine I may resaue confort
With honestie without my syne or schame
Grant this o lord in Iesus christis name.

(MQ, LXVI, 128-29, 138-45)

Moreover, God’s creation of woman and ‘hir awin langage’ (MQ, LXVI, 91) had been stressed in Marguerite of Navarre’s *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse*:

Mais, Monseigneur, si vous estes mon pere,
Puis je penser que je suis vos tre mere?
Vous engendrer? vous par qui je suis faicte?
[...]
Vous estes Dieu, je suis vostre facture .]

[But, Lord, if you are my father,
may I think of myself as your mother,
give birth to you, you by whom I am created?
[...]
You are God; I am of your making. 100

G. H. draws upon the sacred pro-woman language of Marot’s patron, Marguerite of Navarre: ‘thow creat me & formit hes of nocht / thow hes me als to that perfectioun brocht’ (MQ, LXVI, 132-33). By echoing the feminized meditative language of

99 *De Imitatione Christi*, Books I-III trans. by William Atkynson, Book IV trans. by Margaret Beaufort, pp. 191-92. The 1517 Paris edition of the *De Imitatione Christi* was owned by the Scotsman, John Gray. Durkan and Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries*, p. 104. Margaret Beaufort’s 1504 printed English translation of the *De Imitatione Christi* may have reached Scotland via Margaret Tudor (wife to James IV of Scotland and goddaughter to Margaret Beaufort).

Marguerite of Navarre’s *Le miroir de l’âme pêcheresse*, the speaker of the Maitland lyric, ‘Ane Elagie’, indirectly appeals to a female spiritual *Respublica litterarum*.

As the speaker of the Maitland lyric outpours her lament to God – ‘I knaw not ane bot the eternall lord / [...] to the only I doe my plaint out pour’ (MQ, LXVI, 128-30) – so too does Elizabeth Melville confront her reader with an implicit female meditation in *Ane Godlie Dreame*: ‘I [...] / musit alone and divers things did think. / [...] Than I began my lamentatioun’ (AGD,101 7-8, 27). Both the Maitland lyricist and Melville Christianize Ovid’s *Heroides*, as the lamenting female voice is utilised to reach a Christian God. Melville’s speaker powerfully addresses Christ: ‘Awalk, O Lord, quhy sleipest thou sa lang? / [...] O shaw thy selfe’ (AGD, 34, 39). Here we find a very different assertive preaching voice to that of the blustering rhetoric of Knox. Access to God and Christ is not solely a male privilege, Melville purports, as Christ addresses the implicit female speaker intimately with no interruptions from ‘learned’ men.102 Christ declares to Melville’s speaker: ‘I heir thy sichs, I sie thy twinkling teares, / [...] ryse up [...] / And follow mee [...] I sall be thy gyde: / [...] I am thy spous’ (AGD, 97, 113-14, 130). As Christ describes himself as the speaker’s ‘spous’ (AGD, 130), he infers that she is his bride: a personification of the female Church and a reclamation of the female divine. Yet ‘spous’ (AGD, 130), like ‘phœnix’ (MQ, LXVI, 11), is also gender ambiguous. In the biblical Song of Salomôn, the male speaker continually refers to the female speaker as ‘My sister, my spouse’.103 In Melville’s poem, however, Christ is the spouse, not the female speaker. In this way, Melville dissents from Donne who had famously described the church as Christ’s ‘spouse [...] / open to most men’.104 For Melville it is Christ who is open to men and women. Melville’s intentional gender fluidity, like the Maitland lyric, ‘Ane Elagie’, questions the violent stress on gendered difference foregrounded by Knox. Could Melville have been inspired by the Maitland lyric, ‘Ane Elagie’, to offer her own reinterpretation of the ‘godlie’? No annotated copy of ‘Ane Elagie’ has been found amongst Melville’s recently discovered manuscript writings.105 However, as Jamie Reid Baxter and Sara Ross point out, Melville was an

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102 Knox, *The First Blast* [...] Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, sig. 17r.


avid reader of Lowland Scots literature. Given this context, we should certainly consider the possibility of Melville’s reading of the Maitland Quarto.

Melville’s *Ane Godlie Dreame* provides tangible evidence that Scottish women’s writing was actively travelling beyond borders. *Ane Godlie Dreame* was published in Scots in 1603, and Anglicized and reprinted in *circa* 1604 and 1606. The repeated print runs and Anglicization suggest that Melville’s poem was enjoying wide dissemination on the British Isles. What is more, Melville’s speaker herself predicts the wide circulation of her voice, evinced through the metaphor of pilgrimage:

> Than up I rais, 
> [...] 
> my spreit did follow fast. 
> Throw mos and myres, throw ditches deip wee past, 
> Throw prickings thornes, throw water & throw fyre, 
> [...] 
> clam on craigie Montanes hie, 
> [...] 
> Throw thick and thin, throw sea and eik be land, 
> Throw greit deserts wee wanderit on our way: 
> [...] 
> My voyage [...] was not in vaine. 
> (AGD, 161, 164-66, 169, 173-74, 214)

Melville recalls Petrarch’s sublime ascent to Mount Ventoux (‘clam on craigie Montanes hie’ [AGD, 169]) and accosts us with a shifting panoramic landscape, wherein she places the travelling sermonizing voice that knows no bounds, voyaging beyond borders into new worlds, whilst searching for the promised land.

One writer who may have come across both the Maitland Quarto and *Ane Godlie Dreame* is the London-based poet, Aemilia Lanyer (1569-1645). Lanyer is connected to Lowland Scotland through her long-term lover, Henry Carey, first Baron Hunsdon (1526-1596). According to Susanne Woods, Lanyer becomes Hunsdon’s mistress in

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107 *Ane Godlie Dreame* was republished at least thirteen times down to 1737 in Scots and in English, see Sarah C. E. Ross, ‘“Give me thy hairt and I desire no more”: The Song of Songs, Petrarchism and Elizabeth Melville’s Puritan Poetics’, in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558-1680*, ed. by Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 96-107 (p. 96).

around 1587 and as Wallace MacCaffrey points out, during this time Hunsdon was regarded as the privy council’s Scottish expert. The Scottish government regarded him as ‘their spokesman on the privy council’ and he frequently travelled to Edinburgh and the border town, Berwick-upon-Tweed, throughout the 1570s and 1580s. In circa 1591, Hunsdon employed the poet, Henry Lok (d. in or after 1608), as his secretary. As Deirdre Serjeantson observes, Lok spent time in the Scottish court and one of his sonnets is included in James VI’s *His Maiesties poetichall exercises at vacant houres* (1591). As indicated, it is in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scottish literary circles that the Maitland Quarto is likely to have been scribbally circulating. Lanyer therefore may have been introduced to manuscript and printed Scots literature via her lover, Hunsdon, and his Scottish connections.

One reason why Lanyer would have been interested in polyglottal culture is because she wants her published volume of poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, to appeal to an international audience. This is evinced in her use of a Latin title. As Janel Mueller observes, Lanyer’s title, ‘Salve Deus Rex Judæorum’, is a citation of the Latin Vulgate of the Gospels (Matthew 27.29; Mark 15.18; John 19.3), where Christ’s persecutors address him in mockery, ‘Haile king of the Jewes’. Yet as Mueller points out, Lanyer adds one new word, ‘Deus’ meaning ‘God’, and thus makes ‘fully explicit her expression of personal faith’. However, Lanyer’s use of Latin is not simply ‘personal’, but political. Lanyer chooses this particular moment in the Gospels because it highlights Christ’s marginal status – he is a Jew and by implication the original dissident, challenging the ‘High Priests and Scribes, and Elders of the Land’ (SDRJ, 490). Christ, like Lanyer, is a marginal figure, but will wield power through the *auctoritas* of God: ‘he will give me Power and Strength to Write’ (SDRJ, 298). Lanyer’s use of Latin advocates a certain level of humanist education: she implies that

110 MacCaffrey, ‘Carey, Henry, first Baron Hunsdon (1526-1596)’, *ODNB*.
111 MacCaffrey, ‘Carey, Henry, first Baron Hunsdon (1526-1596)’, *ODNB*.
she can read, cite, understand and interpret the Latin Vulgate in the original, and this is potentially a supplication to other international female Latinists. Lanyer addresses her poem to ‘all vertuous Ladies in generall’ and ‘ladie’ connotes an educated female reader or lectrix.\(^{116}\) We know that Lanyer’s text reaches as far as Ireland through her husband who presents a copy of his wife’s published book to Thomas Jones, Lord Chancellor of Ireland from 1605.\(^{117}\) Additionally, Lanyer may have intended her poem to reach other border-crossing destinations through her chief potential patron, Lady Margaret Clifford (1560-1616), who had wide international connections through her sponsoring of New World voyages.\(^{118}\) What I wish to propose here is that Lanyer combines the devotional meditative practice of Melville with the Neoplatonic contemplative practice of Maitland, so that her text is infused by an appealing polyglottal intertextuality.

The action or practice of profound spiritual reflection or mental contemplation is what the seminal critic, Louis Martz, labels as the ‘poetry of meditation’.\(^{119}\) According to Martz, the meditative poem creates an ‘interior drama of the mind’, whereby the mind grasps a situation, ‘evoked by [...] memory’, brings it forward to ‘consciousness’ and concludes with ‘illumination’ where the speaker’s self has ‘found an answer to its conflicts’.\(^{120}\) Martz posits that Donne is the ‘master and father’ of a new kind of English meditative poetry and is closely followed by his contemporaries, Southwell, Herbert, Vaughan and Crashaw.\(^{121}\) Martz states that meditative poetry is concerned with ‘inward man’ and his ‘intellectual faculties’.\(^{122}\) He ends by citing T. S. Eliot, who praises the way ‘our [literary] fathers and grandfathers expressed themselves’.\(^{123}\) More recently critics have started to explore how and why the ‘metaphysical’ and ‘meditative’ are interlinked. Michael Schoenfeldt, for example, has shown how Herbert’s meditative practice intimately conflates the corporeal with the transcendental.\(^{124}\) But women writers also actively contribute to the metaphysical genre of meditation and evidence for

\(^{116}\) Aemilia Lanyer, ‘To all vertuous Ladies in generall’, in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. 12-16 (p. 12). From henceforth this poem is abbreviated as TAVL and is proceeded by the line reference.


\(^{118}\) Penny Bayer, ‘Lady Margaret Clifford’s Alchemical Receipt Book and the John Dee Circle’, *Ambix*, 52 (2005), 271-84 (p. 275).

\(^{119}\) Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*.

\(^{120}\) Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, p. 330.

\(^{121}\) Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, p. 2.

\(^{122}\) Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, pp. 5, 1.


this can be found in the Maitland Quarto, *Ane Godlie Dreame* and *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*.

In Poem XLIX of the Maitland Quarto, the poet writes:

| Yo[u]r splendo[u]r so madame I wein |
| Sa greit Ioy dois my spreit fulfill |
| contempling your perfectioun |
| Ye weild me holie at yo[u]r will |
| and raviss my affectioun. |

| Ye weil |
| d me holie at yo[u]r will |
| and ravis |

| My Mynd to freindschip reciproc |
| That treuth sall try sa far above |
| The autiient heroicis love |
| as salbe thocht prodigious |
| and plaine experie[n]ce sall prove |
| Mair holie and religious. |

(MQ, XLIX, 4, 13-16, 19-24)

The poet of Poem XLIX is responding to, and tacitly dissenting from, a male Neoplatonic contemplative tradition. Plato had argued in the *Symposium* that divine love ‘derives from the Heavenly goddess’ who has ‘nothing of the female in her but only maleness; so this love is directed […] towards the male’.125 This is Christianized in the fifteenth century by the influential writings of Marsilio Ficino. Ficino posits that Platonic philosophers defined ‘true friendship’ as the ‘permanent union of the lives of two men’.126 He intimates that ‘this bond, our [male] friendship’ will ‘serve us’ in ‘discovering the divine’.127 Contemplation of the male beloved enables Ficino to soar on the ‘wings of metaphysics’ to the ‘creator of heaven and earth’.128 The poet in Poem XLIX injects the female into this metaphysical meditative tradition. In Poem XLIX the ‘will’ (MQ, XLIX, 15) referred to evokes the ‘blessed Will’ of Christ.129 The speaker is ravished by her female beloved who possesses a capacious spiritual-erotic will: ‘Ye weild me holie at yo[u]r will’ (MQ, XLIX, 15). This sacrosanct sensuality is enhanced through the cluster of spiritual-erotic vocabulary: ‘Ioy’, ‘spreit’, ‘holie’, ‘will’ ‘raviss’, ‘affectioun’, ‘religious’ (MQ, XLIX, 13, 15, 16, 24). These words are tinged with

sacred/earthly connotations. Poem XLIX implies that a contemplative woman can reach the divine through the female beloved.

The sacred subtext of Poem XLIX is furthered by the poet through the predominant use of huitains (stanzas composed of eight, eight-syllabled lines). According to the sixteenth-century numerologists, Francesco Giorgio and Guy Le Levre de la Boderie, Christ rose from the dead on the eighth day, so by pursuing the number eight and the octave, we shall return to God. Moreover, St Augustine had written to his companion, Januarius:

Read Genesis; you will find the seventh day without an evening, which signifies rest without end [...] for this reason the eighth day will have eternal blessedness [...] the eighth shall be as the first, so that the first life may be restored to immortality.

In Poem XLIX we find a woman-to-woman love that is associated with eternity, divinity and the suspension of earthly time: ‘Sic constancie sall ws mantein / In perfyte amitie for euer’ (MQ, XLIX, 71-72, my italics). The poet-speaker of Poem XLIX, through her use of huitains, alludes to (and arguably feminizes) the sacredness of the number eight.

Lanyer develops this tradition of female Neoplatonic meditation. Lanyer’s patron, Margaret Clifford, like Poem XLIX’s ‘madame’ (MQ, XLIX, 4), possesses a ‘beautie of [...] mind’ (SDRJ, 1452) and Lanyer depicts Margaret Clifford as a sacrosanct meditator. Margaret walks amongst the ‘sweet woods’ (TDC, 81) of Cooke-ham:

With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;  
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,  
To meditate what you [Margaret Clifford] therein did see:  
With Moyses you did mount his holy Hill [...]  
(TDC, 82-85)

Lanyer here harks back to the original sixteenth-century meaning of ‘tradition’: the doctrine of divine authority orally transmitted through Moses and Christ (OED). Lanyer

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131 St Augustine, *Letters*, cited by Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, p. 369. This letter is dated to *circa* AD 400.
132 Aemilia Lanyer, ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’, in *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, pp. 130-38. From henceforth, ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’ has been abbreviated as TDC and is proceeded by the line reference.
feminizes this ‘tradition’ by placing Margaret Clifford at the heart of it – it is Margaret Clifford who receives the ‘holy Writ’ and sacred ‘talke’ of Christ (TDC, 82, 83). Additionally, it is through Margaret Clifford that Lanyer contemplates ‘Gods powrefull might’ (ADLM, 133 159), as God resides in Margaret’s ‘selfe confind’ (SDRJ, 1547) there to be sought by the poet-speaker. However, Lanyer goes a step further than Poem XLIX, as it is not only the female beloved who possesses Christ’s ‘blessed Will’, but the poet-speaker herself: ‘Saint Peter gave health to the body, so I deliver you [Margaret Clifford] the health of the soule’. Lanyer’s speaker can thus be aptly described as a metaphysician, providing a salve for the soul through her physical-spiritual discourse.

Both the Maitland lyricist and Lanyer are arguably responding to the feminized Neoplatonism existent in the international female Respublica litterarum. Olympia Morata, for instance, writes to her beloved, Lavinia della Rovere Orsini:

So my dear Lavinia, [...] I would not be able to bear my longing for my friends, especially for you, who always ‘remain in the depths of my being’ and whom I always mention in my prayers. [...] Since so great a friendship exists between us and there is no woman dearer to me than you, I have long shared all my secrets with you [...] take yourself to Him [Christ] Who calls all who labor and are heavy laden to Him to give them rest. [...] He Himself will strengthen you and give you, as He promised, the Holy Spirit [...] Morata here configures the communal seeking of Christ through woman-to-woman dialogue and interaction, and Lanyer may be reading Morata through the Maitland Quarto: ‘And now of lait that lustie ladie rair / Olimpia o lampe o latine land / [...] A thrid o Maistres Marie maik I pray’ (MQ, LXXXV, 5-6, 9).

Both Melville and Lanyer place the feminized sensual-spiritual language of Poem XLIX into a specific biblical moment – the sensual-spiritual tears of Christ’s female pilgrims. Melville writes: ‘My [...] / [...] twinkling teares abundauntlie ran down,

\[\text{\footnotesize 133 Aemilia Lanyer, ‘The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of Pembrooke’, in The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer, pp. 21-31 (p. 29). From henceforth this poem is abbreviated as ADLM and is proceeded by the line reference.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize 134 Lanyer, ‘To the Lady Anne, Countesse of Dorcet’, p. 41, line 11; Aemilia Lanyer, ‘To the Ladie Margaret Countesse Dowager of Cumberland’, in The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer, pp. 34-35 (p. 34), lines 9-10.}\]

In sicks and sobbs now chaingit is our sang’ (AGD, 21-25, 36). The universal ‘our sang’ (AGD, 36) evokes the Gospel of St Luke where we are told that ‘there followed him [Christ] a great multitude of people, and of women, which women bewailed and lamented him’. Melville’s ‘our sang’ (AGD, 36) is reminiscent of this all-female threnody: the female pilgrims following Christ at his ‘pitifull Procession’ (SDRJ, 953).

Similarly, the tears of the daughters of Jerusalem take centre stage in Lanyer’s poem:

The Serjeants watching, while the women cri’d.

[...] whose teares powr’d forth apace
On Flora’s bankes, like shewers of Aprils raine:
[...]
Most blessed daughters of Jerusalem,
[...]
Your tearefull eyes, beheld his [Christ’s] eies more bright;
[...]
To have reflection from this Heav’nly Light [
](SDRJ, 968, 973-74, 985, 988, 990)

Lanyer describes the male apostles as ‘Spectators’ (SDRJ, 482) and they are thus akin to the ‘Serjeants’ who are merely ‘watching’ Christ (SDRJ, 968), but it is the daughters of Jerusalem who meditate on Christ’s ‘great griefe and paine’ (SDRJ, 972), mirroring Christ’s ‘sigh[s]’ and ‘groane[s]’ (SDRJ, 1006) through their own bodies: ‘By teares, by sighes, by cries intreat’ (SDRJ, 996). Their tears are aligned to salvific fecundity: ‘Flora’s bankes [...] Aprils raine’ (SDRJ, 974). In this way, Melville and Lanyer reclaim and rewrite the pejorative accounts of the porous female body found in the influential writings of Aristotle and Galen. Aristotle continually refers to the ‘fluid’ and ‘discharge’ that flows copiously out of the female body. Galen sees the female as ‘less perfect than the male’ because of her wet, cold body. Such notions are taken up in the seventeenth century by physicians such as Helkiah Crooke who associates the

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138 Galen, On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body, in Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook, ed. by Aughterson, pp. 47-48 (p. 48). On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body was written in c. AD 169-175. The first complete French translation was completed by Jacques Dalechamps and printed in Lyons in 1566. See Margaret Tallmadge May, ‘Introduction’, in Galen: On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body, trans. by Margaret Tallmadge May, 2 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), I, pp. 3-64 (pp. 3, 7).
cold/leaky female body with ‘petulanc[e]’ and ‘imperfectio[n].’ The fluid body for Melville and Lanyer, far from being a negative trait, demonstrates how women are closer to Christ. Women’s tears enable them to reach the divine. In this manner, Melville and Lanyer implicitly redefine the ‘metaphysical’. According to the Neoplatonist, Pierre de la Primaudaye, ‘Physike [...] is the studie of naturall things: Metaphysike, [...] of supernaturall things’. However, Melville and Lanyer question this binary opposition by suggesting that physicality facilitates interaction with the transcendent and supernatural.

Martz’s model of meditation is further complicated by the notion of the contemplative dreamer who features in the Maitland Quarto, *Ane Godlie Dreame* and *Salve Deus Rex Judeorum*. In the ancient Greek Orphic Hymns or *Orphica* (which were translated into Latin by Ficino in 1462), dreams intimately speak to the soul and ‘rouse men’s minds’:

**TO DREAM**

[...]

I call upon you, blessed, long-winged and baneful
Dream,
messeger of things to come, greatest prophet to mortals.
In the quiet of sweet sleep you come silently
and, speaking to the soul, you rouse men’s minds
and in their sleep you whisper to them the will of the blessed ones.141

The potency of the divine Orphic dream is Christianized by the seventeenth-century philosopher, Thomas Tryon. According to Tryon, during the body’s ‘Nocturnal Repose’, the soul can enter into the ‘suburbs of Eternity; of the secret Intercourses of Spirits with Humanity, and the wonderful Communications of the divine’.142 As S. J. Wiseman points out, Tryon posits that dreams are part of God’s work and can tell the dreamer about him or her self – ‘[s]o that if a man would but turn their Eyes inward, and learn to know themselves, and the Principles and degrees of their own nature’ by

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139 Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia* (1618), in *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook*, ed. by Aughterson, pp. 54-57 (pp. 56, 57).
interpreting their dreams they could ‘consequently know their own Complication’.

Dreams are therefore also Martzian ‘interior drama[s] of the mind’, linked to contemplative physical and spiritual experience. In Poem LXIX of the Maitland Quarto and Lanyer’s ‘The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of Pembrooke’, we find a meditative dreaming ‘self’ concerned with a female Respublica litterarum. The lyricist in Poem LXIX writes:

Into my dreame [...] I lay

Marie I thocht in this wod did appeir
mait land and gold scho gave aboundantlie
Syne in hir hand ane flourishit trie did beir
q[uhai]rin wes writtin with letteris properlie
This is in sing of trew Virginite

In quhose crope ane plesand sicht thair wes
of ladyis fair as phœbus in mid day
for thair wes Venus Iuno and pallas
Minerva cleo and tersiphone
proserpina and diana the may
Dame Beawtie bricht and als dame chastity [.]

(MQ, LXIX, 25, 41-45, 57-62)

As discussed in Chapter 1, Marie Maitland appears in this dream vision endowed with a cryptic encoding. The ‘trie’ (MQ, LXIX, 43) that she holds in her hand could be the laurel of the female Respublica litterarum, handed down from Sappho to Olympia Morata (MQ, LXXXV, 1, 6, 9) and here presented to other women by Marie Maitland herself.

Like the Maitland lyricist of Poem LXIX, Lanyer presents us with a semiotically ambiguous female figure in her dream vision:

Me thought I pass’d through th’ Edalyan Groves,

The eie of Reason did behold

bright Bellona [...]  
Whom these faire Nymphs so humbly did receive,

144 Martz, The Poetry of Meditation, p. 330
A manly mayd which was both faire and tall,
[...]  
With speare, and shield, and currat on her breast,
And on her head a helmet wondrous bright,
With myrtle bayes, and olive branches drest,
Wherein me thought I tooke no small delight.

(ADLM, 1, 6, 33-35, 37-40)

Similarly to the figure of Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX, Bellona is caught between two worlds: the supernatural spectral world (‘Me thought I pass’d’ [ADLM, 1]) and the rational, physical cognitive world (‘eie of Reason’ [ADLM, 6]). Like the adumbration of Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX, Bellona becomes a kaleidoscopic symbol of femininity where no singular interpretation will suffice.

Bellona is traditionally the Goddess of War, wife of Mars. But in Lanyer’s poem she appears with no man, no Mars beside her. Her presence evokes the cross-dressed figure of Elizabeth I, who whilst rallying the troops at Tilbury had famously declared: ‘I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king’.145 Yet Lanyer classifies Bellona as the goddess of ‘Wisdome’ in her marginal note and this is visually figured through her helmet of ‘myrtle bayes’ (ADLM, 39), which is not simply a symbol of victory, but a signifier for the poetic maker. Dante, for instance, presents the poet, Statius, as crowned with myrtle and perhaps it is the myrtle ‘trie’ of ‘letteris’ (MQ, LXIX, 43-44) that Marie Maitland holds in her hand in Poem LXIX.146 Bellona as a ‘manly mayd’ (ADLM, 35) combines both male and female ‘making’ traditions.

‘[M]anly mayd’ (ADLM, 35) takes us back to Olympia Morata, who had been classed by her critics as a ‘Calvinist Amazon’.147 Although for male Renaissance thinkers the male androgyne is the ideal muse of poetry (typified by the ‘master-mistress’ of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 20), for a woman to possess both gender traits within a literary context was regarded by some as dissident or dangerous.148 This is exemplified not only through Morata, but the seventeenth-century writer, Lady Mary

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Wroth (1587?-1651/1653), who is accused of being a ‘Hermaphrodite in show […] a monster’. We had seen in Chapter 1 how Poem XLIX of the Maitland Quarto had eulogized female gender fluidity, and Lanyer here also rewrites the female androgynous ideal from a celebratory perspective through Bellona.

Bellona appears exclusively to a community of women, ‘nine faire’ Nymphs (ADLM, 9, 34) and the poet Mary Sidney (1561-1621) herself (ADLM, 29). After Bellona’s appearance, Lanyer’s poet-speaker tells us that this female group will sit and meditate on ‘holy hymnes […] / Those rare sweet songs which Israel King did frame’ (ADLM, 116-17). This is, of course, an allusion to the biblical Psalms newly translated by Mary Sidney. But another sixteenth-century woman writer who offered her own rendition of the Psalms in Greek hexameters and sapphics is Olympia Morata, and here Lanyer portrays a female community of harmonious singing voices: ‘Those holy sonnets they did all agree, / With this most lovely Lady here to sing’ (ADLM, 121-22). Lanyer is arguably suggesting that Mary Sidney is singing in unison with Olympia Morata and thus potentially appeals to a European female literary and spiritual community. In this context, Bellona (like Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX) figures as a muse uniting the female Respublica litterarum.

Meditation on spiritual dreams was associated with dissenting communities by James VI and I. In his Basilicon Doron (1599), James attacked religious dissenters, the ‘brain-sicke’ and ‘headie Preachers’ who resist the royal authorities, leaning to ‘their owne dreams and reuelations’ in ‘making’ the ‘scriptures to be ruled by their conscience’. It is precisely the ‘dreame’ (AGD, 90) for Melville that guides her speaker to God through Christ. Melville highlights the power of individual dream-life and its links to sola scriptura:

Into my dreame I thocht thair did appeir
Ane sicht maist sweit, quhilk maid me weill content:
Ane Angell bricht with visage schyning cleir [.]

(AGD, 90-92)

150 The presentation copy of the Sidney Psalter was completed in 1599, see Danielle Clarke, ‘Table of Dates’, in Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanyer: Renaissance Women Poets, ed. by Clarke, pp. xlv-xlvi (p. xlv).
152 James Stuart, Basilicon Doron, pp. 6, 7.
As Jamie Reid Baxter points out, here Melville is alluding to the Mary Magdalene, who at the tomb of Christ sees an angel (Matthew 28. 1-5). This moment in the gospels is communicated to Melville’s speaker through a sensual-celestial dream/vision: ‘Into my dreame I thocht thair did appeir / Ane sicht maist sweit’ (AGD, 90-91). According to Germaine Greer and her fellow editors, Ane Godlie Dreame was transmitted orally on special days of ‘fasting, prayer, open-air preaching and feasting’ when dissenting congregations were ‘encouraged to interpret’ biblical texts. James in the Basilicon Doron seems to be attacking the oral public transmission of dream narratives by Presbyterians such as Melville. Lanyer joins forces with Melville in portraying the prophetic power of the female dreamer:

Witnesse thy wife (O Pilate) speakes for all;  
Who did but dreame, and yet a message sent,  
That thou should’st have nothing to doe at all  
With that just man [Christ] […]  
(SDRJ, 834-37)

Pilate’s wife is a peripheral figure in the Gospel of St Matthew, but in Lanyer’s poem she is a cardinal witness in Christ’s defence, speaking ‘for all’ (SDRJ, 834) Christians from the margins. Elizabeth Hodgson argues that Lanyer portrays Pilate’s wife as the ‘first Christian before the fact, a prophetic voice challenging Pilate because of her sympathy for Christ’s likely suffering’. Indeed, Pilate’s wife (like Melville’s speaker) has meditated on Christ through her ‘dreeame’ (SDRJ, 835; AGD, 90) and is connected to Lanyer’s own poetic-prophetic voice:

this Title, Salve Deus Rex Judaëorum, […] was delivered unto me in sleepe […] it came into my remembrance, what I had dreamed long before; and thinking it a significant token, that I was appointed to performe this Worke, I gave the very same words I received in sleepe as the fittest Title […]

Lanyer, like Melville, allies her dream to godly providence (‘I was appointed to performe this Worke’) and both writers seem to recall and rework the Acts of the Apostles from The Geneva Bible: ‘saith God, I wil powre out my Spirit vpon all flesh, your sonnes, and your daughters shal prophecie, […] and your olde men shal dreme
Although James Stuart brings about the regal union between ‘two nations’, Lanyer foregrounds a ‘metaphysical’ silent kinship with Melville’s *Ane Godlie Dreame*, one that will covertly question the condemnation of prophetic dreamers by the royal authorities.\(^{160}\)

A. A. MacDonald suggests that collections of Middle Scots verse ‘continued to be consulted’ during the seventeenth century and John Kerrigan has argued that post 1603, ‘books travelled’, so did printers and manuscripts were similarly ‘mobile’.\(^{161}\) I have shown that one way of analysing this textual ‘mobility’ and ‘consultation’ is by unpacking what is meant by the female international *Respublica litterarum*. I have illustrated how the ‘femininity’ of the Maitland Quarto may have been read and silently understood by other women writers of the Renaissance. I have thus offered a methodology for reading textual ‘femininity’ historically. Reading the Maitland Quarto alongside Melville’s *Ane Godlie Dreame* and Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, forces us to rethink what is meant by the ‘metaphysical meditative tradition’. I have shown how this tradition is not simply male and English, but female, Scottish and European.

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Chapter 3

‘Compounded […] Contrarieties’:¹ Alchemical Metaphysics in Aemilia Lanyer’s

*Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611)

‘I deliver you [Margaret Clifford] the health of the soule; […] this perfect gold growing in the veines of that excellent earth of the most blessed Paradice.’

(Aemilia Lanyer)²

In the Renaissance, the art of alchemy referred to the power of transmutation or extraction, both physical (the transmutation of metals, herbs, minerals and plants) and spiritual (the transformation of ‘base’ man/woman into a state of spiritual perfection).³

This dual definition of alchemy is vividly captured by the father of the Protestant movement, Martin Luther, who writes:

The science of alchemy I like very well, and indeed, ’tis the philosophy of the ancients. I like it not only for the profits it brings in melting metals, in decocting, preparing, extracting, and distilling herbs, roots; I like it also for the sake of the allegory and secret signification, which is exceedingly fine, touching the resurrection of the dead at the last day. For, as in a furnace the fire extracts and separates from a substance the other portions, and carries upward the spirit […] so God, at the day of judgement, will separate all things through fire, the righteous from the ungodly.⁴

Luther here juxtaposes the exoteric and physical (‘melting metals, […] decocting […] and distilling herbs, roots’), with the esoteric and metaphysical (‘allegory […] secret signification […] the fire extracts […] and carries upward the spirit’).⁵ This type of ‘metaphysical reason[ing]’ is portrayed as threateningly dissident by the anti-Reformist, Thomas More, who declares: ‘THE HERETICS ARE THEOLOGICAL ALCHEMISTS […] wherein thei describe eche of them their own fantastical church

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¹ Lanyer, SDRJ, 1219.
² Lanyer, ‘To the Ladie Margaret Countesse Dowager of Cumberland’, p. 34, lines 9-13. From henceforth ‘To the Ladie Margaret Countesse Dowager of Cumberland’ is abbreviated as LM and is proceeded by the line reference.
⁵ Luther, *Table Talk*, cited by Linden, ‘Introduction’, p. 22.
unknown […] he deuiseith and imagineth markes, tokens & signes’. It is presumably Luther’s notion of a ‘secret signification’ that More finds disturbing – an esoteric ‘unknown’ Church made up of subjective, unfamiliar ‘tokens’ and ‘signes’.

Yet Thomas More was largely in the minority in his condemnation of ‘theological alchemy’. Both Renaissance Catholics and Protestants utilized the discourse of spiritual alchemy to delineate their transcendental relationship with God. For example, this is how the sixteenth-century Catholic mystic, St Teresa of Ávila, expresses her spiritual transformation through God:

> the soul was purified, worked upon and refined like gold in the crucible, so that He [God] might the better set in it the enamel of His gifts: it was being cleansed now of the impurities of which it would need to be cleansed in purgatory.

> [...] My soul seemed to emerge from the crucible like gold, both brighter and purer, to find the Lord within it.

According to St Teresa, God is the holy alchemist par excellence, as he cleanses her speaker’s soul of its ‘impurities’ and fills it with an incandescent spiritual ‘gold’. Moreover, this is how the seventeenth-century English Protestant philosopher-physician, Sir Thomas Browne, describes his knowledge of alchemy:

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

Margaret Healy posits that one reason why Renaissance men and women were turning to the lexicon of metaphysical alchemy was because it provided a route into the prisca

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theologia – the one true trans-cultural theology. The sixteenth-century French Protestant philosopher, Philippe Du Plessis Mornay, writes: ‘Mercuirus [Hermes] Trismegistus [the father of alchemy], who (if the bookes [the Hermetica] which are fathered uppon him bee his in deede, as in trueth they bee very auncient) [...] teacheth euerywhere, That there is but one GOD’. Du Plessis Mornay’s above-quoted treatise, A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion (1587), was translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney and Arthur Golding. This treatise ran into four editions by 1617 (STC) and is echoed by the seventeenth-century philosopher, Thomas Tymme: ‘Do not all things flow from Vnity through the goodnes of One?’ Men and women could escape the violent religious disputes of the time through the unary of the One – the auctoritas of a unified God.

The dissemination of metaphysical alchemical ideologies during the Renaissance partly came about through Marsilio Ficino’s influential editions of the Hermetica, the Asclepius (1469) and the Pimander (1471). As Brian Copenhaver points out, in the mid-fifteenth century, Ficino laid aside his work on Plato to concentrate on the writings of the Egyptian sage, Hermes Trismegistus, who, as indicated, was regarded as the father of physical and spiritual alchemy. The fourteenth-century physician, Bernard of Trier, for example, states: ‘The firste invente[r] of this arte [of alchemy] [...] was Hermes Trismegistus: for he made and composed the boocks of [...] naturall philosophie’. Ficino’s Hermetic Pimander, together with the Asclepius, went through more than twenty printed editions between 1471 and the mid-sixteenth century. It was translated into French, Spanish, Dutch and Italian. Hermetic-alchemical philosophy was disseminated on the British Isles by philosophers such as Thomas Tymme, who printed an English translation of Joseph Du Chesne’s Latin text, The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermetical Physicke, in 1605.

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

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

It is a passage such as this that appears to have led the seventeenth-century philosopher, physician and poet, Henry Vaughan, to remark that ‘Hermetists […] observe nature in her workes […] by the mediation of nature […] they may produce and bring to light […] rare effectual medicines’. For Vaughan and his fellow Hermeticists, ‘rare effectual medicines’ could be attained through the distillation, conservation and transmutation of telluric ‘herbs, trees, stones, and spices’.

In 1580 the distiller, John Hester, proposed that ‘Alchymie […] serueth to helpe those diseased both inwardly and outwardly […] pacients shall be holpen through the hidden mysteries and heauenly secrets of this science’. Hester here recalls the influential theories of the sixteenth-century Swiss Hermeticist, Paracelsus (1493-1541). Paracelsus had argued that the physician’s task is to see the ‘inner and secret matter’ of all things. He posits that a physician must be a ‘philosopher’ and ‘Alchemist’. By combining the ‘outwar[d]’ and the ‘inwar[d]’, Hester and Paracelsus create a compounded physical-spiritual alchemical healing practice. Paracelsus’s ideologies were being translated into English by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers such as

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21 Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius, trans. by Copenhaver, pp. 69, 70, 71.
22 Henry Nollius [Heinrich Nolle], Hermetical Physick, trans. by Henry Vaughan, p. 5.
George Baker and Thomas Tymme. Both the philosopher, John Dee, and the writer, John Donne, owned Paracelsian texts. Indeed, when Donne describes the process of spiritual inner sublimation as ‘true religious alchemy’, he is arguably evoking the Hermetic-alchemical theories of Paracelsus and Hester.

This chapter argues that Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611) responds to a male metaphysical alchemical tradition set by Renaissance thinkers such as Marsilio Ficino, Paracelsus, John Hester, John Dee, Thomas Tymme and Michael Maier. I then demonstrate how Lanyer takes this male tradition further through her specific focus on the role of the female alchemist. I explore Lanyer’s feminization of alchemical discourse in three ways: her presentation of Margaret Clifford (1560-1616) as Lady Alchymia; her self-fashioning of herself as a female poet-alchemist; and finally her attempt to establish an esoteric linguistic code with other female alchemists of the time, in particular Anne Clifford (1590-1676), Mary Sidney (1561-1621) and Queen Anne (1574-1619). Alchemy as a ‘[c]ompounded’ (SDRJ, 1219) discourse is manipulated by Lanyer, as her poet-speaker seeks to compound the contrary class hierarchies that exist among women.

Alchemical practice was particularly appurtenant to women during the Renaissance as the processes of distillation and decoction of herbs and plants would often take place within the home where women administered medical and spiritual care. In 1600, the anatomist, Charles Estienne, stipulated that the ‘huswife’ should be ‘skilfull in naturall Physicke, for the benefite of her own folke and others’. Two such women involved in ‘naturall Physicke’ were Margaret Clifford and her daughter, Anne Clifford. The Clifford household library had a number of alchemical texts, including George Ripley’s *The Compound of Alchymy* (1591), Roger Bacon’s *The Mirror of Alchymy*

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(1597), and a late Paracelsian work from 1606 in Latin. Moreover, in 1652, Anne Clifford describes her mother in the Great Book of Records of the Cliffords in the following way:

She [Margaret Clifford] was a lover of the study and practice of alchimy, by which she found out excellent medicines, that did much good to many. She delighted in distilling of waters, and other chymical extractions, for she had some knowledge in most kind of minerals, herbs, flowers, and plants.

[...]

And certainly this noble Countess [Margaret Clifford] had in her the infusion from above of many excellent knowledges and virtues both Divine and humane; which did bridle and keep under that great spirit of hers, and caused her to have the sweet peace of a heavenly and quiet mind [.] 33

Anne here encapsulates the ‘infusion’ between the exoteric and esoteric: the physical ‘distilling of waters’ and its connections to the ‘Divine’ and ‘humane’. 34 Margaret, in the above-quoted extract, is presented as a Hermetic physician-alchemist and both her and her daughter were probably drawing influence from translations of the Hermetica. Hermes famously declared: ‘that which is above is all one with that which is beneath’. 35 Margaret, like Hermes Trismegistus, conflates the divine with the human through her mixing together of ‘herbs, trees, stones, and spices’, which have ‘within themselves [...] a natural force of divinity’. 36 As indicated, John Hester proposed in 1580 that ‘Alchymie [...] serueth to helpe those diseased both inwardly and outwardly [...] pacients shall be holpen through the hidden mysteries and heauenly secrets of this science’. 37 It is presumably this type of spiritual-physical discourse that Anne and by implication, Margaret, were accessing. Anne’s description of her mother in her 1652 family memorial provides tangible evidence that women in the Renaissance were not somehow

37 Hester, The Key of Philosophie, The Second Part, sig. G1r.
isolated from the philosophical, medical and spiritual discourses of the time, but were participants in them.

Anne Clifford tells us that her mother knew ‘no language but her own [English]’. Margaret Clifford therefore had to be active in commissioning translations of alchemical texts through her male associates, Thomas Tymme (d. 1620) and Christopher Taylour. Margaret’s connection with Tymme and Taylour is evinced in her collection of alchemical texts at Skipton Castle, Yorkshire. Penny Bayer argues that the extant sixteenth-century alchemical receipt book held in the Cumbria Record Office, the so-called ‘Margaret Manuscript’ (c. 1550-1598), most probably belonged to Margaret Clifford. This manuscript is inscribed with ‘C.[hristopher] T.[aylour]’ on fol. 35r. Furthermore, the 1590 manuscript translation of Dudley Fenner’s *Sacred Divinitie or the Truth which is according to Pietie* is likely to have been written for Margaret and is transcribed with ‘Your lovinge friend T[homas]. T[ymme].’ Arguably Margaret Clifford forged connections with these men, so that they could translate alchemical works that Margaret would not otherwise have had access to.

Penny Bayer goes on to argue that the alchemical receipt book, ‘The Margaret Manuscript’, features in Anne Clifford’s commissioned portrait of her mother and family – *The Appleby Great Picture* (1646). This portrait places ‘a written hand Booke of Alkumiste Abstracions of Distillation & Excellent Medicines’ above Margaret Clifford’s head. Jayne Archer contends that this commissioned portrait featuring the prominent alchemical receipt book points to a body of alchemical knowledge, ‘ontology’ and ‘epistemology’ that exists between mother and daughter. Indeed, Margaret is likely to have passed on her knowledge of domestic medical alchemy to Anne, as in 1616, when Margaret is suffering from ‘cold chillness’ and ‘ague’, Anne sends Margaret ‘certain cordials and conserves’ to speed her recovery. Furthermore, if we turn to the contents of ‘The Margaret Manuscript’, we find that alchemical practices

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39 Bayer, ‘Lady Margaret Clifford’s Alchemical Receipt Book and the John Dee Circle’, pp. 271-84. The alchemical receipt book held in the Cumbria Record Office is given the title, ‘The Margaret Manuscript’, by Penny Bayer in her above-cited article.
40 Kendal, Cumbria Archive Centre, MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fol. 35r.
41 This evidence is cited in Bayer, ‘Lady Margaret Clifford’s Alchemical Receipt Book’, p. 283.
did not take place in isolation, but in the presence of others. For example, in this manuscript there is a receipt for ‘Fixacio Luna in Sol’, which ends ‘Proved as writeth my daugher’. This suggests that daughters were working in collaboration with their mothers and fathers, learning the art of spiritual and physical healing for use in their own households after marriage.

But to whom did Margaret Clifford administer her ‘excellent medicines’? In circa 1593 it is reported that Margaret Clifford was saddened by the sight of so many poor women in the town of Beamsley near Skipton. The sight of these impoverished women motivates Margaret (in 1593) into founding a hospital or almshouse in Beamsley for a mother and twelve sisters (all of whom were poor widows). Margaret requests in her will that this hospital be completed by her daughter, Anne, which Anne does, as the hospital is fully completed in circa 1631. The 1593 Beamsley Hospital is circular in shape with a chapel in the centre. Every woman in the hospital has her own room and garden. Having one’s own garden is reminiscent of Ficino’s advice to his patients to surround themselves with the ‘spiritus’ of plants, herbs and stones. Of course, the circular shape is associated with the divine in this period and this may well be what Margaret planned to allude to in her all-female chapel-hospital. Besides her own household, it is precisely to these women of Beamsley that Margaret might have been administering her spiritual and physical care. Indeed, Margaret Clifford’s contemporary, Lady Margaret Hoby (bap. 1571, d. 1633), was another practitioner of medicine and distributed physical ‘saulue[s]’ (salves) to poor women in her community, as recorded in her diary. Administering ‘salves’, whether physical or spiritual, was one way in which women of different classes encountered one another. The case of Margaret Clifford’s 1593 Beamsley Hospital demonstrates the power that some Renaissance women had and used to transform other women’s lives.

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46 MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fol. 54r.
49 Spence, Lady Anne Clifford, p. 9.
50 Spence, Lady Anne Clifford, pp. 10, 97-98.
51 Spence, Lady Anne Clifford, p. 10.
52 Spence, Lady Anne Clifford, p. 10.
54 For further exposition on the circle’s links to divine alchemy, see Margaret Healy, “‘Making the quadrangle round’: Alchemy’s Protean Forms in Shakespeare’s Sonnets and ‘A Lover’s Complaint’”, in A Companion to Shakespeare’s Sonnets, ed. by Michael Schoenfeldt (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 405-25 (pp. 410-12).
The alchemical-transformative power of the patron is a key touchstone in Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaæorum*, which provides further evidence of Margaret Clifford’s role as spiritual and physical alchemist. According to Lanyer’s speaker, Margaret ‘[h]ealeth all griefes’ (SDRJ, 1383):

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To heale the soules [...] 
By thy faire virtues; [...] 
[...]
If they be blind, thou giv’st to them their sight; 
If deafe or lame, they heare, and goe upright.
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(SDRJ, 1371-72, 1375-76)

The ‘they’ (SDRJ, 1375-76) cited here could well include the women of Beamsley whom Margaret aided through her salvific care and ‘almes-deeds’ (SDRJ, 1335). Lanyer here invokes both *The Geneva Bible* (Ecclesiasticus 38. 1; Luke 9. 1) and Ficino’s *Three Books on Life* (1489), where Christ commanded his disciples to ‘cure the sick [...] with herbs and stones [...] to cure with words’.

Margaret Clifford, for Lanyer’s poet-speaker, is Christ’s true disciple, as she possesses the physical and spiritual capacity to ‘heale’ (SDRJ, 1371).

In *Salve Deus Rex Judaæorum*, Christ is referred to as a pure, unspotted ‘Jasper stone’ and ‘corner stone’ (SDRJ, 1635, 1661) on which the ‘worlds foundation first was laid’ (SDRJ, 1643). This not only invokes *The Geneva Bible* – ‘the stone [Christ] which ye buylders refused [...] is made the head of the corner’ – but also evokes Renaissance alchemical writings, which depict Christ as the philosopher’s stone.

The sixteenth-century alchemist, Heinrich Khunrath, for instance writes: ‘the PHILOSOPHERS’ STONE [...] is [...] IHSVH CHRIST [...], Saviour of the whole human race [...]. Know CHRIST naturally from the Stone; and learn to Theosophically know the STONE from CHRIST’.

For Lanyer’s poet-speaker, it is Margaret Clifford who mirrors the steadfast and pure cornerstone, Christ:

```
your [Margaret Clifford’s] heart remaineth firme and right; 
Your love so strong, as nothing can remove, 
Your thoughts beeing placed on him [Christ] both day 
    and night, 
Your constant soule doth lodge betweene her brests, 
This Sweet of sweets, in which all glory rests. 
[...]
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You loving God, live in your selfe confind
From unpure Love, your purest thoughts retires, [...]

Subduing all affections that are base,
Unalterable by the change of times [...]
(SDRJ, 1340-44, 1547-58, 1558-59)

False, ‘base’ (SDRJ, 1558) alchemists search for external ‘riches’ (SDRJ, 1385), but Lanyer’s Margaret concentrates on inner ‘wealth’ (SDRJ, 1407), as she searches for the precious esoteric jewel which is Christ:

Thy [...]
Respecting worldly wealth to be but drosse, [...]

your perfect heart [...]
spend that precious time that God hath sent,
In all good exercises of the minde,
Where to your noble nature is inclin’d.
(SDRJ, 1405-1407, 1562, 1566-68)

As Susanne Woods points out, ‘drosse’ (SDRJ, 1407) denotes the waste that results from melting metal or unrefinable material. Margaret rejects the ‘drosse’ (SDRJ, 1407) in favour of a *philosophia meditativa*, reaching Christ and the divine through the transformative faculty of her ‘minde’ (SDRJ, 1567) and ‘soule’ (SDRJ, 1343).

Through Margaret Clifford’s ‘meditation’ (SDRJ, 153) on Christ, she gains power to transform others:

To virtue, learning, and the powres divine,
Thou [Margaret Clifford] mai’st convert, but never wilt incline

To fowle disorder, or licentiousnesse
But in thy modest vaile [phial?] do’st sweetly cover
The stains of other sinnes, to make themselves,
That by this meanes thou mai’st in time recover
Those weake lost sheepe that did so long transgresse,
Presenting them unto thy dearest Lover;
That when he brings them backe unto his fold,
In their conversion then he may behold

Thy beauty shining brighter than the Sunne,

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To this great Lord [Christ], thou onely art affected [...]
(SDRJ, 1391-1401, 1705)

Through her alchemical vaile/phial (SDRJ, 1394), Margaret is able to initiate a regenerative ‘new berth’ (SDRJ, 200) for the poet-speaker, as the poet undergoes spiritual and literary transfiguration:

You [Margaret Clifford] are the Articke Starre that guides my hand,
All what I am, I rest at your command.
(SDRJ, 1839-40)

I first obtain’d Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain’d;
[...]
you (great Lady) [...],
From whose desires did spring this worke of Grace [...]
(TDC, 1-2, 11-12)

Repetition of ‘Grace’ (TDC, 2, 12) recalls Thomas Norton’s influential alchemical treatise, The Ordinall of Alchimy (1477): ‘holi Alkimy / [...] by Teaching, or Revelacion begann. / [...] given to an able Man by grace.’ Norton’s name appears on fol. 123r of ‘The Margaret Manuscript’, so his writings are likely to have been read by Margaret Clifford and her circle. Moreover, Lanyer’s repetition of ‘Grace’ (TDC, 2, 12) evokes Botticelli’s three female Graces in the Primavera (c. 1477-1490). Botticelli’s three female Graces may personify ‘intellectus’, ‘spiritus’ and ‘materia’, and for Lanyer’s poet-speaker these three divine components are embodied in Margaret Clifford herself: ‘I first obtain’d / Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain’d’ (TDC, 1-2).

Indeed, it is Margaret Clifford who controls the ‘spiritus’ of Nature in Cookeham:

each plant, each floure, each tree
Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee [Margaret]:
The very Hills right humbly did descend,
When you to tread upon them did intend.
And as you set your feete, they still did rise,  
Glad that they could receive so rich a prise.  
The gentle Windes did take delight to bee  
Among those woods that were so grac’d by thee.  
[...]  
Each Arbor, Banke, each Seate, each stately Tree,  
Thought themselves honor’d in supporting thee.  

(TDC, 33-40, 45-46)

In *The New Pearl of Great Price* (1546), the alchemist is described as a ‘minister and follower of Nature’ and this is echoed by Michael Maier in 1618: ‘Nature be your guide; follow her with your art [of alchemy] willingly, closely’. For Lanyer’s speaker, it is Margaret Clifford who embodies both Dame Nature and Lady Alchymia, as she transforms and commands the landscape that surrounds her: ‘each plant, each floure, each tree / Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee [Margaret]’ (TDC, 33-34). Lanyer’s representation of Margaret Clifford as Dame Nature at Cooke-ham takes us back to Anne Clifford’s portrayal of her mother in her 1652 family memorial: ‘She [Margaret Clifford] delighted in distilling of waters, and other chymical extractions, for she had some knowledge in most kind of minerals, herbs, flowers, and plants’. For both Lanyer and Anne Clifford, it is Margaret who sets forth the powers of ‘plant[s]’, ‘floure[s]’ and ‘tree[s]’ (TDC, 33). One of the extant presentation copies of Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaorum* contains the inscription ‘Cumberland’ on the recto of the page preceding the title-page (Figure 1).

Figure 1, The inscription ‘Cumberland’ on the recto of the page preceding the title-page in Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaorum*, London, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, Dyce 5675. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. www.vam.ac.uk.

This inscription suggests that *Salve Deus Rex Judaorum* may have been disseminated via Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland and her associates. Anne Clifford could have accessed *Salve Deus Rex Judaorum* through her mother and drawn influence from

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65 This presentation copy of Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaorum* (London, 1611) is held in the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Dyce 5675.
it for her own eulogy of Margaret Clifford in her 1652 family memorial. Indeed, in Lanyer’s dedicatory poem to Anne Clifford, Lanyer writes:

This Monument of her [Margaret Clifford’s] faire worth retaine
In your [Anne Clifford’s] pure mind, and keep it from al staine.
[...]

He [Christ] is the stone the builders did refuse,
Which you, sweet Lady [Anne Clifford], are to build upon;
He is the rocke that holy Church did chuse,
Among which number, you must needs be one [.]

(LACD, 66-71, 129-32)

Lanyer posits here that Anne Clifford will ‘retaine’ (LACD, 71) in her ‘mind’ (LACD, 72) the textual monument of Margaret Clifford that Lanyer has erected in her volume of poems. Moreover, Lanyer suggests that through Salve Deus Rex Judæorum, Anne Clifford will access the spiritual-material ‘stone’ (LACD, 129), Christ. What I am arguing here is that it is the discourse of spiritual-physical alchemy that connects both Lanyer and Anne to Margaret.

Lanyer thus foregrounds the power of the transformative female patron who can change protégées’ lives emotionally, physically, spiritually and ultimately financially. Lanyer has been accused by A. L. Rowse of being sycophantic in her expressions of love for her patrons, but Lanyer’s portrayal of the transformative female patron is arguably part of a carefully engineered political agenda, as she seeks to rewrite the pejorative accounts of Lady Alchymia found in some male discourses of the time.

The sixteenth-century German astrologer, Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516), described Lady Alchymia as a ‘chaste prostitute, who has many lovers but disappoints all and grants her favors to none. She transforms the haughty into fools, the rich into paupers, the philosophers into dolts, and the deceived into loquacious deceivers’.

Trithemius, in this statement, seems to be satirizing the muse of exoteric alchemy. Gold seekers, according to Trithemius, will be disappointed by the ‘chaste prostitute’, Lady

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66 Aemilia Lanyer, ‘To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet’, in The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer, pp. 41-47. From henceforth ‘To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet’ has been abbreviated as LACD and is proceeded by the line reference.
Alchymia, because she is open to all, but grants satisfaction and fruition to none.\textsuperscript{69} Trithemius’s notion of the promiscuous ‘chaste prostitute’ is recalled and reworked by Donne in his depiction of the bride/church of Christ, who is ‘most trew’ when she is ‘embrac’d and open to most men’.\textsuperscript{70} Lanyer’s poet-speaker is devoted to her patron, Margaret Clifford, for being the ‘Deere Spouse of Christ’ (SDRJ, 1170) – Margaret is the embodiment of the true church of Christ, celebrated for her constancy, generosity and genuine transformative power:

The gentle Windes did take delight to bee  
Among those woods that were so grac’d by thee \[Margaret Clifford\].

[...]
The swelling Bankes deliver’d all their pride,  
When such a \textit{Phænix} once they had espide.  
[...]
In these sweet woods how often did you [Margaret Clifford] walke,  
With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;  
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,  
To meditate what you therein did see [.]

(TDC, 39-40, 43-44, 81-84)

\textit{A Chymicall Dictionary} (1650) defines the phoenix as the ‘quintessence of Fire; also the Philosopher’s Stone’.\textsuperscript{71} For Lanyer’s speaker in ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’, the philosopher’s stone, the ‘\textit{Phænix}’ (TDC, 44), Christ, is resurrected through Lady Alchymia, Margaret Clifford. In this way, Lanyer deconstructs the dubious/profane invocations of Lady Alchymia found in the writings of Trithemius and Donne. Lanyer’s Lady Alchymia, Margaret Clifford, restores to life the philosopher’s stone, the ‘\textit{Phænix}’ (TDC, 44), Christ, and is cleansed from any taint of the profane.

Lanyer’s \textit{reinterpretaio} of male alchemical traditions is sustained in her presentation of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. In the sixteenth-century manuscript, \textit{Splendor Solis, Alchemical Treatises of Solomon Trismosin} (1582), we find a pictorial depiction of alchemical knowledge emanating from the Queen of Sheba and Solomon: the mixing of male and female, Sol and Luna (Figure 2).\textsuperscript{72} This is taken up by

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{69} Trithemius, \textit{Annalium Hirsaugensium}, cited by Archer, ‘‘Rudenesse it sefe she doth refine’: Queen Elizabeth I as Lady Alchymia’, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{A Chymicall Dictionary} (1650), cited in Abraham, \textit{A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery}, p. 152.
\end{flushleft}
Heinrich Khunrath in the *Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom* (1595), which is a theosophical commentary on Solomonic texts, and is also recounted in Michael Maier’s *Septimana Philosophica* (1620), which is a six-day dialogue between King Solomon, Hiram and the Queen of Sheba.⁷³

It is this exchange of alchemical ‘Wisdome’ (SDRJ, 1586) that Lanyer evokes when she writes:

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That Ethyopian Queene did gaine great fame,
Who from the Southerne world, did come to see
Great Salomon; the glory of whose name
Had spread it selfe ore all the earth,
[...]
this faire Queene of Sheba came from farre,
To reverence this new appearing starre.
[...]
faire rich presents did she bring:
Yea many strange hard questions did shee frame,
All which were answer’d by this famous King:
    Nothing was hid that in her heart did rest,
    And all to proove this King so highly blest.
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Here Majestie with Majestie did mee te,
Wisdome to Wisdome yeelded true content,
One Beauty did another Beauty greet,
Bounty to Bountie never could repent;
[...]
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In virtuous exercises of the minde,
In which this Queene did much contentment finde.
(SDRJ, 1569-72, 1575-76, 1580-88, 1591-92)

Textual chiasmus here (SDRJ, 1585-88) establishes an egalitarian equality between Solomon and Sheba, mirroring the balancing of Sol and Luna, male and female in Plate IV of the Trismosin illustration (Figure 2). Margaret Clifford, as a reader of alchemical texts, would not have missed this allusion. However, Lanyer goes a step further than her male contemporaries, as she intimates that Solomon and Sheba ‘com[e] short’ (SDRJ, 1690) of Margaret Clifford:

This great majesticke Queene comes short of thee [Margaret],
[...]
a greater thou hast sought and found
Than Salomon in all his royalite [.] (SDRJ, 1690, 1697-98)

Solomon and Sheba are ‘[I]overs [...] base’ (SDRJ, 1551-52) in comparison to the ‘[p]ure thoughted Lady’ (SDRJ, 1673) Margaret. Margaret with her ‘golden via[l] [phial?]’ (SDRJ, 1678) reaches ‘heavenly light’ (SDRJ, 1611), as she ‘walke[s]’ with Christ and ‘meditate[s]’ with Moses, ‘mount[ing]’ his ‘holy Hill’ (TDC, 81, 84-85). Lanyer here echoes the notion of divine Hermetic ascent: ‘And thereupon’ the Hermetica tells us, ‘the man mounts upward through the structure of the heavens [...] he ascends to the substance of the eighth sphere, being now possessed of his own proper power’.74 As Margaret ascends Moses’ ‘holy Hill’ (TDC, 85) in ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’, she becomes a personification of the Prophetess Maria, Moses’ sacred sister and said inventor of the bain-marie (the water bath used for alchemical separation).75

According to Lanyer’s poet-speaker, Margaret Clifford’s alchemical healing stems from a rich female biblical tradition emanating from the daughters of Jerusalem, the Virgin Mary and the Mary Magdalene. The daughters of Jerusalem ‘cri’d’ at Christ’s crucifixion and thus obtain a Thomas-Norton-like ‘grace’ from God (SDRJ, 968-69).76 Their fecund tears ‘powr’d forth apace / [...] like shewers of Aprils raine’ (SDRJ, 973-74), cleansing and ‘wash[ing]’ (SDRJ, 1017) the ‘stone’ (SDRJ, 1661) which is Christ. Similarly, the Virgin Mary with ‘[h]er teares did wash away his

75 Patai, The Jewish Alchemists, pp. 61, 74.
[Christ’s] precious blood’ (SDRJ, 1017). This fluvial intermingling of blood and tears recalls the alchemical process of ablation: mixing blood with matter and dissolving the matter of the stone in order to reach the divine purity of ‘finest gold’ (SDRJ, 1311). The sixteenth-century alchemist-physician, Gerhard Dorn, proposed that ‘[w]ithin the human body there is [...] a metaphysical substance [...] it is itself uncorrupted medicament’. Lanyer implies that it is women’s uncorrupted tears that are healing metaphysical substances, as it is women’s tears that alleviate Christ’s suffering during the Passion. According to Lanyer’s speaker, it is through the alchemical intermixing of the tears of women and the blood of Christ that leads to the creation of the Gospels: ‘In deepe Characters, writ with blood and teares, / Upon those blessed Everlasting scroules’ (SDRJ, 1725-26).

The Virgin Mary is described by Lanyer as a ‘Faire chosen vessell’ (SDRJ, 1030). The Virgin Mary is thus evocative of a sacred bain-marie, created to ‘[n]urse / [...] Heavens bright King [Christ]’ (SDRJ, 1087-88). Lanyer’s Virgin Mary enters into the ‘open street’ to gather the ‘Jessie floure and bud’, Christ, when he smells ‘most sweet’ (SDRJ, 1020-22). This not only recounts the voice of the bride in the Song of Songs, who seeks Christ ‘by the stretes & by the open places’, but also refers to other Renaissance female wanderers, who walk in open places, gathering and conserving wild flowers as salves. The domestic worker turned writer, Isabella Whitney, for example, writes:

For this I say the flowers are good,
which I on thee bestow:
[...]
The luce of all these Flowers take,
and make thee a conseru[.]

Flowers for Whitney and Lanyer are a Gerhard-Dorn-like medicine of ‘threefold nature: metaphysical, physical, and moral’. For Lanyer, this practise of conserving and decocting the medicament of flowers emanates from the Virgin Mary (SDRJ, 1020-22).

Paracelsus had argued that the physician’s task is to see the ‘inner and secret matter’ of all things. He posits that a physician must be a ‘philosopher’ and

78 Gerhard Dorn, ‘Speculativae philosophiae’ (1602), cited in Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 256.
80 Isabella Whitney, A Sweet Nosgay (London, 1573), sigs A8r; C5r.
‘Alchemist’, healing human bodies with ‘astral balsam[s]’. It is arguably this lexicon that Lanyer draws upon when she writes:

The Maries doe with pretious balmes attend,
[...]
those pretious oyntments he [Christ] desires
[...]
These pretious balms doe heale his [Christ’s] grievous

wounds []

(SDRJ, 1287, 1290, 1297)

For Lanyer, Paracelsus’s ‘astral balsam[s]’ derive from the women who attend Christ at his death and resurrection. It is to this alchemical tradition of astral balms that Margaret Clifford belongs. She, with the daughters of Jerusalem, the Virgin Mary and the Mary Magdalene, reflects on the ‘Heav’nly Light’ of Christ (SDRJ, 990): ‘Your [Margaret Clifford’s] Eagles eyes did gaze against this Sunne’ (SDRJ, 991). As Lorna Hutson points out, Margaret’s ‘reflective knowledge’ is enhanced by the ‘refraction of light’ in the tears of the daughters of Jerusalem. It is from the combined light of Christ and his female disciples that Margaret is able to ‘heale the soules of those that doe transgresse’ (SDRJ, 1371).

What is more, Margaret’s ‘Eagle[es] eyes’ (SDRJ, 991) seem to be a symbol of alchemical sublimation. The seventeenth-century alchemist, Eyraeneus Philalethes, states, ‘and therefore every sublimation of the Philosophers, let be one Eagle’. This image resurfaces in ‘The Margaret Manuscript’: ‘Sol is called the white Eagle’. Of course, the key transgressor that Margaret carries with her in her eagle-like flight in Lanyer’s poem is arguably the poet-speaker herself – a marginal woman of the court who may have been mistress to the prominent courtier, Lord Hunsdon. It is Margaret Clifford who has the eagle-like power to ‘heale’ (SDRJ, 1371) the poet’s transgressive predicament and alleviate her suffering with spiritual and financial ‘Grace’ (SDRJ, 1090).

According to Michael Schoenfeldt, women of the Renaissance were unable to express a ‘physiological interiority’ because of their lack of education in ‘medical

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86 Eyraeneus Philalethes, Secrets Reveal’d (1669), cited in Abraham, A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery, p. 64.
87 MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fol. 118v.
discourse’. Historians of women’s science have done much to counter this gender-biased ideology. Margaret Pelling, for instance, argues that the first port of call in times of illness in the early modern era was the family or household where women’s knowledge and presence was prominent. As outlined above, Lanyer uses the Gospels to create a complex physiological lexicon, which was designed to appeal to early modern female practitioners of medicine such as Margaret Clifford. Salve Deus Rex Judeorum provides evidence that physiological discourses were inextricably intertwined with spiritual discourses in this period and it is through this conflation that women writers like Lanyer could enter into medical debates.

It is not only Margaret Clifford, however, who is portrayed as a spiritual alchemist in Salve Deus Rex Judeorum, but the poet-speaker herself. As indicated, Margaret has the strength to undergo Hermetic ascent, but the poet too is capable of reaching such divine heights:

This Storie: that whole Worlds with Bookes would fill,
In these few Lines, will put me out of breath,
To run so swiftly up this mightie Hill,
I may behold it with the eye of Faith [.]
(SDRJ, 315-18)

Lanyer’s poet-speaker combines Petrarch’s sublime ascent of Mount Ventoux (‘To run so swiftly up this mightie Hill’ [SDRJ, 317]), with a Hermetic regenerative power (‘poore Infant Verse must soare aloft, / [...] And in the Ayre above the Clowdes to hover’ [SDRJ, 279, 283]). The poet-speaker’s heavenly ascent will lead to the creation of her divine poem. By mirroring Margaret Clifford’s ascent of Moses’ ‘holy Hill’ (TDC, 85), the poet-speaker signals that she is on a potentially similar footing to her patron, as ‘Poverty and Riches’ meet ‘together’ (SDRJ, 1114) through the ‘poore rich King’ Christ.

Erica Longfellow posits that discourses of ‘egalitarianism’ would have been ‘alien’ to Lanyer’s original readers and potential patrons. But just how accurate is this assumption? As illustrated, Margaret Clifford was not afraid of interacting with

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89 Schoenfeldt, Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England, pp. 37-38.
‘all sorts of people’ (such as the impoverished widows of Beamsley).\(^{94}\) Anne Clifford writes in her 1652 family memorial that Margaret Clifford was of ‘graceful behaviour, which she increased the more by her being civil and courteous to all sorts of people’\(^{95}\). According to Anne Clifford, Margaret’s God-given ‘graceful behaviour’ is augmented through her mixing with ‘all sorts of people’\(^{96}\). Margaret Clifford was also a public defender of women, declaring to the Court at Whitehall in 1606, ‘man in his sex be more excellent than woman, yet in quality wee see often women excell men’\(^{97}\). Margaret’s choice of the term ‘women’ here is arguably transcendent of class. Furthermore, as indicated, it is through the administering of ‘salves’ that women of various social backgrounds were able to interact with one another. Lady Margaret Hoby gives a ‘saulue’ (salve) to a ‘poore woman of Caton’ and receives ‘medeson’ made by Mrs Thornborow.\(^{98}\) The medic-healer, Lady Grace Mildmay (c. 1552-1620), instructs her housekeeper and ‘assured friend’, Bess, in the following way:

My good Bess,

[...] as you receive the robite wine, which I think will be tomorrow in the afternoon, put the herbs [...] in and on Monday next distil some part of, but not too near. Then strain it from the herbs and reserve the herbs to dry. Then put the water you draw off unto the same extracted liquor and reserve it by itself. [...] It may be that you must draw the herbs at twice, because they are many. Use your own discretion herein, but this is the form and matter. And take your time and leisure as you think good. [...] God give his blessing thereunto.

Your very loving mistress and assured friend,

[Lady Grace Mildmay.]\(^{99}\)

It is through the practises of domestic alchemy that class distinctions could be partially negotiated.

It is not accidental that ‘salve’ is the first word of Lanyer’s poem. Lanyer’s use of the word ‘salve’ has a threefold meaning. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, ‘Salve’ is

\(^{97}\) Margaret Clifford’s petition to Whitehall (23 November 1606), cited in Spence, Lady Anne Clifford, p. 41.
Latin for ‘Hail’, but in English it can mean both a healing bodily ointment and a remedy for spiritual disease (OED). Lanyer draws upon this inference and in so doing evokes the culture of healing medicinal mixtures exchanged between women of different classes. ‘Salve’ also invokes the ‘Salve Regina’, a Marian antiphon (OED). As illustrated, the Virgin Mary, for Lanyer, is a physical and spiritual healer par excellence, nursing Christ through his death and resurrection. In this way, Lanyer fashions herself as a spiritual healer and uses this lexicon to enter into Margaret Clifford’s household, chamber and still-room: ‘Saint Peter gave health to the body, so I deliver you [Margaret Clifford] the health of the soule [...] The sweet incense, balsums, odours, and gumsmes that flowes from the beautifull tree of Life’ (LM, 9-10, 14-15). According to Susanne Woods, Lanyer certainly spoke French and Italian and probably had some knowledge of Latin. Lanyer, through *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, may have been offering her services to Margaret Clifford as a translator of alchemical texts, similarly to the aforementioned male protégées, Thomas Tymme and Christopher Taylour.

By stressing the transformative power of the female ‘friend’, Lanyer transmutes the male homosocial discourse of alchemical amicitia, and applies it to women. In the seventeenth-century manuscript, *A Light in Darkness* (c. 1602), Thomas Tymme presents his patron, Thomas Baker, with ‘a Scholler’s guift, which I offer to you [Thomas Baker] (my worshipfull & most precious friend in the world) wishing to you [...] the true and most perfect Elixir [Christ], both in this lyfe and the life to come*. Tymme here compounds the discourse of spiritual alchemy with Neoplatonism, echoing Ficino’s love letters to his disciple/patron, Lorenzo de’ Medici: ‘I burn with the fire of love. [...] You [de’ Medici] have converted [...] everyone’s envy to admiration. [...] I love my own in you. [...] I reverence God through you’. Alchemical amicitia can dissolve class distinctions, as all are one through the ‘precious friend’ Christ. Lanyer draws upon the class transcendence of male alchemical amicitia in her address to Margaret Clifford, and broadens this male homosocial dynamic by foregrounding the transformative power of female patron-protégée love:

Therefore good Madame [Margaret Clifford], to the most perfect eyes of your understanding, I deliver the inestimable treasure [Christ] of all elected soules [...] as also, the mirrour of your most worthy minde [...]
So wishing you in this world all increase of health and honour, and in the world to come life everlasting, I rest.

(LM, 27-31, 38-39)

Lanyer’s construction of herself as poet-alchemist is made explicit when she states: ‘I deliver you [Margaret Clifford] the health of the soule; [...] this perfect gold growing in the veines of that excellent earth of the most blessed Paradice’ (LM, 9-13). Jayne Archer reads this statement as referring to the ‘philosophical gold hidden in the bowels’ of a pre-lapsarian paradise. Indeed, Lanyer intimates that this pre-lapsarian ‘gold’ (LM, 12) can be regained through a Petrarchan Hermetic ascent (SDRJ, 315-18). Lanyer’s ‘gold’ (LM, 12) is, of course, also a reference to Christ. Salve Deus Rex Judæorum is imbued with a spiritual alchemical quest, where the poet’s search for Christ mirrors what ‘The Margaret Manuscript’ describes as ‘the threefolde preparation of Golde’: nigredo or chaotic darkness (‘He [Christ] in the waters laies his chamber beames, / And clouds of darknesse compasse him about’ [SDRJ, 97-98]); albedo or cleansing (‘The Innocent [...] as a Dove shall flie / [...] Her [the Virgin Mary’s] teares did wash away his [Christ’s] pretious blood’ [SDRJ, 119, 1017]); rubedo or dawning light (‘Thou [Christ] as the Sunne shal shine; or much more cleare’ [SDRJ, 56]). By presenting Christ through this vivid exoteric process, Lanyer echoes the lexicon of Margaret Clifford’s alchemical receipt book (‘the threefolde preparation of Golde’) and thus establishes an esoteric code between herself and her patron. Lanyer demonstrates that she can speak and understand the discourse of Margaret Clifford’s alchemical coterie and subtly uses this lexicon to solicit Margaret’s inner circle.

However, Lanyer’s alchemical discourse does not simply allow her to appeal to an enclosed circle, but is part of a wider political agenda applicable to ‘all vertuous Ladies’ that questions the masculinist genealogy of knowledge. At the time Lanyer was writing, alchemist-physicians such as Simon Forman (whom Lanyer visited in 1597) were avidly reading the ‘Vita Adae et Evae’ (the ‘Life of Adam and Eve’), which was an ancient exegesis of Genesis recounting details of Adam and Eve’s pre- and post-lapsarian life. Alchemists turned to the ‘Vita’ because it contained evidence that

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105 MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fols 59r, 121r.
106 MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fols 59r, 121r.
107 Lanyer, TAVL, p. 12.
108 The ‘Vita Adae et Evae’ dates from between the first and third centuries AD. The ‘Vita’ circulated throughout medieval and early modern Europe, in Latin and the vernacular. See Kassell, Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London, p. 190. Lanyer’s 1597 visits to Forman are recorded in Forman’s
original alchemical knowledge was imparted to Adam from God. In Simon Forman’s late-sixteenth-century manuscript copy of the ‘Vita’, we are told that ‘god did replenishe him [Adam] with all kinds of wisdom [and] Arte’. According to the ‘Vita’, it is Solomon who discovers the sacred books of Adam: ‘in the Arke of the testament of god in [...] which he [Solomon] found all the boockes of Moyeses and Aron [...] therein alsoe he found the boock [...] which god gave unto Adam’. The doctrine of the ‘Vita’ is echoed by the medieval alchemist, Aegidius de Vadis, who declared that God made the ‘first mane Adam perfecte in all naturrel things, and didest endue him with sufficient knowledge’. Adam’s ‘perfecte [...] knowledge’, as indicated in the ‘Vita’, was conveyed to the rest of mankind through the patriarchs, Solomon, Moses and Aaron. Indeed, according to Pico della Mirandola, Adam is at the very centre ‘of the world’ and post-lapsarian man can ‘grow upward’ to the ‘higher natures’ of the divine through Adam’s pre-lapsarian perfection. This patriarchal lineage, stressing Adam’s perfection, is queried by Lanyer, as her speaker expostulates: ‘Men will boast of Knowledge, which he tooke / From Eves faire hand, as from a learned Booke’ (SDRJ, 807-808). For Lanyer’s speaker, it is Eve who is blessed with the honour of knowledge and will grant this knowledge to others from the fruit of the Tree of Life:

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this great Lady [Eve] I have here attired,
In all her richest ornaments of Honour,
[...]
she must entertayne you to this Feast [:]

(SQEM, 79-80, 83)
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Our Mother Eve, who tasted of the Tree,
Giving to Adam what shee held most deare,
Was simply good [.]

(SDRJ, 763-65)


109 Kassell, Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London, pp. 190-91
113 Pico della Mirandola, On the Dignity of Man, p. 5.
114 Aemilia Lanyer, ‘To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie’, in The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer, pp. 3-10 (p. 7). From henceforth this poem is abbreviated as TQEM and is proceeded by the line reference.
Lanyer here dissents from Forman, who maintains that Eve and all women ‘ar alwaies proud in theire conceighte [...] & for ever inconstante’. According to Forman, and other male medical practitioners of the time, because Eve ‘harkened the serpent’ women suffered more than seventy diseases specific to their sex. This is taken up by John Donne when he writes of the ‘poisonous tincture, [...] the stain of Eve’. Yet Lanyer cleanses this ‘staine’ laid ‘Upon our [women’s] Sexe’ (SDRJ, 811-12), by implying that it is Adam and his ‘poys’ned’ followers (SDRJ, 382) who are responsible for the spreading of disease: ‘the Scorpions bred in Adams mud’ (SDRJ, 381) are arguably the ‘Vipers’ that deface the ‘wombes’ of women.

Adam’s ‘perfecte [...] knowledge’ of ‘naturall things’ prompted some alchemists to aspire to Adam’s original reading of Nature’s Mystic Book. The seventeenth-century alchemist, Elias Ashmole, for example, posits that before his Fall, Adam was so ‘absolute a Philosopher’ that he fully understood the true ‘knowledge of Nature’, without the need of intermediaries. In turn, Mother Nature in the Renaissance was often gendered as androgynous, mirroring the original hermaphroditic state of Adam. Edmund Spenser, for instance, describes Nature thus: ‘Whether she [Nature] man or woman inly were, / That could not any creature well descry’. For Lanyer, however, Nature is an emphatic female force that grants the poet-speaker special access to Nature’s Mystic Book, with no interruptions from a male intermediary:

Nature yeelds my Soule [...] since all Arts at first from Nature came, That goodly Creature, Mother of Perfection [...] (TQEM, 150-52)

This takes us back to Michael Maier’s statement: ‘Nature be your guide; follow her with your art’. ‘Ar[t]’ (TQEM, 151), for Lanyer, is not only the poetic ‘art’ of her poem,

120 Elias Ashmole, Theatrum chemicum Britannicum (1651), cited in Abraham, Marvell and Alchemy, p. 166.
122 Michael Maier, Atalanta fugiens (1618), cited in Abraham, Marvell and Alchemy, p. 60.
but the ‘art’ of alchemy which she learns from Dame Nature – Margaret Clifford herself. This not only provides further evidence that Lanyer may have been learning the art of alchemy from her patron, Dame Nature, Margaret Clifford, but demonstrates how the poet uses her feminocentric relationship with her dedicatees to question masculinist assumptions about the genealogy of knowledge.

It is partly through the discourse of alchemy that Lanyer is able to dissolve the anti-female interpretations of Genesis (foregrounded by men such as Forman). Lanyer writes to her ‘vertuous’ female readers:

Let Virtue be your guide, for she alone  
Can leade you right that you can never fall;  
[...]  
God’s holy Angels will direct your Doves,  
And bring your Serpents to the fields of rest [...]  
(TAVL, 10-11, 57-58)

With heav’nly Manna, food of his [Christ’s] elected,  
To feed their soules, of whom he is respected.

This wheate of Heaven the blessed Angells bread,  
Wherewith he feedes his deere adopted Heires;  
Sweet foode of life that doth revive the dead,  
And from the living takes away all cares;  
To taste this sweet Saint Laurence did not dread,  
The broyling gridyorne cool’d with holy teares:  
Yeelding his naked body to the fire,  
To taste this sweetnesse, such was his desire.  
(SDRJ, 1783-92)

The ‘Serpen[t]’ (TAVL, 58), in the above-quoted extract, does not resemble the ‘olde serpent’ of Genesis and Revelation that ‘deceiueth all the worlde’, but evokes the alchemical uroboros – a symbol of wisdom, regeneration and eternal life (Figure 3).\(^{123}\)

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Christ instructs his followers in *The Geneva Bible* to be as ‘wise as serpentes’, thus Lanyer’s ‘vertuous’ female readers through Eve and the uroboros shall gain access to Christ and a pre-lapsarian ‘rest’ (TAVL, 58): ‘Let Virtue be your guide, for she alone / Can leade you right that you can never fall / [...] And bring your Serpents to the fields of rest’ (TAVL, 10-11, 58).\(^{124}\)

Furthermore, the fruitful ‘heav’nly Manna’ (SDRJ, 1783) that Lanyer cites, recalls the original ‘food’ (SDRJ, 1783) before the Fall, which was regarded as the philosopher’s stone. As Lauren Kassell points out, in the Renaissance, ‘manna’ bespoke of the food that sustained the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 16. 1-32) and was cited in alchemical texts as spiritual food.\(^{125}\) The sixteenth-century English manuscript, ‘The epitome of the treasure of all welth’ (1562), for example, professes that ‘this stone [...] shallbe endued with divine guiftes & foreknowledgee [...] call itt the foode of Angell [...] a man may live a long time [with] [...] the [...] tast of this stone’.\(^{126}\) This is perhaps what Ficino alludes to when he states: the ‘tree of knowledge [...] brings forth the sweetest possible fruit’.\(^{127}\) It is to this alchemical tradition that Lanyer seems to appeal when she refers to the ‘heav’nly Manna [...] / Sweet foode of life’ (SDRJ, 1783, 1787). Through the patron saint of cooks, ‘sweet Saint Laurence’ (SDRJ, 1789), and his distilled ‘broyling [...] cool’d’ (SDRJ, 1790) body, Lanyer’s speaker preserves the ‘heav’nly Manna’ (SDRJ, 1783), the philosopher’s stone, in her text and hands this to her readers to grant them salvific transcendence: ‘Sweet foode of life that doth revive the dead, / And from the living takes away all cares’ (SDRJ, 1787-88).

It is though her conjuring of the alchemical uroboros (TAVL, 58) and the ‘heav’nly Manna’ (SDRJ, 1783) of Christ that Lanyer’s speaker is able to reach out to ‘all vertuous Ladies’.\(^{128}\) Lanyer’s speaker seeks to establish esoteric links with other female practitioners of alchemy, alongside her dedication to Margaret Clifford. As Lyndy Abraham observes, the astrologer and alchemist, John Dee, was regularly visited by Mary Sidney’s brother, Philip Sidney.\(^{129}\) At Wilton, Mary Sidney had her own alchemical laboratory and employed Sir Adrian Gilbert (a pupil of Dee) to help with her


\(^{128}\) TAVL, p. 12.

\(^{129}\) Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, p. 4.
experiments. Lanyer’s dedicatory poem to Mary Sidney contains a subtle alchemical lexicon:

Me thought a Chariot
[...]
Drawne by foure fierie Dragons, which did bend
Their course where this most noble Lady [Mary Sidney] sate [.] (ADLM, 26, 28-29)

The fifteenth-century French alchemist, Nicolas Flamel, instructs us to ‘Looke well upon these [...] Dragons, for they are the true principles or beginnings of [...] Phylosophy [...]. These are the Sunne and Moone of the Mercurial source’. In the sixteenth-century manuscript, ‘De alchimia’, a mystical woman, Lady Alchymia, stands cradling a dragon as her child (Figure 4). Lanyer affiliates Mary Sidney with this sacred signification of the ‘Drago[n]’ (ADLM, 28) in a bid to establish alchemical female amicitia.

![Figure 4, Thomas Aquinas (pseudonym), ‘De alchimia’ (c. 1500?), Leiden, Leiden University Library, Codex Vossianus 29, fol. 95r. © Leiden University Library, Leiden.](image)

It is in Mary Sidney’s presence that the alchemical hermaphrodite, the ‘manly mayd’ Bellona (ADLM, 35), makes her appearance. The alchemical process of conjunction (the union of two metallic seeds), was often depicted as a chemical wedding of Sol and Luna, sun and moon, which gave birth to the hermaphrodite. George Ripley spoke of the joining of the ‘Red Man and the Whyte Woman’ and according to Nicolas

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Flamel, this union resulted in the creation of the ‘Androgyne [...] of the Ancients’. Lanyer’s androgynous Bellona appears in the liminal twilight of morning, where Sol, Apolloe, graces ‘his eie’ (ADLM, 68) and Luna, Phoebe, mixes with Aurora (ADLM, 61-62). Bellona’s helmet is laden with ‘myrtle bayes’ and ‘olive branches’ (ADLM, 39).

Myrtle plants blossom with white-scented flowers, which were distilled in the later Middle Ages and used in perfumery and from olive branches precious oil could be obtained (OED). In Lanyer’s poem, nine ‘faire Virgins’ (ADLM, 9) surround Bellona with their ‘Harps and Vialls [phials?]’ (ADLM, 10), waiting to decoct Bellona’s herbal gifts. According to Ficino, the ‘Egyptian’ Hermetic ‘priests’ practised ‘medicine, music and the mysteries’ as ‘one and the same study’, and Lanyer places this syncretic theory within a gender-fluid femino-centric context in her dedicatory poem to Mary Sidney.

Lanyer’s poet-speaker appears to be ‘Fast ti’d’ unto Mary Sidney, Bellona and the nine ‘faire Virgins’ by a ‘golden Chaine’ (ADLM, 7), and this image resurfaces at the close of the volume in ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’: ‘Tying my heart to her [Margaret Clifford] by those rich chaines’ (TDC, 210). In ‘The Golden Treatise of Hermes’, the Egyptian sage states: ‘Know, my son, that the philosopher’s bind up their matter with a strong chain’. The Hermetic Asclepius and Pimander are ultimately concerned with the male genealogy of knowledge (masculine ‘gnosis’) and the circulation of this sacred knowledge amongst men. The Hermetic Asclepius and Pimander (like Plato’s Symposium and Cicero’s De Amicitia) are structured by a series of male dialogues between Hermes Trismegistus, his son, Tat, and his friend, Aesculapius. This male homosociality is celebrated by Ficino, who declares: ‘Hermes Trismegistus chose Aesculapius [...] wise men have always thought it necessary to have [...] man as companion for the safe and peaceful completion of the heavenly journey’. Lanyer, however, transforms Hermes’ ‘chain’ to include female lineage: her ‘golden Chaine’ (ADLM, 7) includes mothers and daughters (Margaret and Anne Clifford, Queen Anne and Princess Elizabeth) and other female alchemists such as Mary Sidney and of course, the poet-speaker herself. In this way, Lanyer instils the female
principle into the *Asclepius* and *Pimander* and offers a pro-woman hermeneutic of the Hermetic.

Mary Sidney’s glorious entrance in a magnificent ‘Chariot’ (ADLM, 26) in Lanyer’s dedicatory poem, recalls the dramatic roles that Queen Anne and other women of the court (such as Anne Clifford) played in the royal court masques.\(^\text{138}\) As David Lasocki and Roger Prior point out, Ben Jonson collaborated with several royal musicians in the production of his masques for Queen Anne’s court and they included Lanyer’s cousin, Thomas Lupo, who arranged dance music for violins.\(^\text{139}\) Lanyer thus may have heard about, or even seen, Queen Anne’s performances in masques though her familial musical connections. These masques often contained magical alchemical symbolism. In Jonson’s *The Masque of Blackness* (1605), for example, Queen Anne appears carrying a ‘golden tree’ laden with ‘fruit’, which is the ‘hieroglyphic’ doctrine of the ‘Egyptians’.\(^\text{140}\) Queen Anne, like Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX of the Maitland Quarto, appears as a Hermetic Sibyl:

\[
\text{Marie I thocht in this wod did appeir mait land and gold scho gave aboûndantlie Syne in hir hand ane flourishit trie did beir q[uhai]rin wes writtin with letteris properlie [.] (MQ, LXIX, 41-44)}
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Queen Anne had her own patronage system and could transform the lives of others through her financial control.\(^\text{141}\) Indeed, it is to Queen Anne’s alchemizing fiscal power that Jonson alludes to when he writes of her ‘refine[d]’ touch of ‘perfection’, which will literally transmute Jonson’s ‘mystic lines’ into gold.\(^\text{142}\)

According to Barbara Lewalski, Jonson’s masques that were performed by Queen Anne subverted the representation of King James as an exclusive ‘locus of power’.\(^\text{143}\) Indeed, as indicated, Jonson undoubtedly foregrounds the commanding

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\(^{139}\) Lasocki with Prior, *The Bassanos*, p. 117.


‘authority and grace’ of Queen Anne. Yet Jonson also stresses the supreme auctoritas of King James:

Britannia, whose new name makes all tongues sing,
Might be a diamond worthy to enchase it,
Ruled by a sun that to this height doth grace it,
[...]
His light sciential is, and, past mere nature,
Can salve the rude defects of every creature.

The male ‘sun’ conjured here is the Sun God, Apollo, a personification of King James, who basks in the light of the other divine ‘sun’, Christ. In Lanyer’s opening dedication to Queen Anne in Salve Deus Rex Judæorum, she offers an alternative adumbration of ‘salvific’ Britannia. It is Queen Anne, for Lanyer’s speaker, who is ‘Renowned Empresse, [...] great Britaines Queene’ (TQEM, 1). Anne, not James, according to Lanyer’s speaker, gives new meaning to the name of ‘Britannia’. Moreover, the ‘salve’ of Lanyer’s title may be an invocation of Queen Anne’s medicinal ladies of the bedchamber, Elizabeth Grey (1582-1651) and Aletheia Talbot (d. 1654), who were offering salvific care to both the Queen and other women and men of the court.

The ‘base’ earthly ‘Crowne’ (TQEM, 46, 49) of King James in Lanyer’s dedicatory poem to Queen Anne, is eclipsed by the coronation of King Christ: ‘That mightie Monarch both of heav’n and earth’ (TQEM, 44). Within Christ’s ‘royall Court’ (TQEM, 52) Anne creates her own ‘bright sphære’ (TQEM, 25). Lanyer’s speaker here covertly alludes to Queen Anne’s separatist, possibly pro-Catholic court, which harboured a certain spiritual transformative influence, converting the internal blackness of men and women into a state of esoteric perfection. It is Queen Anne’s gynarchic proselytizing court that partly leads to James’s public proclamations of disgust: ‘Papists are waxed as proud at this time [...] And [...] dayly increase, especially among the

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146 Jonson, The Masque of Blackness, p. 56, line 223.
147 Grey’s and Talbot’s medical-alchemical receipt books were published in the mid seventeenth century, but were composed during Queen Anne’s reign. Elizabeth Grey, A Choice Manual of Rare and Select Secrets (London, 1653) and Alathea Talbot, Natura Exenterata (London, 1655). See Lynette Hunter, ‘Women and Domestic Medicine: Lady Experimenters, 1570-1620’, in Women and Science, 1500-1700: Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society, ed. by Hunter and Hutton, pp. 89-107 (p. 95).
foeminine Sexe’. Within Queen Anne’s separatist spiritual court, Lanyer fashions herself as an alchemical lady-in-waiting, holding up a metaphysical mirror for the Queen’s internal reflection:

Looke in this Mirrour of a worthy Mind,
Where some of your faire Virtues will appeare;
Though all it is impossible to find,
Unlesse my Glasse were chrystall, or more cleare:
Which is dym steele, yet full of spotlesse truth,
And for one looke from your faire eyes it su'th.

[...]
Let your faire Virtues in my Glasse be seene.

(TQEM, 37-42, 90)

As Lyndy Abraham observes, the reception of an image upon a glass was a creation trope used by Hermetic alchemists such as John Dee, who referred to the ‘Glas of Creation’ in The Mathematicall Praeface to Euclid (1570). The alchemical mirror/glass is visually depicted in ‘The Margaret Manuscript’ (Figure 5) and is taken up in the seventeenth century by Thomas Vaughan who describes alchemical creation thus: ‘No sooner had the Divine Light pierced the Bosom of Matter [...] the Idea [...] of the whole Material World appeared in those primitive waters, like Image in a Glasse’.

Figure 5, The alchemical mirror in ‘The Margaret Manuscript’, Kendal, Cumbria Archive Centre, MS WD/Hoth/A988/5, fol. 95r. © Kendal, Cumbria Archive Centre. Reproduced by permission of Lord Hothfield and the Cumbria Archive Centre, Kendal.

150 Abraham, Marvell and Alchemy, p. 125.
Lanyer takes this Hermetic tradition further through her focus on woman’s creation and woman’s divine ‘Virtues’ (TQEM, 38):

    Behold, great Queene, faire Eves Apologie,
    Which I have writ in honour of your sexe,
    [...]  
    this great Lady [Eve] I have attired,
    In all her richest ornaments of Honour [...]  
    (TQEM, 73-74, 79-80)

Lanyer channels this pro-woman ideology through the arguably anti-patriarchal Queen Anne: ‘O Queene, / Let your faire Virtues in my Glasse be seene’ (TQEM, 89-90).

But just how successful was Lanyer in her bid for female alchemical amicitia? Critics such as Leeds Barroll and Lorna Hutson have implied that Lanyer’s poem does not seem to have been ‘received’ and ‘circulated’ by the influential women whom Lanyer addresses.152 Barbara Lewalski and Theresa Kemp, on the other hand, have argued that Salve Deus Rex Judaæorum was probably read and disseminated by Lanyer’s principal dedicatee, Margaret Clifford.153 As outlined, in one of the surviving presentation copies of Salve Deus Rex Judaæorum, we find the inscription of ‘Cumberland’ on the recto of the page preceding the title-page (Figure 1).154 This presentation copy is bound in vellum with the ‘encircled ostrich-feather emblem’ of Prince Henry in gilt in the centre of the front and back bindings.155 This suggests that Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland (and her alchemical coterie) regarded Lanyer’s poem highly enough to circulate it amongst the royal courts. I have shown that one reason for the likely intimacy between Margaret Clifford and Lanyer is the art of metaphysical alchemy. By fashioning herself as a poet-'alchemist, Lanyer’s speaker compounds the roles of kitchen physic and spiritual healer. Lanyer may well have entered into Margaret Clifford’s household at Cooke-ham as an alchemist with specific herbal and spiritual remedies.156 Certainly the practice of alchemy was one way in which women of different social backgrounds could forge connections with one

156 Lanyer apparently spent time at Cooke-ham in Berkshire with Margaret and Anne Clifford, sometime before 1609. Woods, ‘Introduction’, p. xxv.
another. Lanyer’s interest in alchemy would also partly explain her visits to the alchemist-astrologer, Simon Forman, during the late 1590s.\textsuperscript{157} I have illustrated how a ‘partial’ and ‘strange’ intertextuality exists between Lanyer’s \textit{Salve Deus Rex Judæorum}, Margaret Clifford’s alchemical receipt book, and Anne Clifford’s 1652 family memorial.\textsuperscript{158} It is the discourse of spiritual and physical alchemy that ‘Ty[es]’ (TDC, 210) these women esoterically to one another.

\textsuperscript{158} Rosalind Smith argues that there are ‘partial’ and ‘strange’ feminine literary traditions in the Renaissance and my use of these adjectives here is indebted to her. Smith, \textit{Sonnets and the English Woman Writer}, p. 11.
Chapter 4

‘Makes her soule and body one’: The Metaphysics of ‘Making’ in the Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler (c. 1635-1638)

‘Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.’

(The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Version, Luke 1. 38)

Sir Philip Sidney proposed in 1595 that the word ‘poet’ emanates from the Greek word ‘poiein’, which is ‘to make’. For Sidney, the poet can mirror his ‘heavenly Maker’, God, who made ‘man to His own likeness’. Mortal poets, according to Sidney, can attain the ‘metaphysic [...] supernatural’ through their potentially divine poesis. This chapter argues that Sidney and his followers, George Puttenham and John Donne, foreground a male ‘making’ tradition of the ‘most ancient and [...] fatherly antiquity’. The male poet for these thinkers is a wordsmith and craftsman who can traverse both earthly and supernatural realms. I illustrate how this male tradition is manipulated by women ‘makers’ such as Mary Sidney (1561-1621) and Esther Inglis (1570/71-1624), who fashion themselves as the ‘handmaidens’ of God. The chapter suggests that Renaissance women writers consciously exploit the connections between ‘text’ and ‘textile’ to establish a female ‘making’ tradition. I test this theory by examining the writings and compilations of the seventeenth-century Catholic poet, Constance Aston Fowler (1621?-1664). The Catholic context of Mariology, I suggest, allows a woman writer like Fowler to fully exploit her role as a divine handmaiden engaging in handmade acts. The chapter explores Fowler’s role as ‘maker’ in two ways: first, her role as social ‘maker’, as she establishes and influences the connections between women and men in her coterie; secondly, her role as metaphysical ‘maker’, as she writes a feminized form of sensual-spiritual meditative poetry. I argue that Fowler draws upon the meditative writings of Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), St Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582), and others.

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1 Anon., in Constance Aston Fowler’s hand, ‘An Eglogne betweene Melibeus and Amyntas’, in The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler: A Diplomatic Edition, ed. by Deborah Aldrich-Watson (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, in conjunction with Renaissance English Text Society, 2000), pp. 55-59 (p. 59), line 96. This edition has been used throughout this study and has been abbreviated as The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler. Aldrich-Watson has based her diplomatic edition on the original extant manuscript, San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 904.


3 Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, p. 84.

4 Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, p. 86.


6 Sidney, An Apology for Poetry, p. 100.

1582) and Aemilia Lanyer (1569-1645), and in so doing responds to a polyglottal female metaphysical culture.

In his *Theologia Platonica* (1482), Marsilio Ficino characterizes God as a ‘craftsman’, who fuses ‘external matter’ with divine love: ‘God [...] certainly [...] loves His images and His works. A craftsman loves the works which he makes from external matter’. Ficino here seems to invoke Psalm 19, which praises God’s ‘handywork’: ‘The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork’. According to Ficino’s friend and disciple, Pico della Mirandola, man too can emulate his divine maker: ‘Thou [Man] [...] art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. [...] Thou canst [...] grow upward from thy soul’s reason into the higher natures which are divine’. It is presumably this Neoplatonic lexicon that Philip Sidney evokes when he purports that the earthly poet-maker ‘build[s] upon the depth of Nature’ to reach the ‘metaphysic [...] supernatural’ domain.

As S. K. Heninger points out, Sidney infers that the poet can turn abstract divine thoughts into concrete material forms.

Sidney’s building metaphor is utilised by George Puttenham, who likens the poet to a stonemason: ‘ye see in buildings of stone or brick the mason giveth a band [...] to hold [...] the work [...]. So, in [...] verses, the coupling of [...] meters by rhyme or concord is the [...] band’. Puttenham implies that the stonemason-poet uses ‘natural causes and effects’ to attain ‘divine essences and substances’ – the architect of earth can mirror the metaphysical architect of heaven. This spiritual-material melding reaches a climax in John Donne’s sermons, who declares that the biblical Psalms are ‘all Metricall compositions [...] the whole frame of the Poem is a beating out of a piece of gold’.

This again evokes Psalm 19 – the divine transformative power of the ‘handywork’ of

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God.\textsuperscript{16} As Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy observe, here Donne fashions God (and by implication the earthly poet) as an alchemical manufacturer of language.\textsuperscript{17}

Yet this spiritual-material making tradition is a masculine tradition. Sidney’s motto, ‘man’s wit [...] make[th] Poesy’, pervades the \textit{Apology for Poetry}, which foregrounds a heroic genealogy of male makers: ‘Hercules, Achilles, [...] Aeneas [...] hearing them, must needs hear the right description of wisdom, valour, and justice’.\textsuperscript{18} The original patriarchs of poetry for Sidney are Orpheus and Linus who ‘made pens deliverers of their knowledge’.\textsuperscript{19} Sidney’s implicit gender-biased lineage finds its way into Puttenham’s \textit{The Art of English Poesy}, which warns that ‘gentlewomen makers’ should not become ‘too precise poets’ lest they become ‘fantastical wives’.\textsuperscript{20}

However, many Renaissance women writers demonstrate that divine poetic inspiration is not simply a male prerogative, but can enter the bodies and souls of women. The scribe and poet, Esther Inglis, for instance proclaims in 1602:

\begin{verbatim}
Ton Sainct Esprit toujours 
[...] 
illumine, conduise,
Mon cœur, mon œuil, mon pied,
mon esprit et ma main.

[Your [God’s] Holy Spirit always 
[...] 
illumine, lead,
My heart, my eye, my foot,
my spirit and my hand [.]\textsuperscript{21}
\end{verbatim}

Inglis posits that the sacrosanct spark of the Holy Spirit permeates her own handiwork.

The verb ‘to make’ crops up in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century account books in relation to women’s embroidery. The accounts of Lady Shuttleworth’s household in 1619, for example, contain an entry for ‘coventrie blue thred to make letters in needlework on the bed sheets’.\textsuperscript{22} It is arguably this female ‘making’ tradition

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{16}{Psalms 19. 1, cited by Ficino, \textit{The Letters of Marsilio Ficino}, VI, p. 27.}
\footnotetext{17}{Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy, ‘Introduction’, in \textit{Renaissance Transformations: The Making of English Writing (1500-1650)}, ed. by Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy, pp. 1-11 (p. 4).}
\footnotetext{18}{Sidney, \textit{An Apology for Poetry}, pp. 104, 95.}
\footnotetext{19}{Sidney, \textit{An Apology for Poetry}, p. 82.}
\footnotetext{20}{Puttenham, \textit{The Art of English Poesy}, p. 336.}
\footnotetext{21}{Esther Inglis, ‘Priere a Dieu [Prayer to God]’, in \textit{Early Modern Women Poets (1520-1700), An Anthology}, ed. by Stevenson and Davidson, p. 125, lines 7, 10-12.}
\footnotetext{22}{Lady Shuttleworth’s household accounts cited in Rozsika Parker, \textit{The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine} (London: Women’s Press, 1996, 1\textsuperscript{st} pub. 1983), p. 85.}
\end{footnotes}
that Mary Sidney invokes in her dedicatory poem to Elizabeth I in the Sidney Psalter (1599):

I weav’d this webb to end;
the stuffe not ours, our worke no curious thing,
Wherein yet well wee thought the Psalmist King
Now English denizend, though Hebrue borne,
[...]

And I the Cloth in both our names present,
A liverie robe to bee bestowed by thee [Elizabeth I]:
[...]

Thy brest the Cabinet, thy seat the shrine,
[...]
where Wit, where Art, where all that is divine
conceived best, and best defended lies.
[...]

Theise holy garmnets each good soule assaies,
some sorting all, all sort to none but thee.
[...]

Thus hand in hand with him [David] thy glories walke:
[...]

Thy utmost can but offer to hir sight
Her handmaids taske, which most her will endeeres [.]

(ENTC, 23-30, 33-34, 45, 47-48, 63-64, 73, 89-90)

Mary Sidney uses her ‘handmaids taske’ (ENTC, 90) to enter into Elizabeth I’s ‘Cabinet’ and ‘brest’ (ENTC, 45). Moreover, Mary Sidney utilizes her ‘handmaids taske’ (ENTC, 90) to interweave her own voice with that of her brother, Philip Sidney, and the biblical Psalmist-poet, David: ‘And I the Cloth in both our names present’ (ENTC, 33). As Danielle Clarke points out, Mary Sidney here picks up on the connection between ‘text’ and ‘textile’, referring to the texts, translations and intertexts for the Psalter. Mary Sidney provides a powerful metaphor for collaborative authorship, which implies her own role as that of ‘finisher’. I would like to extend
Clarke’s analysis here by suggesting that Mary Sidney is also appealing to a sixteenth-century female making tradition to which Elizabeth I belonged.

In 1544 Elizabeth Tudor presented Katherine Parr with a translation of Marguerite of Navarre’s *Le miroir de l’âme pêcheresse* (‘The Miroir or Glasse of the Synneful Soul’). This text had a handmade book cover, embroidered by Elizabeth Tudor herself. The cover contained Katherine Parr’s initials in the centre with four pansies on each corner. As Lisa Klein observes, the pansies on this book cover are a pun on the French word ‘pensee’, meaning thought or idea. This pun on pansy/pensee draws attention to Elizabeth Tudor’s prayerful act of ‘medytacyon’. Elizabeth Tudor composes a meditative text of the highest gynocentric order – a text written by a woman, translated by a woman and presented to a woman. The translation itself resonates with a feminocentric linguistic order: ‘thou [God] dost handle my sowle […] as a mother, daughter, syster and wyfe’. The reference to ‘handle’ here is not accidental. Elizabeth Tudor formulates a handmaid/handmade rhetoric to appeal to the maternal instinct of her stepmother, Katherine Parr. It is arguably to this making tradition that Mary Sidney alludes to in her extended conceit of the ‘handmaids taske’ (ENTC, 90).

Within the context of Catholicism, the handmaid often referred to the Virgin Mary, who describes herself as the ‘handmaid of the Lord’ in the Gospel of St Luke (1. 38). The Virgin Mary’s handmaiden makings are portrayed in a surviving thirteenth-century cope of St Maximin in Provence as the workings on a cloth in a temple with other women (Figure 1). The divine hand-makings of Mary are a key motif in *The Psalter of the B[lessed] Virgin Mary* (1624, affiliated with St Bonaventura):

I haue seene the great miracl[e]s which your [Mary’s] hands haue done […] make warme my soule, for you are the light and guide […] you made your selfe [...] the Humble Hand-maid of our Lord […] Make me to imploy my selfe in holy works […]

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28 Klein, ‘Your Humble Handmaid’, p. 478. Elizabeth Tudor’s ‘The Miroir or Glasse of the Synneful Soul’ was printed in 1548 as *A Godly Medytacyon of the christen sowle (STC).*
Your are the [...] fruitful Palme
 [...] 
It is your hand which hath touched me, and [...] hath laboured in my cause
 [...] 
Signe my Forehead with the Seale of your holy grace [...].

The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary sets up a connection between hands, making and miracle working. The Virgin Mary is depicted as a divine handmaiden because she is instrumental in the ‘making’ of Christ. The seventeenth-century Neoplatonist, Francis de Sales, evokes the Virgin Mary’s makings, when he advises his followers to engage in ‘spiritual embroidery’.

Figure 1. Detail from The Cope of St Maximin, church of St Maximin, Provence. Late thirteenth century. The embroidery could be either French or English. Cited in Parker, The Subversive Stitch, Illustration 31. © Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Of course, worship of the Virgin Mary was officially banned in Britain during the seventeenth century, as George Herbert reminds us: ‘But now ( alas!) I dare not; for our King, / Whom we do all jointly adore and praise, / Bids no such thing’. Indeed, Mariolatry was regarded as dangerously dissident by some seventeenth-century Puritan thinkers. William Prynne, for example, expostulates in disgust: ‘popish Doctors have

30 The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary, trans. from a French version, probably that of Antoine Sucquet, of the Psalterium Parvum Mariae formerly attributed to St Bonaventura, trans. into English by R. F. (St Omer, 1624), pp. 73, 142, 182, 184, 236-37, 260, 265.
32 George Herbert, ‘To All Angles and Saints’ (1633), ll. 16-18, cited by Danielle Clarke, ‘The Iconography of the Blush: Marian Literature of the 1630s’, in Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing, ed. by Kate Chedgzoy and others (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), pp. 111-28 (p. 113).
most blasphemously written of the Virgin Mary [...] That She is the [...] greatest Authority in the Kingdome of Heaven’. Prynne is perhaps critiquing The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary here, which exalts Mary as a ‘greater, and more excellent authority then any other creature’. It is arguably the Virgin Mary’s female auctoritas that Prynne finds threatening. This female auctoritas was visually and politically rendered in the Caroline period by Queen Henrietta Maria, who often appeared in public with her ladies-in-waiting singing the Hours of the Virgin. As Frances Dolan points out, for some seventeenth-century Englishmen, such as Prynne, the Virgin Mary became the embodiment of ‘a usurped, arbitrary power’, the symbol of Catholics’ misplaced ‘obedience and reverence’. This ongoing controversy over Mariolatry during the Renaissance was one reason why Protestant writers such as Mary Sidney and Esther Inglis avoid any explicit mention of the Virgin Mary as the divine handmaiden of God.

One coterie that is likely to have come across both the Sidney Psalter and The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary is the seventeenth-century Catholic poetic coterie of Tixall in Staffordshire. Tixall was the family seat of Sir Walter Aston (1584-1639), the ambassador to Spain under James I and later Charles I. Sir Walter wrote verse and passed on his love for poetry to at least three of his ten children: Herbert Aston (bap. 1614, d. 1688/89), Gertrude Aston Thimelby (1617-1668) and Constance Aston Fowler. Constance Aston Fowler’s surviving verse miscellany contains poems by numerous writers including Sir Walter, Robert Southwell (1561-1595), William Habington (1605-1654), Herbert Aston, and Conststance’s close female friends, Katherine Thimelby (1617/18-1658) and Lady Dorothy Shirley (d. 1636/7). The miscellany also contains a

34 The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary, p. 116.
35 Veevers, Images of Love and Religion, p. 35.
36 Dolan, Whores of Babylon, p. 119.
37 The 1899 sale catalogue of the Tixall library contains Mary Sidney’s translation of the Psalms. The Tixall Library. Catalogue of Valuable Books & Manuscripts, Late the Property of Sir F. A. T. C. Constable, Bart. (London: Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, 1899), p. 49, Lot 598. I am grateful to Helen Hackett for providing me with a copy of this catalogue. Members of the Tixall coterie had connections with St Omer in France, where the The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary was printed. Richard Thimelby (1614-1680), for instance, became rector of St Omer’s in 1672. William Habington (1605-1654) was educated in St Omer. See Deborah Aldrich-Watson, ‘Introduction’, in The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler, pp. xix-lxii (p. xxvii).
number of anonymous meditative poems that have been attributed to Fowler herself.\textsuperscript{39} Fowler’s verse miscellany was composed from \textit{circa} 1635 to 1638.\textsuperscript{40}

The Fowler miscellany is dominated by two hands: an italic hand and an old-fashioned secretary hand. The italic hand has been identified as Fowler’s, verified by her surviving letters.\textsuperscript{41} The older secretary hand, however, has prompted much debate amongst scholars. Deborah Aldrich-Watson and Jenijoy La Belle argue that this secretary hand belongs to Fowler’s sister, Gertrude Aston Thimelby.\textsuperscript{42} Indeed, a poem in the miscellany entitled ‘To My Honer’d sister G A’ (probably by Herbert Aston), portrays Gertrude as a transformative maker and muse par excellence:

\begin{quote}
you [Gertrude Aston] guide your high poetique quills 
[...]
inspire, 
Vs, with the heate of your poetique fire; 
For as the sun by urther of his great 
Masculin luster and his quieckning heate; 
Of slime; and Mud, produceth liuing creatures; 
Diffirng in nature; and of seuerall features; 
Acording to the mould from which they’r made, 
so your lines heate; and splendour; doth inuade 
Our dul, dead, muddy, minds; and doth create 
New Creatures; [...] 
And even these lines though creatures of my minde, 
By your poetique fire they are refin’d; 
From there dull mould, you on them life bestow [...] 
(TMHS,\textsuperscript{43} 98, 113-25)
\end{quote}

The poet here recalls Donne’s construction of God and the Psalmist-poet as the alchemical wordsmith.\textsuperscript{44} It is Gertrude in this poem who has the power to transform and refine ‘dul’ (TMHS, 121) matter through her resplendent ‘poetique fire’ (TMHS, 124). However, Victoria Van Hyning has recently uncovered Gertrude’s italic hand from the extant seventeenth-century records of vows of St Monica’s convent in Louvain, where

\textsuperscript{40} For the dating of Fowler’s miscellany, see Aldrich-Watson, ‘Introduction’, pp. ix, xxviii, xxxix.
\textsuperscript{41} London, British Library, MS Additional 36452, fols 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 32, 48.
\textsuperscript{43} Herbert Aston (?), in Fowler’s hand, ‘To My Honer’d sister G[ertrude] A[ston]’, in \textit{The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler}, pp. 128-31 (p. 131). From henceforth this poem has been abbreviated as TMHS and is proceeded by the line reference.
\textsuperscript{44} Donne, ‘Sermon Number 1: Preached upon the Penitentiall Psalms [1623]’, p. 41. For the Astons’ connections to Donne, see Deborah Aldrich Larson, ‘John Donne and the Astons’, \textit{Huntington Library Quarterly}, 55 (1992), 635-41.
Gertrude professed in 1658.\(^45\) Van Hyning argues that the secretary hand in Fowler’s miscellany does not match Gertrude’s hand.\(^46\)

Victoria Burke and Helen Hackett have suggested that the older secretary hand in the Fowler miscellany may belong to a travelling Catholic priest.\(^47\) Burke’s and Hackett’s supposition is convincing because the miscellany’s older secretary hand records the poetry of the Jesuit priest, Robert Southwell, and other Catholic ballads which appear in another mid-seventeenth-century Catholic manuscript associated with the Fairfax family of Wooton Wawen in Warwickshire.\(^48\) Victoria Burke argues that the secretary hands in the Fowler miscellany and the Fairfax manuscript match.\(^49\) The identity of this travelling Catholic priest, however, is yet to be uncovered.

Despite this controversy over the hands in the Fowler miscellany, scholars agree that members of the Tixall coterie were avid readers of contemporary literature. The 1899 sale catalogue of the Tixall library contains Mary Sidney’s translation of the Psalms, Philip Sidney’s \textit{Arcadia}, Shakespeare’s Second Folio, a first edition of Donne’s poems, and the essays of Montaigne.\(^50\) As outlined in this study, it is precisely these writers who engage with the metaphysics of making, and I would like to suggest here that it is to these writers that Fowler and her circle respond.

If we turn to Fowler’s miscellany we find a poem in Fowler’s hand entitled ‘A true loues knott that was giuen As a fancy for a newyears gift’:

\begin{quote}
make mee thy fancy and if I proue not  
A true loues knott  
That neuer faides, then cast mee of a gaine  
[...]  
As in your breast  
There I’le discouer all that thinke to knitt  
A counterfitt
\end{quote}

\(^{45}\) Reading, Douai Abbey Library, Box WMLK1, Docs: Vows, Folder K2, Vows under Mother Throgmorton, 1633-1666 (?) , 2\(^{nd}\) Prioress, item unnumbered. I am grateful to Victoria Van Hyning for sharing this archival find with me.

\(^{46}\) Unpublished personal correspondence with Victoria Van Hyning, 5 May 2012.


\(^{50}\) \textit{The Tixall Library. Catalogue of Valuable Books & Manuscripts}, pp. 49, 50, 49, 18, 37, Lots 598, 599, 592, 206, 435.
Thus then it must bee drawne by hand deuine
to be like mine
[...]
And what are drawne together by a force
Breaeke or doe worse
They only hold that in a golden meane
A uoy’d extreame
Last it must haue no endes, for such a Tye
is pollicy
True loue could neuer tell how’t came to passe
But so it was
ore if compell’d to answearre to a why
T’was I am I
Thus much for forme, the matters not forgott,
The hart stringes only tye a true loues knott [%]

(ATALK, 51-3, 10-14, 23-34)

Jenijoy La Belle describes the above-quoted poem in the following literal way:

The poet begins by asking his lady to accept him, and by implication his poem, as a ‘true loves [sic] knott’ and place him near her heart. The poet then compliments both the sweetness of the lady’s breast and his own true love’s knot in contrast to any counterfeit knots that the lady may have accepted earlier. The perfect love knot is finally defined as one that avoids the extremes of looseness (and thus can slip) and fastness (which can break when pulled).

I would like to suggest here that this poem, ‘A true loues knott that was giu en As a fancy for a newyears gift’, also indirectly delineates the intricacies of ‘mak[ing]’ (ATALK, 1) by setting up a connection between knotting (a method of producing a decorative thread by hand-tying knots), fancy (an ‘inventive design’, an ‘inclination or liking’, something that ‘pleases or entertains’ [OED]), and the ‘deuine’ (ATALK, 13) handicraft of the scribe/compiler who facilitates intellectual and emotional unity. This poem is attributed to Katherine Thimelby’s brother, Henry Thimelby (d. 1655), by Fowler, who ends the poem with the initials ‘H T’. The poem may have been presented to Fowler as a New Year’s gift. Of course, this process of gift-giving was in

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31 Henry Thimelby (?), in Fowler’s hand, ‘A true loues knott that was giuen As a fancy for a newyears gift’, in The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler, pp. 142-43. From henceforth this poem is abbreviated as ATLK and is proceeded by the line reference.
33 This definition of ‘knotting’ is outlined by Donald King and Santina Levey, The Victoria and Albert Museum’s Textile Collection: Embroidery in Britain from 1200 to 1750 (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1993), p. 110.
itself a mirroring of the ‘deuine’ (ATLK, 13) giver, God. As the fourteenth-century Catholic mystic, Catherine of Siena, posits: the earthly giver ‘join[s]’ the ‘divine nature with the human’ because when one receives a gift ‘[t]he receiver does not look just at the gift, but at the heart and the love of the giver, and accepts and treasures the gift […] because of the friend’s affectionate love’. Catherine of Siena’s writings were being recommended as essential reading by English Catholic priests such as John Fenn (1535-1615), and it is her definition of human/divine giving that Henry Thimelby may be invoking. If this poem is addressed to, and given to Fowler, then it is arguably she who is also responsible for making a ‘true loue knott’ (ATLK, 2). It is Fowler who engages in the act of spiritual-physical knotting, drawing together the ‘hart stringes’ (ATLK, 34) of her coterie.

Indeed, Fowler’s handiwork in facilitating a courtship between her brother, Herbert Aston, and her close friend, Katherine Thimelby, is captured in her letters. Fowler writes to her brother when he accompanies Sir Walter on a diplomatic mission to Spain between 1635 and 1638:

> her [Katherine Thimelby’s] owne hart must needes bee unighted to yours [Herbert Aston’s] […] and then mine, which has bin the keeper of yours […] I [Fowler] have taken such a subject for my invencion to worke on, that I can not for my life unfasen my selfe from it.

Fowler literally fashions herself as a maker of a ‘true loues knott’ (ATLK, 2) – she creates a cyclical knot of desire that moves in and around her brother, her best friend and herself. She describes this process as an ‘invencion’ and ‘worke’ which she ‘fasen[s]’, recalling both the ‘worke’ of embroidery and the ‘worke’ of literary creativity.

Furthermore, Fowler has an acute awareness of her own performativity. She declares:

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Oh if you [Herbert Aston] knew what paines I [Fowler] have taken, and what difficulty I had to wright all this I have sent, you would love me mightyly for my care in performing it. […]

Oh, if you knew the sweetnesse of those expressions she [Katherine Thimelby] fillles letters continually with to me, you could not but dye in love with them, or her; […] I would not for a world in part each particuler of them to you, for they would overcome a stronger hart [.] […]

Tis con and none but con that is [.].

Fowler creates an expressive sense of drama here, withholding information from her brother to heighten his sense of expectancy. By punning on her own name, ‘continually’ […] Tis con’, she fashions herself as the principle maker, tying her brother to her best friend with ‘constancy’. 60

But what are Fowler’s true intentions in arranging this courtship between her best friend and her brother? In 1636 Fowler warns Herbert Aston:

Sir John Thimelby dos intend to match his sister [Katherine Thimelby] to a gentleman harde by him, in the countterey […] so infinitly much I love her [Katherine Thimelby], that I shall be aflicted to the soule, if it prove so indeed; for I vow to you [Herbert Aston], with my eyes drownd in teares, I am most certayne, ther is none in England worthy of her; and, oh, how grived shall I be to here she is mach to one unworthy of her. Oh, she is more deare to me then all the women in the world; and this will separat us much, if it shuld hapen. 61

Fowler here anticipates Katherine Philips’s famous lament of 1662:

I find […] there are few Friendships in the World Marriage-proof; especially when the Person our Friend marries has not a Soul particularly capable of the Tenderness of that Endearment, and solicitous of advancing the noble Instances of it, as a Pleasure of their own, in others as well as themselves: And such a Temper is so rarely found, that we may generally conclude the Marriage of a Friend to be the Funeral of a Friendship [.] 62

Women of the Renaissance, according to James Daybell, often played a significant role in acting as intermediaries between suitors in marriage negotiations.\(^63\) The context of Fowler and Philips shows that women were also proactive in arranging these marriages, so that same-sex friendships could be maintained. Since marriage was a must for many women during this period, women were compelled to work the system to their advantage. Hence Fowler hopes her brother ‘will not prove unconstant’ to Katherine Thimelby and will marry her, so that her own intimacy with Katherine can continue.\(^64\) This indeed proves to be the case. Herbert Aston marries Katherine Thimelby on his return to England in 1638, partly perhaps due to Fowler’s constant handwritten promptings.\(^65\) A melancholic Katherine Thimelby writes some time after her marriage: ‘My sweet sister Fowler, I here, comes to morow [...] Oh the hapines of talking to her, who so well will fele my mesery in your [Herbert Aston’s] absence’ – Thimelby is comforted by the continued closeness of her sister-in-law that her marriage makes possible.\(^66\)

Fowler states that Katherine Thimelby has ‘made me [Fowler] misteres of her hart’ and it is Katherine Thimelby’s role as a maker of letters that Fowler (in part) falls in love with.\(^67\) This is evinced in Fowler’s effusive pronouncement:

> ther was never any more passionat afectionat lovers then she [Katherine Thimelby] and I, [...] you [Herbert Aston] never knew two creatures more truely and deadly in love with one another than we are. [...] For after I had made knowne to her by letters how infinitly I honerd her, and how I had dun soe sence I first saw her [...], she writt me the sweetest ansars, that from that very howre I confesse I have bin most deadly in love with her as ever lover was; and so much she did increase my admirassion of her by many of these letters, that I could never sence thinke any one worth the honering but she [...]\(^68\)

Unfortunately, the correspondence between Katherine Thimelby and Fowler has not survived. However, if we turn to Fowler’s verse miscellany, we find that Katherine Thimelby emerges as an ardent defender of female constancy. This is exhibited in the

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\(^{65}\) Victoria E. Burke, ‘Aston, Herbert (bap. 1614, d. 1688/9), poet’, *ODNB* [accessed 24 October 2010].

\(^{66}\) Katherine Thimelby, ‘Letter XXX’ (undated), in *Tixall Letters*, I, p. 152. Arthur Clifford posits that this letter ‘appears to have been written many years after’ Katherine Thimelby’s marriage, *Tixall Letters*, I, p. 150.


dialogue that takes place between two poems that appear in succession in Fowler’s hand: ‘To the honorable G[eorge] T[albot]’ by William Habington and ‘The assure to these uerses Made by M’rs K[atherine] T[himelby]’. Habington’s poem is a consolatory poem, designed to soothe his friend, George Talbot (d. 1634), who has been scorned by his female beloved, Astrodoro:

Though Astrodoro, like a sullen starre
Eclipse her selfe, ith’ sky of beauty are
Ten thousand other fires, some bright as she.
And who with milder beames, may shine on thee;
[...]
And we two [Habington and Talbot], who like two bright stars haue shin’d
Ith heauen of friendship, are as firmly joyn’d
As bloud and loue fram’d us, and to be
Lou’d and thought worthy to be lou’d by thee [Talbot]
Ist to be glorious.

(THGT, 69 11-14, 21-25)

The love that Habington’s speaker has for his male beloved, George Talbot, eclipses the love of the female Astrodoro, who is a ‘sullen starre’ (THGT, 11). Astrodoro is surpassed by the heavenly fire of male-male friendship. Here Habington recalls the Neoplatonic ideologies of Ficino, who argues that ‘wise men have always thought it necessary to have [...] man as companion for the safe and peaceful completion of the heavenly journey’. Habington’s and Ficino’s divine ‘heauen of friendship’ (THGT, 22) appears to be a male homosocial domain.

It is this gender-biased representation of the ‘heauen of friendship’ (THGT, 22) that Katherine Thimelby seems to take issue with:

s‘f since you [Habington] are profest to dwell
I’th Heauen of frindship, you shuld tell
what tis to loue and ualew well [...]

(MKT, 71 1-3)

Thimelby’s speaker disrupts Habington’s male homosocial ‘heauen’ (THGT, 22). She implies that Habington has failed to provide an accurate exposition on what true ‘loue’ and ‘ualew’ (MKT, 3) means. She intimates that these terms are subjective and

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69 William Habington, in Fowler’s hand, ‘To the honourable G[eorge] T[albot]’, in The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler, pp. 124-25 (p. 124). From henceforth, ‘To the honourable G[eorge] T[albot]’ has been abbreviated as THGT and is proceeded by the line reference.


71 Katherine Thimelby, in Fowler’s hand, ‘The assure to these uerses Made by M’rs K[atherine] T[himelby]’, in The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler, pp. 126-27 (p. 126). From henceforth this poem has been abbreviated as MKT and is proceeded by the line reference.
Habington has merely foregrounded a male ‘ualew’ (MKT, 3) system. Thimelby’s speaker goes on to argue that female inconstancy is a male construct: ‘unconstancy [...] / you may call’t hers from your owne thought / though neuer in her nature wrought’ (MKT, 16, 23-24). In 1599 John Davies had described Nature as ‘Gods handmayde’, and in Thimelby’s poem the speaker insinuates that God’s handmaid (‘nature’) has not made woman inconstant, but men themselves through their ‘owne thought[s]’ (MKT, 24, 23). Thimelby’s meditation on ‘constancy’ may be an indirect invocation of Constance Aston Fowler, the female handmaid of constant love, who imbues Thimelby’s speaker with her spirit and ties Thimelby’s speaker to her male beloved:

For if I lou’d who am now free
shuld he [Herbert Aston?] retorne no loue to me
I must loue ther eternally.

(MKT, 40-42)

This triangulated textual/conceptual/emotional connection between Katherine Thimelby and Constance Aston Fowler is further evinced in the inside back cover of Fowler’s miscellany. In the lower right-hand corner of the inside back cover of Fowler’s book is written in Fowler’s hand the initials ‘C T’. Deborah Aldrich-Watson argues that this initialling indicates either ‘Catherine Thimelby’, whose poems in the miscellany are consistently marked ‘K T’, or, more probably, ‘Constance Fowler’, Fowler’s ‘T’ differing from her ‘F’ only in the absence of a cross-bar. But ‘C T’ could also stand for ‘Constance Thimelby’, as Fowler desires to merge her identity with her female beloved:

I [Fowler] continally perswade her [Thimelby] not to give her selfe frome me, for I shall never perswade my hart to bruke so great a lose, and I canot be contente to have part, but holey must I injoy her, or elce paynes worse then death will continually afflict me.

Yet Fowler is not simply an icon for earthly constancy, but a maker of divine constancy, nurturing the celestial friendship of the Virgin Mary. This is exhibited in the opening poem of Fowler’s book, which aligns Constance with the mysterious figure of Celestinae:

verses presented with
a beautious picture to

72 Sir John Davies, Nosce Teipsum (London, 1599), p. 27.
73 San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 904 (this section of the manuscript is unfoliated).
celesinae

to you [Fowler] belongethe honore of her sight
nor ist a derogacion to her life
To say you’ar yet as she a virginn wife
[...]
may for you and you to her for me [.]

(TC, 76 I-6, 14)

This lyric is written in Sir Walter’s hand and is probably by him.77 The name ‘Celestinae’ evokes the adjective ‘celestial’, meaning that which pertains to the sky or material heavens – the divine abode of God (OED). Indeed, the poet here recalls The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary, where the ‘Glorious Lady’ Mary is seated ‘aboue the starry light’.78 It is Mary in The Psalter who is ‘knowne to have all authority both in Heauen and Earth’, as she is the ‘Soueraigne Queene’ in ‘his [Christ’s] Celestiall Court and Kingdome’.79 At a time when Mariolatry was officially forbidden, ‘Celestinae’ may well be a code name in Fowler’s coterie for the Virgin Mary and the Marian devotion that she sanctions.

The above-cited Aston lyric hovers between the earthly and the sacred, the physical and metaphysical, as Constance/Celestinae is both a ‘virgin wife’ (TC, 6) and the ‘earth’s saint’ (TC, 1). Constance/Celestinae is an intercessor for the divine, encapsulated in the chiastic phrase: ‘may for you and you to her for me’ (TC, 14). The poet-speaker can see the Virgin Mary mirrored within Constance’s physical-spiritual ‘sight’ (TC, 3).

In Fowler’s miscellany, the figure of Celestinae is aligned to the process of poetic/divine ‘making’:

to say what Cælestina is: must make
An Angells quill the penne [.]

(William Pershall, ‘The first Alter’, 24-25)80

76 Sir Walter Aston (?), in Sir Walter’s hand, ‘verses presented with a beauetous picture to celesinae’, in The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler, pp. 1-2. From henceforth this poem has been abbreviated as TC and is proceeded by the line reference.
77 Sir Walter’s hand can be verified because of his surviving handwritten commonplace book, Stafford, Staffordshire Record Office, MS Aston D988 (c. 1635).
78 The Psalter of the B. Virgin Mary, p. 199
Th’ Relicks of her [Celestina’s] presence made
Faire weather; and the Tempest stayde:
As pleas’d to shew the Raynbows Fame
In the first letter of her Name:
[...]
The Violet and primrose stole
A secret meetinge to condole:
But they were grac’t aboue the rest
For her fayre hands had toucht and blest
Them;
[...]
Blest Mayde retorn: (or if that Mayde)
To nature bee prophanely sayde
Take any Ayde that bears the sence
Of saints or naturs Excellence [.]

(Anon., ‘On Celestinaes goinge a Iourney in wett-
weather’, 13-16, 27-31, 41-44)\textsuperscript{81}

This punning on the making ‘Mayde’ reaches a climax in the anonymous pastoral poem,
‘An Eglogue betweene Melibeus and Amyntas’, written in Fowler’s hand:

Fair Cælestina, farr a boue
The thoughts that commen louers moue:
[...]

Her Motions such a gesture beare’s
As Cynthia (when she full Appears)
Danct to the Musick of the sphæres:

Her speech Like Orpheus doth Intice
Her accents breathinge balme and spice
with all the sweets of paradice:

Her forms and graces may compare
with naturs skill: nay more I dare
say, They Incorporeall are;

For as the soule’s in euery part
As in the whole; and doth Impart
Her residence with equall Art:

soe her perfections beinge knowne
In euery place: Assign’d to none:
Makes her soule and body one [.]
Cælestina’s speech is instilled with an Orphic power, as she becomes a female Orpheus, the mother of poetry: ‘Her speech Like Orpheus doth Intice / Her accents breathinge balme and spice’ (AE, 85-86). Philip Sidney had referred to the ‘Planet-like Musick of Poetrie’, alluding to the Pythagorean doctrine of the music of the spheres.

The speakers of the Fowler ‘Eglogne’ intimate that this ‘Musick of the speæres’ (AE, 84) is driven by a female force – Cælestina, the Virgin Mary, a female maker par excellence. Moreover, the speakers in the Fowler ‘Eglogne’ evoke the tradition of musica mundana, whereby dance constituted an act of worship: Cælestina’s ‘Danc[ing]’ (AE, 84) echoes the movements of the liberated Miriam (the prophetess sister of Aaron) who dances the first dance with the Ark of the Covenant after crossing the Red Sea.

The tie between Cælestina and Constance Aston Fowler resurfaces in this ‘Eglogne’ in the lines:

A constant Faith all Feare Expells
And hope subdues Impossibles:
Loue often worketh Miracles [.]

(TE, 31-33, my italics)

This recounts the linguistic and conceptual punning on Fowler’s name that we have seen in her letters and the verse of Katherine Thimelby and thus further links Constance to the process of spiritual-material miracle ‘making’.

The soul-body conflation that Constance/Cælestina initiates (‘Makes her soule and body one’ [AE, 96]) deconstructs a number of male Renaissance discourses, which portrayed women either as the sanitised untouchable or the purely corporeal. Philip Sidney’s unattainable Stella, for instance, is aligned to ‘Nature’s chiepest furniture’, there to be admired from afar by the ‘heavenly guest’, the poet himself.85 Donne’s infamous mistress going to bed, on the other hand, is un-colonised territory, ‘Oh my America, my new found lande’, there to be ‘Unpin[ned]’, ‘Unlace[d]’ and ultimately

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82 Anon., in Fowler’s hand, ‘An Eglogne betweene Melibeus and Amyntas’, in The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler, pp. 55-59 (pp. 55, 58, 59). From henceforth this poem has been abbreviated as AE and is proceeded by the line reference.
 possessed by the male poetic voice."Francis de Sales, however, had proposed that ‘the soul is present in every part of the body’ and the speakers in the Fowler ‘Eglogne’ imply that this spiritual-physical confluence is generated by a divine female force – the makings of Cælestina. The sixteenth-century French polymath, Symphorien Champier, argued that there are ‘four basic principles’ in metaphysics (‘methaphisicum’): essence (‘essentia’); being (‘esse’); power (‘virtus’); and motion (‘actio’). As outlined above, the speakers of the Fowler ‘Eglogne’ consciously confront their coterie with a female essence, being, power and motion.

This melding of the physical and metaphysical is sustained in some of the meditative poems in Fowler’s miscellany that are written in Fowler’s hand. This is evinced in the poem, ‘O Lord direct my hart, direct my soule’:

I trauell’d up the mount; where Iesus wept
All others slept,
His weeping not as ours, t’was a huge flood,
And all his pord’s were eyes, where gusht out blood.
Lord can I write
And shed no teare, uieling this gastiely sight?
And can my soule be light, and thine heauye
Euen unto death, and all cause I might not dye.

[...]

see th’ Allmightys hand
which often spand
the polds: bound in cords; the feet that of’t bestryd
The glorious Heauens []
(P7/8, 25-32, 49-52)

The poet here compounds the physical writing of her hand (‘Lord can I write’ [P7/8, 29]) with her metaphysical ascent up the biblical/Petrarchan ‘mount’ (P7/8, 25) of Olives, where she will reach ‘th’Allmighty hand’ (P7/8, 49). This meditative poem in

87 Franci de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life, p. 55.
88 Champier, Vocabularius [...] naturalis philosophiae (Lyons, 1508), cited by Heninger, Touches of Sweet Harmony, p. 153 and Note 23, p. 196.
89 Sir Walter Aston (?) and Constance Aston Fowler (?), ‘Poem 7/8: O Lord direct my hart, direct my soule’, in The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler, pp. 17-21 (pp. 18-19). The first twenty-one lines of this poem are written in Sir Walter’s hand. The remaining eighty-three lines are written in Fowler’s hand. Aldrich-Watson attributes the last eighty-three lines in this poem to Fowler herself. Deborah Aldrich-Watson, ‘Note 1’, The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler, p. 17. From henceforth this poem is referred to as P7/8 and is proceeded by the line reference.
Fowler’s miscellany ends with a pictorial border – an intricate thatch-work of crucifixes drawn in Fowler’s hand (Figure 2).

Figure 2, Constance Aston Fowler’s textual orphrey, Huntington Library, MS HM 904, fol. 15v (detail). Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

This border is reminiscent of an orphrey (a decorative band or border embroidered onto chasubles, copes and other vestments).91 Indeed, the elongated rectangular shape of Fowler’s border is evocative of Catholic altar pieces, which sometimes bore the signatures of the women who embroidered them.92 Fowler’s thatching of multiple crucifixes brings to mind St Teresa of Ávila’s statement: ‘I need […] crosses […] I seem to be like one working with a pattern before her and copying it with her needle […] He [Christ] is our Pattern’.93 Fowler’s textual orphrey of crucifixes draws further attention to her intricate handiwork, which is influenced by ‘th’Almightys hand’ (P7/8, 49).

Julie Sanders posits that the women in the Tixall coterie do not ‘subvert their chosen genres’.94 But there is evidence in Fowler’s miscellany that points to Constance Aston Fowler’s role as an innovative female meditative maker. I wish to argue here that Fowler works within a male meditative tradition set by St Ignatius of Loyola (d. 1556), Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), Sir Walter Aston, John Donne and Robert Southwell. I then demonstrate how Fowler takes this tradition further through her specific focus on what it means to meditate on Christ as a woman.

The aforementioned meditative poem in Fowler’s miscellany, ‘O Lord direct my hart, direct my soule’, is written in two hands: the first twenty-one lines are written in Sir Walter’s hand (and are likely to be by him), while the remaining eighty-three lines are written in Fowler’s hand (and are likely to be by her).95 Femke Molekamp has

91 This definition of ‘orphrey’ is taken from King and Levey, The Victoria and Albert Museum’s Textile Collection, p. 110.
93 St Teresa, The Life, pp. 76, 86, 95.
95 Aldrich-Watson, ‘Note 1’, The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler, p. 17
argued that this poem records two contrasting modes of meditation.\textsuperscript{96} The opening of the poem (written in Sir Walter’s hand), reads as follows:

O Lord direct my hart, direct my soule  
O Lor’d controle  
my weaker fancy [.]  
(P7/8, 1-3)

Sir Walter’s speaker here (according to Molekamp) solicits a form of divine ‘self-regulation’:\textsuperscript{97} Indeed, Sir Walter here seems to recall Justus Lipsius’s renowned veneration of divine stoicism found in the \textit{Two Bookes of Constancie} (1595), which ran into four editions by 1654 (\textit{STC}). Stoical meditators, for Lipsius, reach the heavenly sphere through the ‘controle’ (P7/8, 2) of the ‘mind of the soule’:

in the body Reason hath her offspring from heauen, yea from God: and Seneca gaue it a singular commendation, saying, [...] \textit{That there was hidden in man parte of the diuine spirit}. This reason is an excellent power or faculty of vnderstanding and judgement, which is the perfection of the soule, euen as the soule is of man. The Grecians cal it [...] \textit{Noun}, the Latines \textit{mentem}, and as we may say ioynytly, \textit{The mind of the soule}. [...]  

I doe in good earnest giue this commendation to the Stoickes, that no other sect of Philosophers auowed more the maiesty and prouidence of God, nor drewe men neerer to heauenlie and eternall thinges.\textsuperscript{98}

In the section of the poem, ‘O Lord direct my hart, direct my soule’, written in Fowler’s hand, the speaker disrupts the stoical regulation of the ‘mind of the soule’ by foregrounding an uncontrollable torrent of tears that mirrors Christ’s tears on the mount of Olives:\textsuperscript{99}

I trauell’d up the mount; where Iesus wept  
All others slept,  
His weepinge not as ours, t’was a huge flood,  
And all his pord’s were eyes, where gusht out blood.  
Lord can I write  
And shed no teare, uiewing this gastly sight?  
(P7/8, 25-30)

\textsuperscript{97} Molekamp, ‘Early Modern Women’, p. 66.  
This deluge of tears is explicitly female in the anonymous meditative poem, ‘On the Passion of our Lord and sauior Iesus’, which is written entirely in Fowler’s hand and is likely to be by her:

The tender hearted weomen did relent
And for his [Christ’s] sake their bitter teares present
These did Injoy when coward mann did faile
courage to follow; Pitty to bewaile [.]  

(OTP, 100 197-200)

The Fowler poet here recalls Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611), where the daughters of Jerusalem meditate on Christ’s body during the Passion:

The Serjeants watching, while the women cri’d.

Thrice happy women that obtaind such grace
[...]
whose teares powr’d forth apace
On Flora’s bankes, like shewers of Aprils raine:
[...]

these poore women, by their pitious cries
Did moove their Lord, their Lover, and their King [Christ],
To take compassion, turne about, and speake
To them whose hearts were ready now to breake.

Most blessed daughters of Jerusalem,
Who found such favour in your Savio [s] sight,
To turne his face when you did pitie him;
Your tearefull eyes, beheld his eies more bright;
Your Faith and Love unto such grace did clime,
To have reflection from this Heav’ny Light:
[...]

When spightfull men with torments did oppresse
Th’afflicted body of this innocent Dove,
Poore women seeing how much they did transgresse,
By teares, by sighes, by cries intreat, may prove,
What may be done among the thickest presse [.]  

(SDRJ, 968-69, 973-74, 981-90, 993-97)

The Fowler poet, like Lanyer, implies that the first meditators on Christ’s body are women: Serjeants ‘wat[hl]’ (SDRJ, 968) and ‘coward’ (OTP, 199) men cower, while the women disciples actively immerse themselves in an all-female threnody.

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100 Anon., in Fowler’s hand, ‘On the Passion of our Lord and sauior Iesus’, in *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler*, pp. 6-14. Aldrich-Watson attributes this poem to Fowler, see Aldrich-Watson, ‘Introduction’, pp. xxxv-xxxvii. From henceforth, ‘On the Passion of our Lord and sauior Iesus’ has been abbreviated as OTP and is proceeded by the line reference.
By foregrounding the valiant power of the tearful ‘tender hearted weomen’ (OTP, 197) at Christ’s Crucifixion, Lanyer and the poet of ‘On the Passion’ challenge the masculinist critique of weeping that is found in Justus Lipsius’s influential treatise, *Two Bookes of Constancie*. In this treatise, Lipsius’s friend and mentor, Charles Langius, declares that

This [exhortation[n] vnto Constancie] is the propertie of wise and valiant hearted men, as Achilles was warned in Homer.

*Though cause of griefe be great, yet let vs keepe All to our selues: it booteth not to weep.*

Lanyer and the poet of ‘On the Passion’ posit that ‘tender hearted weomen’ (OTP, 197) surpass ‘coward mann’ (OTP, 199) at the Crucifixion through their constant courageous tears and fearless piety: ‘these poore women, by their pitious cries / Did moove their Lord, their Lover, and their King [Christ]’ (SDRJ, 981-82). The poet-speaker of ‘On the Passion’ becomes one of Christ’s valiant mourning women when she states: ‘For his [Christ’s] loue contrition shall force roome / within my soule, and make my heart his tombe’ (OTP, 273-74). This recalls the ‘tombe’ (OTP, 274) of Christ where the angel informs the female disciples of Christ’s resurrection.102 As Catherine of Siena reminds us: ‘The dear Magdalen [...] with true heart clothed herself in Christ crucified [...] she [...] stayed alone at the tomb [...] she has been made our teacher’.103 Thus Christ and the Mary Magdalen, through the power of contrition, will ‘make’ a ‘tombe’ in the Fowler poet-speaker’s ‘heart’ (OTP, 274). The poet of ‘On the Passion’ posits that constancy is not merely the ‘propertie of wise and valiant hearted men’ (as Lipsius would have us believe), but is open to ‘tender hearted weomen’ (OTP, 197) such as the poet-speaker herself: ‘These constant uows religiously I’le pay’ (OTP, 168).104

The conjuring of corporeal tears to access the destitution of Christ at the Passion was not simply a female preserve during the Renaissance. The sixteenth-century founder of the Society of Jesus, St Ignatius of Loyola, for instance, had advised Jesuits and their followers to

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101 Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancie*, p. 57.
104 Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancie*, p. 57.
Gather [...] a desire to give thy selfe wholly vnto our Lord, imploring all thy members and senses in his diuine service, that thou mayst wholly be a perfect representation of him. [...] 

Ponder the devotion & inward feeling, the teares and sorrow of thy Lord, how solitary, destitute & comfortles he [Christ] is in this his so great affliction [...].

It is a deluge of male penitential corporeal-spiritual tears that St Peter invokes in Robert Southwell’s *Saint Peters Complaint* (1595):

> Launche foorth my Soul into a maine of teares, 
> [...] 
> Give vent unto the vapours of thy brest, 
> That thicken in the brimmes of cloudy eies: 
> Where sinne was hatchd, let teares now wash the nest: 
> Where life was lost, recover life with cries. 
> Thy trespasse foule: let not thy teares be few: 
> Baptize thy spotted soule in weeping dewe.

However, St Ignatius had also critiqued the life of the fluid earthly body:

> co[n]sider what thy body is whilst it liueth, and thou shalt find, that it is a sack of earth, a continuall flowing water of all filth and stench, and there is not any part therof from the sole of the foot, to the crowne of the head, without impurity and vncleanesse.

This assailment against the life of the earthly senses is taken up by the Jesuit priest, Southwell, who writes (in the voice of the Mary Magdalen):

> O heaven, lament: sense robbeth thee of Saints: 
> Lament O soules, sense spoyleth you of grace. 
> Yet sense doth scarce deserve these hard complaints, 
> Love is the theife, sense but the entring place. 
> Yet graunt I must, sense is not free from sinne, 
> For theefe he is that theefe admitteth in.

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For John Donne, on the other hand, it is the sensual ‘embrac[e]’ of the ‘spouse’ of Christ that leads to divine truth:

Betray kind husband [Christ] thy spouse to our sights,
And let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,
Who is most trew, and pleasing to thee, then
When she’s embrac’d and open to most men.¹⁰⁹

Although the ‘spouse’ of Christ is corporeally present in Donne’s above-quoted sonnet, she is vocally absent. The poet of ‘On the Passion’ reclaims the female sensual-spiritual voice to create a penitential feminized meditative practice:

O say (deere Iesus) was it for my sake
For me vile sinner thou didst undertake
such pains, such cruell torments, what am I
That thou for me shouldst suffer misery
But O my soule I feele my conscience say
I was an Actor in this bloody play
gae thee some wounds, my guilty soule descries
Too, where they were, t’was neere those sacred Eyes
O tell me where I hit, and frome this Day
These constant uows religiously I’le pay [...] (OTP, 159-68)

Here we find the characteristic paronomasia (rhetorical word play) on Constance Aston Fowler’s name that is evident in her letters: ‘O my soule I feele my conscience say [...] These constant uows religiously I’le pay’ (OTP, 163, 168, my emphasis). ‘Conscience’ and ‘constancy’ in this poem is tied to the personal pronoun ‘I’ (OTP, 163, 168), which points to the poet’s consciousness and identity – her ‘metaphysics of presence’.¹¹⁰ Here the poet seems to allude to the sacredness of her name by evoking the narrative of Constantina in The Lives of Saints (1609) by Alfonso Villegas (which was held in the Tixall library):

Constantina daughter to the Emperor Cõstãtinus [...] was not a Christian, yet she went to the sepulchre of S. Agnes [...]. While she remained there in praier, [...] she heard a voice which said: Constantina be constant, beleue in Iesus Christ [...] and thou shalt be whole. Whereupon she was not only made a Christian [...] but also built a sumptuous Church in the [...] honor of S. Agnes.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 22. See Chapter 1 of this study for an analysis of the Derridean notion of the ‘metaphysics of presence’.
Christ, through St Agnes, makes Constantina a Christian, and the speaker of the Fowler poem, ‘On the Passion’, is also pervaded with this making, transformative principle, tied to Christ through the *auctoritas* of the ‘constant uo[w]’ (OTP, 168).

The poet’s fashioning of herself as an ‘Actor’ (OTP, 164) in ‘On the Passion’ recalls Fowler’s statement in her letters (‘you would love me mightyly for my care in performing [...]’) and substantiates the evidence that Constance Aston Fowler is indeed the poetic voice and maker here.\(^{112}\) By describing herself as an ‘Actor’ (OTP, 164), the poet of ‘On the Passion’ recalls and questions Southwell’s *Saint Peters Complaint*:

> O women, woe to men: traps for their falls,
> Still actors in all tragicall mishaunces:
> Earthes necessarie evils, captiving thralles,
> Now murdring with your tongs, now with your glances,
> Parents of life, and love, spoylers of both,
> The theefes of Harts: false do you love or loth.\(^{113}\)

The above-quoted venting of spleen against ‘women [...] / [...] actors’ is motivated by the servant maids who accuse Peter and prompt his denial before Christ’s Crucifixion.\(^{114}\) As Kari Boyd McBride observes, the ‘number and gender’ of Peter’s accusers varies according to gospel, but the ‘femaleness of the accusers’ is central to Southwell’s argument.\(^{115}\) Indeed, Peter’s female accusers become signifiers for all women: ‘O women, woe to men’.\(^{116}\) Southwell’s speaker chastises all women for fake ‘act[ing]’ and ‘false’ emotion.\(^{117}\) The seventeenth-century Puritan, William Prynne, goes a step further than Southwell by expostulating that ‘women-Actors’ are ‘prostitu[ted] Strumpets’.\(^{118}\) The poet of ‘On the Passion’, however, turns this derogatory demarcation of the female performer on its head. The Fowler poet’s female speaker is an ‘Actor in this bloody play’ (OTP, 164), yet this penitential performativity leads to a heightened sense of seeing: ‘Now I behold, and see my selfe most cleere’ (OTP, 179). The prominent adverb, ‘Now’ (OTP, 179), pulls us into the present moment of meditation, as the Fowler poet creates an acute sense of dramatic self-involved


\(^{117}\) Southwell, *Saint Peters Complaint*, p. 85, lines 320, 324.

immediacy. The Fowler poet demonstrates that the performative can become a cathartic form of release – it is a vital method for reaching the divine that conflates the human with the sacred.

But this sacrosanct performativity is not necessarily unique to the poem, ‘On the Passion’. Many male metaphysical writers utilized a corporeal poetic dramaturgy in their devotional practice. Donne, for example, uses a dramatic monologue to address his poet-speaker’s soul in Holy Sonnet XIII:

Marke in my heart, O Soule, where thou dost dwell,
The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
Whether that countenance can thee affright,
Teares in his eyes quench the amasing light,
Blood fills his frownes, which from his pierc’d head fell,
[...]
I said to all my profane mistresses,
Beauty, of pitty, founnesse onely is
A signe of rigour: so I say to thee [Christ?],
To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assign’d,
This beauteous forme assures a pitious minde.\(^{119}\)

‘[P]rofane mistresses’ are spoken to in the above-quoted sonnet-monologue, but we are never allowed to hear their voices or viewpoints.\(^{120}\) It is a sonnet such as this that arguably leads to Colin Burrow’s following contention: ‘Such writing [metaphysical poetry] depended on a training in rhetoric which few women in this period had, and dramatizes a desire to display and to persuade in ways which were not associated with the feminine in this period’.\(^{121}\) What I am arguing here is that the poet-speaker of ‘On the Passion’ appropriates and adapts male metaphysical discourse to delineate an authentically female sensual-spiritual meditative inner life. Take, for instance, the following lines from ‘On the Passion’:

Now I behold, and see my selfe most cleere
Agent in all that happened to him [Jesus] heere
My costly clothinge made him naked goe
My easy lodginge forst his scourginge soe
My curious Diett Hungar to him brought
My foolish Ioyes presented him sad thoughts
My pleasurs in vaine glory breed his scorns
My often curlinge weau’d his crown of Thorns [.

\(^{119}\) John Donne, ‘Holy Sonnet XIII: What if this present were the worlds last night?’, in \textit{The Divine Poems}, ed. Gardner, p. 10, lines 2-6, 10-14.
\(^{120}\) Donne, ‘Holy Sonnet XIII’, line 10.
'My often curlinge weau’d his crown of Thorns’ (OTP, 186) recalls Donne’s first sonnet from *La Corona* (c. 1608?):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Deigne at my hands this crown of prayer and praise,} \\
\text{Weav’d in my low devout melancholie,} \\
\text{[...]} \\
\text{But what thy thorny crowne gain’d, that give mee,} \\
\text{A crowne of Glory, which doth flower alwayes 
\text{[.]}}
\end{align*}
\]

The poet-speaker of the ‘On the Passion’ places Donne’s spiritual-meditative ‘Weav[ing]’ within a feminized context – the ‘curlinge’ (OTP, 186) of hair – which, according to Helen Hackett, was practised more often by women than by men in the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{123} The speaker of ‘On the Passion’ weaves Christ’s body with her own in an act of spiritual-physical embroidery: ‘My often curlinge weau’d his crown of Thorns’ (OTP, 186). By drawing attention to her hair, the Fowler poet recalls the admirable abjection of Catholic nuns who cut off their hair when they became brides of Christ.\textsuperscript{124} This would have special resonance for the women in the Tixall coterie, as Katherine Thimelby’s sister, Winifred Thimelby (c. 1618/19-1690), was professed at St Monica’s convent in Louvain in 1635 and was joined by Fowler’s sister, Gertrude Aston Thimelby, in 1655.\textsuperscript{125} The above-cited evidence from the poem, ‘On the Passion’, demonstrates how a woman could re-appropriate the Donnean meditative metaphysic to articulate a contemplative female subject-position.

Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy have urged scholars to recover the Renaissance ‘senses’ of ‘making’.\textsuperscript{126} They argue that this recovery will facilitate a more accurate and nuanced understanding of early modern conceptions of writing.\textsuperscript{127} Danielle Clarke has argued that the writings of Renaissance women are essential to this recovery.\textsuperscript{128} I have shown how the Catholic contexts of Mariology and female

\textsuperscript{125} Donna J. Long, ‘Thimelby [née Aston], Gertrude (1617-1668), poet’, *ODNB* [accessed 6 October 2010].
\textsuperscript{126} Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{127} Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{128} Danielle Clarke, ‘Gender, Material Culture and the Hybridity of Renaissance Writing’, in *Renaissance Transformations: The Making of English Writing (1500-1650)*, ed. by Margaret Healy and Thomas Healy, pp. 112-27.
hagiography are vital in recovering the ‘senses’ of ‘making’: both textual senses (pertaining to meaning) and physical senses (pertaining to the body). I have shown how a Catholic woman writer like Constance Aston Fowler constructs herself as a ‘maker’ by compounding her spiritual-material poesis with her sensual-spiritual vita contemplativa. The confluence of Marian devotion and Catholic female hagiography enables Fowler and her circle to fruitfully conflate the metaphysical senses of ‘making’ with the feminine.
Chapter 5

‘All oppositions are contiguous’: Hermetic Metaphysics in the Poetry of Katherine Philips (1632-1664)

‘For the friendship, and commixture of contraries and unlike, became Light shining from the Act or Operation of God [.]’

(John Everard, The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus)

‘Hermes Trismegistus chose Aesculapius [...] wise men have always thought it necessary to have [...] man as companion for the safe and peaceful completion of the heavenly journey.’

(Marsilio Ficino)

‘[D]iscords harmony compound. / [...] This made that Antique Sage in rapture Cry / That sure the world had full Eternity.’

(Katherine Philips)

The historian, Frances Yates, argues that during the Renaissance, the ancient mythical Egyptian sage, Hermes Trismegistus, was regarded as a real physician, king, philosopher and priest, who lived at the time of Moses and had himself conceived (through divine revelation) the works of the Greek wisdom texts, the Corpus Hermeticum or Hermetica. In the mid-fifteenth century, the influential Florentine statesman and patron, Cosimo de’ Medici, asked Marsilio Ficino to make a new Latin translation of the Corpus Hermeticum. Ficino eagerly consented. Ficino’s Hermetic Pimander, together with the Asclepius, went through more than twenty printed editions between 1471 and the mid-sixteenth century. It was translated into French, Spanish, Dutch and Italian. The first printed English translation of the Hermetica was John Everard’s The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus (1649).

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

Among philosophers he [Hermes] first turned from physical and mathematical topics to contemplation of things divine, and he was the first to discuss with great wisdom the majesty of God [...]. Thus, he was called the first author of theology, and Orpheus followed him, taking second place in the ancient theology. After Aglaophemus, Pythagoras came next in theological succession, having been initiated into [the] rites of Orpheus, and he was followed by Philolaus, teacher of our divine Plato. In this way, from a wondrous line of six theologians emerged a single system of ancient theology [prisca theologia], harmonious in every part, which traced its origins to Mercurius [Hermes] and reached absolute perfection with the divine Plato. Mercurius [Hermes] wrote many books pertaining to the knowledge of divinity, [...] often speaking not only as philosopher but as prophet [...] He foresaw [...] the rise of the new faith, the coming of Christ [...].10

As Stanton Linden points out, the *Hermetica* was, in fact, penned in the post-Christian era (in the third or fourth century AD), but this was unbeknown to Ficino and his followers, who believed that the *Hermetica* presaged and predicted the ‘coming of Christ’.11 What Ficino is suggesting in his preface to the *Pimander* is that the *Hermetica* is one of the first ancient texts to conflate the ‘physical’ and natural with a ‘divine’ spiritual monism. Moreover, Ficino in his preface to the *Pimander* does not define Hermeticism and Platonism as two separate traditions, but emphatically unites them into one trans-cultural syncretic philosophy – a *prisca theologia*.

According to Ficino, the ‘Egyptian’ Hermetic ‘priests’ practised ‘medicine’ and ‘the mysteries’ as ‘one and the same study’.12 Ficino wishes to master this ‘natural [...] Egyptian art’ and wholeheartedly encourages others to ‘apply’ themselves ‘to it’.13 Critics such as Frances Yates, Elizabeth Holmes, Maren-Sofie Røstvig, Lyndy Abraham, Robert Schuler and Margaret Healy have shown that many men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries enthusiastically heeded Ficino’s advice and practised the art of physical and metaphysical Hermeticism.14 These men included John

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Dee, Francis Bacon, Robert Fludd, Elias Ashmole, Henry Vaughan and Andrew Marvell. Building on this scholarship, this chapter proposes that the *Hermetica’s* influential blending of the ‘physical’ and the ‘divine’ had particular relevance for Renaissance women, as it was women who often administered physical and spiritual care within their own households and local areas. I argue that women such as Rebecca Vaughan (*d.* 1658) and Lady Grace Mildmay (c. 1552-1620) obtained access to Hermetic texts and practices through their male contemporaries, Thomas Vaughan, Thomas Tymme and Reginald Paters. I then examine how Hermetic practices could infiltrate Renaissance women’s poetry and elucidate this supposition by analysing the poems of the seventeenth-century writer, Katherine Philips (1632-1664). I argue that Philips gained access to the *Hermetica* through her male contemporaries, John Everard, Henry More, Henry Vaughan and Andrew Marvell. I then demonstrate how Philips used this accessibility to create a female Hermetic-poetic language of her own. I explore Philips’s feminization of Hermeticism on four levels: spiritual, political, erotic and linguistic. The chapter proposes that there is a Hermetic intertextuality between Philips’s poetry and Aemilia Lanyer’s pro-woman alchemical volume of poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611). By reading Philips and Lanyer alongside one another, I aim to re-configure what is meant by the ‘Hermetic metaphysical tradition’. The chapter ends by considering how Philips’s Hermeticism was understood by two contrasting seventeenth-century readers of her verse: Sir Francis Finch and Aphra Behn (1640?-1689).

The *Hermetica* posits that ‘herbs, trees, stones, and spices’ have ‘within themselves [...] a natural force of divinity’.\(^{15}\) It is the human being, according to the *Hermetica*, who has the capacity to uncover this earthly natural divinity:

> a human being is a great wonder [...] He looks up to heaven [...] He cultivates the earth; he swiftly mixes into the elements; he plumbs the depths of the sea in the keenness of his mind [...] mingling and combining the two natures [mortal and eternal] into one in their just proportions.\(^{16}\)

It is a passage such as this that arguably led to the seventeenth-century philosopher, physician and poet, Henry Vaughan, to remark that ‘Hermetists [...] observe nature in her workes [...] by the mediation of nature [...] they may produce and bring to light [...]’

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16 *Hermetica*, trans. by Copenhaver, pp. 69, 70, 71.
rare effectual medicines’. For Vaughan and his fellow Hermeticists, ‘rare effectual medicines’ could be attained through the distillation, conservation and transmutation of earthly ‘herbs, trees, stones, and spices’. Hermes was thus regarded as the father of physical and spiritual alchemy. The seventeenth-century German alchemist, Martinus Rulandus, for instance, argued that ‘to obtain a knowledge of the mysteries of the art [of alchemy], it is necessary to be acquainted with all the works of Hermes’. Rulandus’s use of the Ficinian term ‘mysteries’ suggests that this ‘art’ of alchemy is physical, exoteric, spiritual and esoteric.

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

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

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

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

In 1614, the philologist, Isaac Casaubon, proposed that the Hermetica derived from the first century AD rather than from ancient times, but this evidence was largely ignored throughout the seventeenth century and philosophers such as Ralph Cudworth continued to insist that Hermes Trismegistus initiated the prophet, Moses, into ‘Hieroglyphick Learning and Metaphysical Theology’.

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For Cudworth, spiritual monism stems from the ‘Hermaical or Egyptian Doctrines (in all which One Supreme Deity is every where asserted)’.\textsuperscript{24} Cudworth here refutes Casaubon by harking back to the sixteenth-century French Protestant philosopher, Philippe Du Plessis Mornay. Du Plessis Mornay’s treatise, A Woork e concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion (1587), was translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney and Arthur Golding. This treatise ran into four editions by 1617 (STC). Du Plessis Mornay writes:

Mercuirus [Hermes] Trismegistus, who (if the bookees which are fathered uppon him bee his in deede, as in trueth they bee very auncient) [...] teacheth euerywhere, That there is but one GOD [...] [...] Mercurius Trismegistus with Moyses, shall reape therby most singular contention. In Genesis Moyses describeth the Creation of the World; and so doth Mercuric likewise in his Pemandar. [...] Moyses parteth the nature of moysture into twayne, the one mounting aloft which he calleth heauen, and the other remayning beneath which he calleth Sea; And Mercurie seeth a light fire which he calleth Aether mounting up as it were out of the bowelles of the moyst nature [...] this maner of Mercuries writing, is not a bare borrowing or translating out of Moyses; but rather a tradition conueyed to the AEgiptians from the Father to the Sonne.\textsuperscript{25}

For Du Plessis Mornay, Moses’s account of the Creation in Genesis parallels the divine alchemy found in the Hermetica. It is, presumably, this physical-spiritual blending through the prisca theologia (one God, one theology), that Cudworth defines as a ‘Metaphysical Theology’.\textsuperscript{26}

Aligning Hermes Trismegistus with Moses can be traced back to at least the fifteenth century, where we find a mosaic of Hermes in Siena Cathedral (c. 1488) that declares: ‘HERMES MERCURIUS TRIMEGISTUS CONTEMPORANEUS MOYSE’.\textsuperscript{27} On close examination of this mosaic of Hermes, we find that the male prophet, Hermes, is flanked by two female sibylline figures.\textsuperscript{28} These sibylline figures imply that Hermetic knowledge will be disseminated by women. Indeed, according to the renowned seventeenth-century alchemist, Michael Maier, the Hermetic succession passed to Maria the Hebrew, who was closest to Hermes [...] the whole secret, she [Maria] says, is in the knowledge of the Vessel of

\textsuperscript{24} Ralph Cudworth, The True Intellectual System of the Universe (Cambridge, 1678), p. 333.
\textsuperscript{27} Santi, The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{28} Santi, The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena, pp. 19, 20.
Hermes, because it is divine [...] He who understands this properly grasps the truest mind of Maria, and she will open up to him those secrets of chemistry which [...] all have wrapped in dark silence.29

Maier indicates that the Hermetic art is not exclusively passed from ‘the Father to the Sonne’, but is initiated by women such as Maria.30 Maier depicts Maria as Hermes’s sortor mystica – a Hermetic sister-prophetess who carries and circulates the knowledge of Hermes’s sacred alchemical ‘Vessel’.31

Taking on the role of the sortor mystica was one way in which women of the Renaissance could gain Hermetic agency. This is exhibited through the seventeenth-century married couple, Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan. The philosopher and physician, Thomas Vaughan (brother of Henry Vaughan), kept an alchemical notebook during the 1650s where he recorded a communal physical and metaphysical Hermetic practice:

Take one part crude or melted sal ammoniac, also one part of the best scarab. Crush very gently, and dissolve in distilled vinegar, or in our burning spirit. Then distill, and you will have a noble menstruum for resolving and subliming metallic calxes into a volatile spirit: [...] It was proved in reduction and sublimation of metallic calxes into viscous, volatile, fiery, and exceedingly acidic water.

Praise indeed be to God, our merciful Lord and most high; in thee, o most just Jesus, redeemer of sinful souls, most clement God and Man, uniting and reconciling God to man and man to God. Great Love, new and eternal bond, true life, the way and light of the way. Draw me after Thee, We shall run! T. [homas] R. [ebecca] V. [aughan]32

Thomas Vaughan here immediately follows his exoteric alchemical practice with a regenerative devotional meditation that reconciles ‘man to God’.33 This exoteric–esoteric juxtapositioning recalls the Hermetica’s stress on the ‘two natures’ of man, mortal and eternal.34 Thomas Vaughan’s use of the plural ‘our burning spirit’ and signing of the meditation as ‘T. [homas] R. [ebecca] V.[aughan]’ indicates that his

29 Maier, Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum (1617), cited in Patai, The Jewish Alchemists, pp. 76, 77, 78.
31 Maier, Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum, cited in Patai, The Jewish Alchemists, p. 77. According to Raphael Patai, the chief source for Maria is the ancient Greek alchemical author, Zosimos, who lived in Hellenistic Egypt at about 300 CE. Patai argues that Maria must have lived at least two generations before Zosimos himself. See Patai, The Jewish Alchemists, p. 60.
32 Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan’s Aqua Vitae: Non Vitis (British Library MS, Sloane 1741), ed. and trans. by Donald R. Dickson (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), p. 33. This alchemical notebook was written soon after 1658 and records alchemical practices that were taking place throughout the 1650s. See Donald R. Dickson, ‘The Alchemistical Wife: The Identity of Thomas Vaughan’s ‘Rebecca’”, The Seventeenth Century, 13 (1998), 36-49 (p. 41).
33 Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan’s Aqua Vitae: Non Vitis, p. 33.
34 Hermetica, trans. by Copenhaver, p. 71.
alchemical-spiritual practice is not taking place in isolation, but in the company of his wife, Rebecca.³⁵

Later on in the notebook, Thomas Vaughan writes of an ‘Aqua Rebecca: Which I call thus, since my dearest wife showed me this from holy Scripture. She showed me (I say) nor would I have ever found it by another way’.³⁶ As we have seen, philosophers such as Ralph Cudworth and Philippe Du Plessis Mornay were reading the Bible through the lens of the Hermetica and here Rebecca Vaughan offers a Hermetic-alchemical interpretation of the ‘holy Scripture’ that her husband uses exoterically.³⁷ In this way, Rebecca Vaughan becomes a soror mystica (like the Prophetess Maria) who guides Thomas Vaughan to the Hermetic divine through the ‘holy Scripture’.³⁸

But women did not necessarily need their husbands to gain access to the Hermetic arts and this is seen through the writings and practices of the early-seventeenth-century medic-healer, Lady Grace Mildmay. According to Linda Pollock, Lady Mildmay may have been part of an ‘élite circle of alchemists’ that included the physician, Reginald Paters.³⁹ Indeed, in her writings, Lady Mildmay cites both the medieval Hermeticist, Arnaldus de Villanova, and the sixteenth-century Hermeticist, Paracelsus.⁴⁰ Although Lady Mildmay does not mention reading foreign languages and Latin in her surviving autobiography, she certainly would have been able to read John Harvey’s printed edition of An Astrological Addition [...] the learned worke, of Hermes Trismegistus, intituled, Iatromathematica (1583) and Thomas Tymme’s published English translation of Joseph Du Chesne’s The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermetical Physicke (1605).⁴¹ Lady Mildmay (like her contemporary, Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland) may have acquired access to the Hermetica through her male alchemical associates. As we will see, Lady Mildmay’s spiritual meditations abound in allusions to the Hermetica.

The Hermetica delineates the alchemical divine omnipotence of God:

He [God] filled a great basin with mind, and sent it down to earth; and he appointed a herald, and bade him make proclamation to the hearts of men: ‘Hearken, each human heart; dip yourself in this basin [...]
believing that you shall ascend to Him who sent the basin down’ [...] those who [...] dipped themselves in the bath of mind, these men got a share of gnosis.  

It is this transformative basin of gnosis that Lady Mildmay seems to evoke in her spiritual meditations:

He [God] is the spirit of sanctification and regeneration, making that holy which was unholy [...] regeneration [...] begetteth us to God and maketh us new creatures in mind, will, and life [...] Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, should walk in newness of life. [...]  

God hath ordained fire to refine gold and as wines poured from vessel to vessel are purified, so hath he ordained means to refine and purge this heart from all her dross [...] to make it a clean vessel, more pure than the gold and to retain the holy spirit of God .

Lady Mildmay’s invocation of spiritual ‘washing’ and ‘regeneration’ not only stems from the biblical doctrine of baptism (Matthew 3. 13-17; John 1. 29-34), but recalls the Hermetica’s holy alchemical ‘basin’.  

As we have seen, the Hermetica posits that ‘herbs, trees, stones, and spices’ have ‘within themselves [...] a natural force of divinity’ and it is up to the human being to ‘cultivat[e] the earth’ and uncover its healing potential. It is this Hermetic theory that Lady Mildmay appears to explicate when she writes:

plants, trees, fruits, spices, precious balsms natural, natural baths which boil like a furnace, ordained for health. All sorts of precious gums for medicine, sweet odours, gold, silver, pearl, precious stones [...] All which do declare unto us, the mighty power of God [...] God hath given man wisdom and knowledge to use them and to avoid the abuse of them[].

These divine ‘plants’ and ‘spices’ are used by Lady Mildmay to concoct ‘precious and excellent balm[s]’ that are distributed in her household and local vicinity. In her

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42 Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings which Contain Religious or Philosphic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, trans. by Scott, p. 61.
43 Lady Grace Mildmay, ‘Extracts from Spiritual Meditations’ (c. 1617-1620), in Pollock, With Faith and Physic, pp. 70-91 (pp. 76-77).
44 Hermetica, trans. by Scott, p. 61.
46 Mildmay, ‘Extracts from Spiritual Meditations’, in Pollock, With Faith and Physic, p. 84.
medical papers, Lady Mildmay notes that she prepares her healing balms ‘according to art’ and I would argue that this ‘art’ is a likely reference to the *Ars Hermetica*.  

Lady Mildmay dedicates her spiritual meditations to her daughter and grandchildren, as she writes at the beginning of her meditations:

To my daughter, Mary, the Lady Fane, wife of the Honourable Knight, Sir Francis Fane.

For as much as by the goodness of God, such abundance of the fatness of the earth shall descend upon you (my daughter) from your father and myself, I present this above all other gifts unto you and your children, even the dew of heaven, contained in these books following.

Lady Mildmay’s allusion to the ‘fatness of the earth [...] the dew of heaven’ is clearly an invocation of Genesis: ‘God giu e thee [...] of the dewe of heauen, and the fatnes of the earth’.  

This quotation from Genesis also appears on the title-page of John Dee’s alchemical-Hermetic text, *Monas hieroglyphica* (1564). As Lyndy Abraham points out, for some Renaissance Hermetic thinkers, the alchemists’ cleansing water was seen as a ‘dew of grace’.  

It is presumably this cleansing alchemical potential that Lady Mildmay bestows on her meditations, as she implies that they will continue to purify and heal her daughter and grandchildren after her death. Lady Mildmay’s dedicatory epistle to her daughter evinces that Hermetic gnosis was being passed on to daughters through their mothers.

In the mid seventeenth century, Hermeticism’s foregrounding of the *prisca theologia* took on a resurgent political resonance as men and women sought to transcend the severe earthly factionalism of their times and reach the divine through the ascendency of the *Deus unus*. Everard’s 1649 translation of the *Hermetica* declares that the

friendship, and commixture of contraries and unlike, became Light shining from the Act or Operation of God [...]  

For there is one Soul, one Life, and one Matter. [...] There is therefore one God. [...] He therefore being One, doth all things in many things.

According to Margaret Healy, the *Hermetica*’s rendering of the syncretic ‘friendship [...] of contraries’ enabled ‘people to envision alternative golden worlds beyond the

cataclysmic events’ of the mid seventeenth century. Indeed, during the mid seventeenth century, there was a demand for English translations of Hermetic texts, as they poured off the printing presses. These English printed texts included Everard’s *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* (1649) and *Hermes Trismegistus His Second Book, Called Asclepius* (1657), Henry Vaughan’s translation of Henry Nollius’s (Thomas Vaughan’s?) *Hermetical Physick* (1655), and Elias Ashmole’s *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1651) which contained ‘Severall Poetical Pieces of our Famous English Philosophers, who have written the Hermetique Mysteries’.

One mid-seventeenth-century writer who was caught in the midst of political and religious factionalism was Katherine Philips. Philips was born into a Presbyterian background. Her father, John Fowler, was a cloth merchant. Her maternal grandfather, Daniel Oxenbridge, was a Presbyterian physician who was practising in London from circa 1620 onwards. Her maternal uncle, John Oxenbridge, was a puritan minister and a friend of Andrew Marvell and John Milton. Her maternal aunt, Elizabeth Oxenbridge, was married to Oliver St John, a prominent Parliamentarian lawyer. In 1647 it was documented that Philips’s mother, Katherine Oxenbridge, visited the Independent preacher, Sarah Wight.

Between 1640 and 1646, Philips attended Mrs Salmons’s Presbyterian boarding-school in Hackney. It was probably at Mrs Salmon’s school that Philips learnt about the processes of domestic alchemy. The seventeenth-century conduct-book writer, Hannah Woolley, directed female teachers as follows: ‘Having qualified them [female students] for reading, you should practice them in their pen, [...] and in due time let them know how to Preserve, Conserve, Distill; with all those laudible Sciences which

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57 Warren Chernaik, ‘Philips [née Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), poet’, *ODNB* [accessed 7 July 2009].
59 Chernaik, ‘Philips [née Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), poet’, *ODNB*.
60 Chernaik, ‘Philips [née Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), poet’, *ODNB*.
62 Chernaik, ‘Philips [née Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), poet’, *ODNB*. 
adorn a compleat Gentlewoman’.

Indeed, it is domestic alchemical receipt-book culture that Philips playfully captures in her 1640s juvenilia:

A receipt to cure a Love sick Person who cant obtain the Party desired

Take two oz: of the spirits of reason three oz:
of the Powder of experiance five dram of the Juce
of Discretion three oz: of the Powder of good advise
& a spoonful of the Cooling watter of consideration
make these all up into Pills & besure to drink a
little content after ym & then the head will be
clear of maggotts & whimsies & you restored to yf
right sences []

As we will see, it is this early interest in emotional alchemy that Philips transmutes in her later verse into an intricate form of Hermeticism.

Kate Lilley suggests that it was at Mrs Salmon’s school that Philips formed intimacies with girls of a ‘higher social standing’. Here, for instance, Philips befriended Mary Aubrey, daughter of the Royalist, Sir John Aubrey. Here, she also met Mary Harvey, niece of the Royalist sympathiser and physician, Dr William Harvey.

Mary Harvey went on to marry the Royalist, Sir Edward Dering, and it was through the Derings in London that Philips made the acquaintance of the Royalist and Hermeticist, Henry Vaughan. It was also through the Derings that Philips was introduced to the Royalist society of the music composer, Henry Lawes.

In circa 1646-1647, Philips’s widowed mother married Sir Richard Phillipps and Katherine Philips moved with her mother and stepfather to Picton Castle in Wales. In 1648, Katherine (née Fowler) Philips married the prominent Welsh Cromwellian, Colonel James Philips (c. 1624-1674). It is in Wales that Katherine Philips makes the acquaintance of Anne Owen (1633-1692), the ‘Lucasia’ of her verse, to whom she


66 Lilley, ‘Dear Object’, p. 163.


70 Chernaik, ‘Philips [née Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), poet’, ODNB.
addresses several poems. Anne Owen was the daughter and heiress of John Lewis of Presaddfed. As Carol Barash observes, Anne Owen’s family connections had strategically shifting political allegiances. Anne Owen’s stepfather and later father-in-law, Sir Hugh Owen, for instance, sided with Parliament on the outbreak of the Civil War. He then transferred his sympathies to the Royalist cause, but eventually went on to hold important public appointments under the Commonwealth throughout the 1650s.

Philips thus had strong Royalist and Parliamentarian connections, and Mark Llewellyn has argued that it was for this reason that she had to ‘strike a balance between the often conflicting political and religious imperatives of two very different visions of worldly existence’.

It is for this reason, I would suggest, that Philips turned to the *Hermetica*. The *Hermetica*’s stress on the ‘friendship [...] of contraries’ – its *discordia concors* – allows a writer like Philips to negotiate the factionalism and conflict of her times:

Order, by which all things were made,  
And this great world’s foundation laid,  
Is nothing else but Harmony,  
Where different parts are brought t’ agree.  

(LADB, 76 1-4)

Philips partly uses her verse as a tool to find a common-ground between the Royalist and the Parliamentarian:

We hunt extreams, and run so fast,  
We can no steady Judgement cast:  
He best surveys the circuit round,  
Who stands i’ th’ middle of the Ground.  

(LADB, 61-64)

For Philips, it is the *Hermetica*’s emphasis on the *prisca theologia* that has the capacity to redeem all earthly factions: ‘One God would save, one Christ redeem them all’.

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75 The Divine Pymander, trans. by Everard, p. 123.
77 Katherine Philips, ‘2. Corinth. 5. 19. v. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. 8 April 1653’, in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 181-82 (p. 182), line 34.
There are a number of ways in which Philips could have accessed the *Hermetica*. She was fluent in French and proficient in Italian—languages in which published editions of the *Hermetica* were circulating throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.\(^{78}\) Philips wrote the majority of her poems between *circa* 1650 and 1664, after John Everard’s publication of *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* (1649).\(^{79}\) Furthermore, Philips read the writings of the seventeenth-century Hermetic disciple, Henry More, whom she quotes explicitly in her epitaph to her poem, ‘God’.\(^{80}\) Henry More cites the *Hermetica* on the title-page of *Psychathanasia* (1647): ‘man is immortal; for he can receive God, and hold intercourse with God’.\(^{81}\)

As indicated, Philips also knew the Hermetic philosopher, Henry Vaughan. In *circa* 1651, Philips chooses to address Henry Vaughan in Hermetic terms:

> To Mr. Henry Vaughan, Silurist, on his Poems

> [...] Thou [...] Descend’st from thence like Moses from the Mount, And with a candid and unquest’nd aw, Restor’st the golden age when verse was law. Instructing us, thou so secur’st thy fame, That nothing can disturb it but my name; Nay I have hopes that standing so near thine 'Twill loose its drosse, and by degrees refine. (TMHV,\(^{82}\) 25-32)

The alchemical treatise, *The All-wise Doorkeeper*, described alchemy as the ‘Mosaico-Hermetic science of all things above and things below’.\(^{83}\) It is this Mosaico-Hermetic

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\(^{79}\) For the dating of Philips’s poems, see Thomas, ‘Introduction’, pp. 65-68.


\(^{82}\) Katherine Philips, ‘To Mr. Henry Vaughan, Silurist, on his Poems’, in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 96-97 (p. 97). From henceforth ‘To Mr. Henry Vaughan, Silurist, on his Poems’ is abbreviated as TMHV and is proceeded by the line reference.

auctoritas that Philips grants to Henry Vaughan’s verse, which has the power to restore the ‘golden age’ and refine Philips’s poetry and name from all its ‘drosse’ (TMHV, 28, 32). As Andrea Brady points out, the ‘golden age’ that Philips evokes is an invocation of Plato’s Republic when ‘Poets were Judges, Kings Philosophers’ (L, 18).84 However, as Ficino argues, Platonic theory descends from Hermes Trismegistus, who is the first author of theology: he [Hermes Trismegistus] was succeeded by Orpheus […] succeeded in theology by Pythagoras, whose disciple was Philolaus, the teacher of our Divine Plato. Hence there is one ancient theology (prisca theologia) […] taking its origin in Mercurius [Hermes Trismegistus] and culminating in the Divine Plato.85

Read within this context, Philips’s invocation of the ‘golden age’ (TMHV, 28) does not just venerate Plato, but the pristine prisca theologia, originating from the ‘Golden Work of Hermes Trismegistus’.86 Henry Vaughan, as an alchemical philosopher, would not have missed this Hermetic hermeneutic.

But it is not simply Henry Vaughan who has the ability to separate ‘drosse’ from ‘gold’, but Katherine Philips’s poet-speaker herself. This is exhibited in the poem ‘God’, where Philips’s poet-speaker undergoes a quest for Hermetic ascent:

When shall those cloggs of sence and fancy break,
That I may heare the God within me speak?
When with a Silent and retired art,
Shall I with all this empty hurry part?
To the still voice above, my Soule advance;
My light and Joy fix’d in God’s Countenance;
[...] With such distinctions all things here behold,
And so to separate each drosse from Gold [.] (G, 49-54, 57-58)

John Dryden had notoriously proposed in 1693 that the ‘metaphysics […] perplexes the minds of the fair sex’.87 But as we shall see, Philips’s above-cited poem, ‘God’, actively engages with Hermetic metaphysics.

The Hermetica posits that ‘[a]t the dissolution of your material body […] man mounts upward through the structure of the heavens […] he ascends to the substance of

the eighth sphere, being now possessed of his own proper power’.\textsuperscript{88} This upwards movement is described as ‘metaphysical’ by the influential sixteenth-century Italian Hermetic philosopher, Giordano Bruno, in his \textit{De gli eroici furori} (\textit{The Heroic Frenzies}, 1585):

\begin{quote}
the kingdom of God is within us [...] divinity lives within us by virtue of the regenerated intellect and will [...] 
[this] mode of pursuit [...] is not physical movement, but a certain metaphysical movement [...] circling through the degrees of perfection to reach that infinite center [...].\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

It is this ‘metaphysical movement’, I would argue, that Philips’s poet-speaker seeks in the poem ‘God’ through the dissolution of the ‘cloggs of sence’ (G, 49).\textsuperscript{90} Bruno’s Hermetic writings were circulating in Queen Henrietta Maria’s court via the masque composers, Thomas Carew and Aurelian Townshend.\textsuperscript{91} As a reader of Italian, Philips certainly would have had access to Bruno’s \textit{The Heroic Frenzies}, which was published in London in 1585 and dedicated to the renowned poet, Sir Philip Sidney.\textsuperscript{92}

The ‘Gold’ (G, 58) that Philips’s poet-speaker discovers in the poem ‘God’ is not an exoteric, physical gold, but an inner esoteric gold. According to Michael Maier, ‘gold’ is the ‘shadow’ of the eternal spirit: ‘Gold, which is in it self incorruptible, is on earth accounted the symbol, the marke and shadow of that eternity, which we shall enjoy above’.\textsuperscript{93} Moreover, Ralph Cudworth declared in his sermon to the House of Commons in 1647: ‘We must be reformed within, with a spirit of fire and a spirit of burning, to purge us from the dross [...] of our hearts and refine us as gold and silver;

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Hermetica}, ed. and trans. by Scott, pp. 52-53.
\textsuperscript{90} Bruno, \textit{The Heroic Frenzies}, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{91} As Margaret Healy points out, Bruno’s \textit{The Heroic Frenzies} influenced sixteenth-century French court entertainments such as the \textit{Ballet Comique de la Reine} (1581) and these were revived in England in the seventeenth century via Queen Henrietta Maria, who learnt the arts of ballet, acting and singing in the French court and practised these in her performed masques in England. See Healy, \textit{Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination}, p. 38; Karen Britland, \textit{Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 3, 5. Queen Henrietta Maria performed in the masque, \textit{Tempe Restored} (1632), which was written by Aurelian Townshend and had as its main source the \textit{Ballet Comique de la Reine} (see Britland, \textit{Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria}, p. 91). Thomas Carew’s masque, \textit{Coelum Britannicum} (1634) was based in part on Bruno’s \textit{Spaccio de la bestia trionfante} (London, 1584). Carew’s source is outlined on the \textit{STC}.
\textsuperscript{92} See Healy, \textit{Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination}, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{93} Michael Maier, \textit{Lusus Serius} (1654), cited in Abraham, \textit{A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery}, p. 87.
and then we shall be reformed truly’.\(^{94}\) It seems to be this sacred ‘Gold’ (G, 58) that Philips’s poet-speaker attains through a metaphysical meditation that leads to the ‘still’ (distilled) ‘voice’ of God (G, 53).

Philips’s ‘Silent and retired art’ (G, 51) recalls Everard’s 1649 translation of the *Hermetica*, which induces ‘a Divine Silence, and [...] rest of all the Senses’.\(^{95}\) In his manuscript commentary on the *Hermetica*, the Parliamentarian, Thomas, Lord Fairfax, interprets this ‘Divine Silence’ as a pre-lapsarian silence, when God ‘was knowne, praysed, and reverenced’ by silence alone.\(^{96}\)

This pre-lapsarian state of Hermetic perfection was implicitly denied to women by the seventeenth-century poet, Andrew Marvell, whose poetry Philips may have read in manuscript through her uncle, John Oxenbridge.\(^{97}\) Marvell writes:

> When we have run our passion’s heat,  
> Love hither makes his best retreat.  
> [...]  
> My soul into the boughs does glide:  
> [...]  
> Such was that happy garden-state,  
> While man there walked without a mate:  
> After a place so pure, and sweet,  
> [...]  
> To wander solitary there:  
> Two paradieses ’twere in one  
> To live in paradise alone.

(‘The Garden’,\(^{98}\) 25-26, 52, 57-59, 62-64)

Maren-Sofie Røstvig argues that Marvell’s lines, ‘Two paradieses ’twere in one / To live in paradise alone’ (TG, 63-64), recount the *Hermetica*’s delineation of the androgynous character of the Creation: ‘Man [...] being hermaphrodite, or Male and Female [...] he is

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\(^{95}\) *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 44.


\(^{97}\) Andrew Marvell had lived in John Oxenbridge’s household at Eton in the 1650s. See Allan Pritchard, ‘Marvell’s ‘The Garden’: A Restoration Poem?’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 23 (1983), 371-88 (p. 371).

governed by, and subjected to a Father, that is both Male and Female’. But for
Marvell’s poet-speaker, androgynous Adam does not need a female ‘mate’ (TG, 58) to
gain access to a divine retreat. Androgyny, for Marvell’s poet-speaker, does not appear
to be applicable to Eve (and women). Marvell’s contention here is similar to Milton’s
proposition: ‘He [Adam] for God only, she [Eve] for God in him’.100

For Philips’s poet-speaker in ‘God’, however, the ‘Silent and retired art’ (G, 51)
is tacitly left open to all sexes and genders. At no point in the poem ‘God’ does the
poet-speaker explicitly refer to her/his sex or gender. ‘God’ elucidates Philips’s
contention that ‘soules no sexes have’.101 In this way, Philips harks back to, and
authentically celebrates, the original androgynous state of Creation in the Hermetica:
‘souls [...] come from one place [...] and they are neither male nor female’.102 Philips
insinuates in the poem ‘God’ that sublime Hermetic ascent is not just a male
androgynous Adamic privilege, but open to all sexless souls.

As suggested earlier in this chapter, the Hermetica intimates that human beings
have the ability to ‘cultivat[e] the earth’ and unveil divine, natural ‘herbs, trees, stones,
and spices’.103 Marvell’s poet-speaker in ‘The Garden’ portrays his ‘cultivation’ of
Nature as a seduction:

What wondrous life is this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
[...] Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.
[...]

My soul into the boughs does glide:
[...]

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walk’d without a mate [.]

(TG, 33-36, 40, 52, 57-58)

102 Hermetica, ed. and trans. by Scott, p. 194.
103 Hermetica, trans. by Copenhaver, p. 70; Hermes Trismegistus, Asclepius, cited by Ficino, Three Books on Life, p. 389;
The beauty of Nature in ‘The Garden’ exceeds the beauty of the earthly human ‘mistress’ (TG, 20): ‘How far these [Nature’s] beauties hers [the human mistress’s] exceed!’ (TG, 22). Marvell’s poet-speaker gives the impression that, before the creation of Eve, androgynous Adam could procure passionate gratification through Nature:

Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.
[...]

My soul into the boughs does glide:
[...]

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walk’d without a mate .]
(TG, 40, 52, 57-58)

Marvell’s speaker’s ‘wondrous’ (TG, 33) seduction by Dame Nature, the ‘am’rous [...] lovely green’ (TG, 18), is transformed by Henry Vaughan into an anxious rape of virginal Nature:

I summon’d nature: peirc’d through all her store,
Broke up some seales, which none had touch’d before,
   Her wombe, her bosome, and her head
   Where all her secrets lay a bed
I rifled quite .]

(‘Vanity of Spirit’, 9-13)104

Philips boldly rejects this male seduction/rape of Dame Nature, as she asserts:

Let dull Philosophers enquire no more
In nature’s womb,
[...]
These are but low experiments; but he
That nature’s harmony entire would see,
Must search agreeing soules, sit down and view
How sweet the mixture is! how full! how true!
By what soft touches spirits greet and kiss,
And in each other can compleat their bliss .]

(TML, 105 1-2, 7-12)

Philips’s speaker here is not pursuing external, exoteric nature, but an inner, esoteric nature – the nature of the soul. The alchemistical ‘mixture’ of ‘soules’ (TML, 10, 9) that Philips’s speaker cites, entices the bodily senses of sight, taste and touch:

sit down and view

How sweet the mixture is! [...] 
By what soft touches spirits greet and kiss, 
And in each other can compleat their bliss. []
(TML, 9-12 my italics)

Philips here evokes the philosophy of tactus (touch) and beatitudo (bliss) found in the writings of the reputed alchemical enthusiast, St Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas had argued the following:

the sense-power that takes in all [...] objects of sense is called touch [tactus].

(Quaestio Disputata de Anima)

Our sense-powers, because they are activities of bodily organs, can be incidentally subject to the activity of heavenly bodies []

(In Aristotelis Librum Peri Hermeneias)

human bliss [beatitudo] lies in becoming as like God as possible. But actually acting makes us most like God, actualizing our potentialities to the utmost. So human bliss consists in human activity.

(‘Commentary on Book 4 of Peter Lombard’s Sentences’)

intellect and reason can be hindered or helped by interior sense-powers. So then there can be virtues in those powers just as in our powers of sensual desire.

(Summa Theologiae)

Philips (following Aquinas) posits that it is through the realm of affect and ‘soft touches’ (TML, 10) that the soul can be moved: ‘By what soft touches spirits greet and kiss, / And in each other can compleat their bliss’ (TML, 10-11). Both Aquinas and Philips are arguably influenced by the Hermetica’s discourse of spiritual solve et coagula (a lexicon that spiritualizes the body and materializes the spirit): ‘the Soul of a made Body, hath its Soul full of the Body’.

106 For Aquinas’s supposed interest in alchemy, see Marie-Louise von Franz, ‘Introduction’, in Aurora Consurgens, ed. by Franz, p. 4.
What is innovative about Philips’s use of *solve et coagula*, however, is that she recruits this discourse of spiritual alchemy to search for an inner female ‘content’ that cannot be adequately defined by ‘dull’ male ‘Philosophers’ (TML, 1):

Content, to my dearest Lucasia

[...]

content is more divine
Then to be digg’d from Rock or Mine;

[...]

But now some sullen Hermit smiles, 
And thinks he all the world beguiles, 
And that his cell and Dish containe
What all mankind doe wish in Vaine.
But yet his pleasure’s follow’d with a grone,
For man was never made to be alone.

Content her self best comprehends
Betwixt two souls, and they two friends,
Whose either Joys in both are fix’d,
And multiply’d by being mix’d;

[...]

Whose flame is serious and divine [...]  
(C, 109-15, 16, 43-52, 58)

Here Philips’s speaker rejects solitary male retreat (as foregrounded in Marvell’s ‘The Garden’) and privileges a joint meditative practice that includes women: ‘For man was never made to be alone’ (C, 48). Philips takes the discourse of Ciceronian male *amicitia* further through a ‘mix’d’ (C, 52) alchemical lexicon that embraces the feminine:

Content *her self* best comprehends
Betwixt two souls, and they two friends,
Whose either Joys in both are fix’d,
And multiply’d by being mix’d;

(C, 49-52, my italics)

This communal excavation for the ‘divine’ (C, 58) is sanctioned by the *Hermetica*: ‘Seek one that may lead you by the hand, and conduct you to the door of Truth, and Knowledg, where the cleer Light is that is pure from Darkness’.  

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109 Katherine Philips, ‘Content, to my dearest Lucasia’, in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 91-94 (pp. 92-93). From henceforth ‘Content, to my dearest Lucasia’ is abbreviated as C and is proceeded by the line reference.

110 *The Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 100.
collective quest for divine ‘Light’ was gendered as male by Ficino, who proclaims: ‘Hermes Trismegistus chose Aesculapius [Hermes’s disciple and student] [...] wise men have always thought it necessary to have [...] man as companion for the safe and peaceful completion of the heavenly journey’ – female companions are not mentioned by Ficino. 111 Philips, however, disrupts this male homosocial dynamic by asserting that women, too, are capable of sublime Hermetic friendship:

To My excellent Lucasia,
on our friendship. 17th. July 1651
[...]
ever had Orinda found
A Soule till she found thine;
Which now inspires, cures and supply’s [sic],
And guides my darken’d brest:
For thou art all that I can prize,
My Joy, my Life, my rest.
Nor Bridegrooms nor crown’d conqu’rour’s mirth
To mine compar’d can be:
They have but pieces of this Earth,
I’ve all the world in thee.
Then let our flame still light and shine,
(And no bold feare controule)
As innocent as our design,
Immortall as our Soule.
(TMEL, 11-24)

Hermetic disciples are advised to look for a ‘cleer Light [...] pure from Darkness’, and Katherine Philips’s poet-speaker, Orinda, acquires this clear light through her female friend, Lucasia, who ‘inspires, cures’ and ‘guides’ Orinda’s ‘darken’d brest’ (TMEL, 13-14). 113 As we have seen, the poetic voice in the poem ‘God’ is potentially ungendered, but in ‘To My excellent Lucasia, on our friendship’, the voice is distinctly female and excludes male heteropatriarchal interruption: ‘Nor Bridegrooms [...] mirth / To mine compar’d can be’ (TMEL, 17-18, my italics). The Hermetic ‘light and shine’ (TMEL, 21) that Orinda is searching for seems to be a specifically female ‘light and shine’. Philips thus challenges the gender-biased interpretation of the Hermetica that is initiated by Ficino and proves that spiritual enlightenment can be gained through a Hermetic sensus communis between women.

113 The Divine Pymander, trans. by Everard, p. 100.
By cleansing Orinda’s ‘darken’d brest’ (TMEL, 14), Lucasia leads Orinda to the ‘golden One’ (L, 14) – the alchemical opus, the philosopher’s stone:

Lucasia, whose rich soule had it been known
In that time th’ancients call’d the golden One,
When innocence and greatness were the same,
[...]
Poets were Judges, Kings Philosophers;
Ev’n then from her [Lucasia] the wise would coppys draw,
And she to th’infant = World had given Law.
[...]
Lucasia, whose harmonious state,
The sphere and muses faintly imitate.
[...]
she now life, and then doth light dispence,
[...] is one shining orb of Excellence;
[...]
right and vigourous, her beams are pure,
[...]
So that in her that Sage [Hermes Trismegistus?] his wish had seen,
And Vertue’s self had personated been.
Now as distilled simples do agree,
And in the Lembique loose Variety;
So vertue, though in scatter’d pieces ’twas,
Is by her mind made one rich usefull masse.

(L, 13-15, 18-20, 23-24, 31-32, 37, 45-50)

By aligning Lucasia to a shining ‘orb’ (L, 32) who emanates from the alchemical ‘Lembique’ (L, 48), Philips evokes the seventeenth-century descriptions of the opus circulatorium (the philosopher’s stone). Martinus Rulandus, for example, states: ‘the circle [...] stands for the most precious of all metals, as also for its philosophical antitype, the Gold of the Sages’.

114 This renowned theory is famously celebrated by Donne in ‘A Valediction: forbidding mourning’:

Our two soules therefore, which are one,
[...]
Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate.
[...]
Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the’other doe.
[...]
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begunne.

114 Rulandus, A Lexicon of Alchemy or Alchemical Dictionary, p. 404.
For Donne’s speaker, the female beloved is the ‘fixt foot’ (V, 27) of the compass that casts the ‘circle’ (V, 35). While Donne’s speaker is free to ‘rome’ (V, 30), his female beloved can only ‘hearke[n]’ (V, 31) – wait and listen without a voice. For Philips, however, this spherical movement is an exclusive female personification that is initiated by Orinda’s pen and voice: ‘My [Orinda’s] pen to rescue the declining age. / [...] she [Lucasia] now life, and then doth light dispence, / [...] is one shining orb of Excellence; / [...] her beams are pure’ (L, 4, 31-32, 37 my italics). In this way, Philips reclaims the original female voice and presence of Sapience in The Geneva Bible: ‘When he [God] prepared the heauens, I [Sapience] was there, when he set the compas vpon the depe. [...] And toke my solace in the compasse of his earth’.¹¹⁵ Sapience’s sole female perception of God’s heavenly/earthly ‘compass’ is literally embodied in Orinda’s name. By delineating the divine spherical movements of Lucasia in her poetry, Orinda, too, can become a female alter Deus.

The philosopher’s stone was said to have been discovered by ‘that Sage’ (L, 45), Hermes Trismegistus. The seventeenth-century English alchemist, Elias Ashmole, claimed in 1651:

> After Hermes [Trismegistus] had once obtained the knowledge of this Stone, he gave over the use of all other Stones, and therin only delighted: Moses, and Solomon (together with Hermes were the only three that) excelled in the knowledge therof, and who therewith wrought Wonders.¹¹⁶

Yet Philips queries this sanctified male exclusivity, as it is Lucasia who summons the ‘golden One’ – the stone – that guides male Poets, Kings, Philosophers and ‘that Sage’ (L 14, 18, 45), Hermes Trismegistus. This is made explicit when Orinda depicts Lucasia as a sacrosanct lawgiver: ‘she to th’infant = World [sic] had given Law’ (L, 20). This takes us back to the book given to Hermes in the mosaic in Siena Cathedral on which is written: ‘SVSCIPITE O LICTERAS ET LEGES EGIPTII’ (take up thy letters and laws o Egyptians).¹¹⁷ As Frances Yates points out, this Latin motto is a supplication from the

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lawgiver of the Hebrews, Moses. Indeed, it is a Mosaico-Hermetic law that governs Orinda’s relationship with Lucasia:

Friendship in Emblem
or the Seale,
to my dearest Lucasia

[...]
The hearts (like Moses bush presum’d)
Warm’d and enlighten’d, not consum’d.

[...]

So friendship governs actions best,
Prescribing Law to all the rest.
(FIE, 19-20, 43-44)

A. G. Gilbert observes that ‘law’ has its root in the Greek word *logos*, which means word, law or decree. By presenting Lucasia as a female lawgiver, Philips heralds a new feminized Mosaico-Hermetic identity – a new female *logos*. This sacrosanct femininity is augmented through Philips’s above-cited allusion to ‘the Seale’, which recalls the voice of the bride from *The song of Salomón*: ‘Set me as a seale on thine heart, & as a signet vpon thine arme’. 

It is a well-known fact, however, that women were not lawgivers in the seventeenth-century British public judicial system. T.E. laments in *The law’s resolution of women’s rights* (1632) that ‘women have no voice in parliament. They make no laws, consent to none, they abrogate none. [...] I know no remedy, though some women can shift it well enough.’ It is this ‘shift[ing]’ political potential that Philips’s speaker grants to Lucasia:

To (the truly competent Judge of Honour)
Lucasia, upon a scandalous libell made by
J. Jones

[...]
Honour keeps court at home, and doth not feare
To be condemn’d abroad, if quitted there.
While I have this retreat, ’tis not the noise
Of slander, though believ’d, can wound my Joys.
There is advantage in’t: for gold uncoyn’d

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119 Katherine Philips, ‘Friendship in Emblem, or the Seale, to my dearest Lucasia’, in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I*, pp. 106-108 (pp. 107-108). From henceforth ‘Friendship in Emblem, or the Seale, to my dearest Lucasia’ is abbreviated as FIE and is proceeded by the line reference.
Had been unusefull, nor with glory shin’d:  
This stamp’d my innocence, which lay i’ th’ Oare,  
And was as much, but not so bright, before.  
Till an Alembique wakes and outward draws,  
The strength of sweets ly sleeping in their cause:  
So this gave me an opportunity  
To feed upon my own integrity.  
And though their Judgement I must still disclaime,  
Who can nor give, nor take away a fame:  
Yet I’le appeale unto the knowing few,  
Who dare be Just, and rip my heart to you.

( TTCJH, 123 51-66)

As Carol Barash points out, the above-cited poem was written in response to a threat initiated by one of Philips’s husband’s opponents, J. Jones. Thus initiated by one of Philips’s husband’s opponents, J. Jones. According to archival evidence, Philips’s manuscript poem, ‘Upon the double murther of K. Charles, in answer to a libellous rime made by V. P.’, fell into the hands of Jones, who threatened to publish it and ‘slander’ (TTCJH, 54) Philips and her husband. In ‘To (the truly competent Judge of Honour) Lucasia, upon a scandalous libell made by J. Jones’, however, it is Lucasia’s transfigurative alchemical ‘Alembique’ (TTCJH, 59) that has the power to cleanse Jones’s ‘slander’ (TTCJH, 54) and clear Philips’s name. Lucasia is thus fashioned as a transformative Hermetic Sibyl, as she is ‘much more then Nymph or Goddess bright; / [...] They give us Love, you [Lucasia] give us Law’. Lucasia is a ‘Judge of Honour’ in the ‘court’ of the ‘home’ (TTCJH, 51). Lucasia’s private judgement has the potential to be heard ‘abroad’ and ‘appeale unto the knowing few’ (TTCJH, 52, 65) – an entreaty that is deliberately both selective and open-ended. Lucasia’s transformative ‘Alembique’ (TTCJH, 59) does not just refer to spiritual grace, but a regenerative political and societal power. Philips seems to point to the ‘shift[ing]’ intersection between public and private lawgiving. Men, like J. Jones, may have the power to initiate a public ‘libell’, but women, like Lucasia, are endowed with a moral lawgiving auctoritas that stems from the semi-public, semi-private court of the home.

But why does Philips utilize Hermetic alchemy specifically in her ‘Lucasia’ poems? As we have seen, the Hermetica encouraged the ‘friendship, and commixture of

123 Katherine Philips, ‘To (the truly competent Judge of Honour) Lucasia, upon a scandalous libell made by J. Jones’, in The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I, pp. 114-16 (p. 116). From henceforth this poem is abbreviated as TTCJH and is proceeded by the line reference.  
124 Barash, English Women’s Poetry, 1649-1714, p. 72.  
125 Barash, English Women’s Poetry, 1649-1714, p. 72.  
contraries’ and this maxim could be appropriated to compound the class hierarchies that existed among women. Elizabeth Wahl argues that Anne Lewis Owen (‘Lucasia’) came from a family of a ‘higher [social] rank’ than Philips’s own ‘merchant-class connections’ in London. More than any other of Philips’s friends, Anne Owen offered Philips the ‘prospect of joining a network of influential people she could use to further her literary career’. Indeed, Katherine Philips did face financial difficulty and was of a different financial class to the heiress, Anne Owen. The seventeenth-century biographer, John Aubrey, records that Katherine Philips’s uncle Oxenbridge was imprisoned for a debt incurred on behalf of his niece and her husband. It is therefore not unlikely that Katherine Philips, through Anne Owen, is seeking an emotional, spiritual, societal and ultimately, financial, patronage:

To my Lucasia

[...]
Oh may good heaven but so much vertue lend,
To make me fit to be Lucasia’s friend!
But I’le forsake my self, and seek a new
Self in her brest, that’s far more rich and true.
Thus the poore Bee unmark’d doth humm and fly,
And dron’d with age would unregarded dy,
Unless some curious artist thither come
Will bless the insect with an Amber Tomb.
Then glorious in its funerall, the Bee
Gets eminence, and gets Eternity.

(TML, 27-36)

Philips’s speaker here searches for a new, regenerated ‘Self’ in Lucasia’s ‘brest’ that is ‘rich and true’ (TML, 29, 30). ‘Rich’ denotes both spiritual richness and financial richness. The ‘eminence’ (TML, 36) that Philips’s speaker desires to gain through Lucasia is both spiritual and societal. As Lyndy Abraham observes, in alchemical terms, the sting of the bee signifies a ‘secret fire, the mercurial solvent which destroys the old metal or outmoded state of being’. But Philips’s speaker fashions herself as a ‘poore Bee unmark’d’ and ‘unregarded’, waiting to be resurrected by the ‘curious artist’, Lucasia, who will ‘bless’ the Bee with an ‘Amber Tomb’ (TML, 31, 32, 33, 34). Amber as an alloy, according to Martinus Rulandus, is one part silver to five parts gold and in

127 The Divine Pymander, trans. by Everard, p. 123.
129 Wahl, Invisible Relations, p. 142.
131 Abraham, A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery, p. 20.
Richard Crashaw’s ‘The Weeper’, amber is aligned to spiritual gold: ‘Not the soft Gold which / Steales from the Amber-weeping Tree’. As Margaret Healy points out, amber is one of the ‘fruits’ of the golden opus. Amber was thus regarded by some as a synonym for gold: spiritual and esoteric, financial and exoteric. Moreover, the precious ‘Tomb’ (TML, 34) that Lucasia possesses is reminiscent of the regenerative ‘Emerald Tablet’ that was supposedly found on the tomb of Hermes Trismegistus and on which was written thirteen precepts, one of which declares: ‘So shalt thou have the Glory of the whole World, all obscurity therefore shall fly away from thee’. Lucasia’s ‘Amber Tomb’ (TML, 34) is not a tomb of death, but a Hermetic womb of life that will cleanse Philips’s speaker of spiritual and social ‘obscurity’. Read within this Hermetic context, it seems likely that the poem, ‘To my Lucasia’, is an alchemical, esoteric rendering of ‘Friendship’s exalted interest’ (FIE, 26).

Philips subtly manipulates the Hermetica’s stress on the ‘friendship, and commixture of contraries’ to establish and justify a sense of equality between herself and her friend/patron, Lucasia:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Friendship’s Mysterys, to my dearest Lucasia.} \\
[\ldots] \\
\text{We are our selves but by rebound,} \\
\text{And all our titles shuffled so,} \\
\text{Both Princes, and both subjects too.} \\
\text{(FM, 23-25)}
\end{align*}
\]

This elegantly demolishes the infamous hierarchy of Donne: ‘She’s all States, and all Princes, I’. Philips, in the above-cited lines, mixes the discourse of the Commonwealth with a Royalist ideology. ‘[S]huffled’ (FM, 24) intimates a political reshuffling or reform – princes and subjects are on an equal footing; princes protect

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133 Healy, Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination, p. 140.

134 Abraham, A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery, p. 7.


136 The Divine Pymander, trans. by Everard, p. 123.

137 Katherine Philips, ‘Friendship’s Mysterys, to my dearest Lucasia. (set by Mr. H. Lawes.)’, in The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I, pp. 90-91 (p. 91). From henceforth ‘Friendship’s Mysterys, to my dearest Lucasia. (set by Mr. H. Lawes.)’ is abbreviated as FM and is proceeded by the line reference.

138 John Donne, ‘The Sunne Rising’, in The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets, ed. by Gardner, pp. 72-73 (p. 73), line 21. This poem may have been written after 1603, see ‘Notes to the Text, Note 133’, in The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse, 1509-1659, ed. by Woudhuysen, p. 794.
their subjects and vice versa. Philips’s language of mutuality: ‘we […] our […] both’ (FM, 23, 24, 25), contrasts with Donne’s isolated, (phallic?) ‘I’ and stress on difference. Lorna Hutson argues that Philips’s poems to her female friends draw attention to the ‘erotic and political subjection of one woman to another’.139 But in Philips’s above-quoted lines, we find both subjection and reformed egalitarianism at work.

Philips’s female class conflation recalls the feminized Hermetic discoria concors of Aemilia Lanyer’s Salve Deus Rex Judeorum (1611). As illustrated in Chapter 3 of this study, Lanyer utilizes an alchemical discourse to appeal to the inner circle of her potential patron, the Hermetic alchemist, Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland. Kate Chedgzoy and Shannon Miller have recently suggested that Salve Deus Rex Judeorum travelled beyond Margaret Clifford’s immediate circle and may have been read by later seventeenth-century poets, such as John Milton, who acquired access to Lanyer’s text as it circulated through a ‘cultural network’ in which both Milton and the ‘Clifford women were involved’.140 Miller argues that Salve Deus Rex Judeorum was disseminated among the ‘royal family, court musicians, and the Cumberland family itself: the Countess’s own Puritan proclivities, Milton’s connection to [the court musician] Henry Lawes, and even the possible performance of Milton’s Comus [1637] at the fourth Earl of Cumberland’s Skipton Castle offer possible lines of connection between the author of Paradise Lost [1674] and Lanyer’s volume of poems.141 Miller goes on to identify a range of textual and conceptual connections between Salve Deus Rex Judeorum and Paradise Lost, such as the representation of Eve, the relationship between ‘mystical visions, acts of (gendered) gazing, and the implications of structures of governance’.142

As demonstrated, one writer who was connected to both the court musician, Henry Lawes, and the poet, Milton, was Katherine Philips. Henry Lawes set four of Philips’s poems to music and published ‘Friendship’s Mysterys, to my dearest Lucasia’ in his second book of Ayres and Dialogues (1655).143 Milton was a friend of Philips’s

141 Miller, Engendering the Fall, p. 49.
142 Miller, Engendering the Fall, p. 48.
uncle, John Oxenbridge. Philips therefore could have read Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* through these two connections. Philips never mentions Lanyer in her surviving letters. But these letters date from 1658-1664. Philips’s earlier correspondence with John Oxenbridge and Henry Lawes is yet to be uncovered. What I would like to propose here is that Philips read and responded to the feminized Hermeticism of *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. I wish to point to the textual and conceptual links between Philips’s poetry and Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* and in so doing re-assess what is meant by the ‘Hermetic metaphysical tradition’.

As argued in Chapter 3 of this study, in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, Lanyer aligns her potential patron, Margaret Clifford, to three alchemical guises: Dame Nature, Lady Alchymia, and the Hermetic hermaphrodite – the philosopher’s stone – the phoenix. All three of these guises are climatically encapsulated in ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’ (the country-house poem that closes *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*):

Farewell (sweet Cooke-ham) where I first obtain’d
Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain’d;

you (great Lady [Margaret Clifford]) Mistris of that Place,
From whose desires did spring this worke of Grace;

each plant, each floure, each tree
Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee:

The swelling Bankes deliver’d all their pride,
When such a *Phœnix* once they had espide.

With *Moyses* you did mount his holy Hill,
To know his pleasure, and performe his Will.

(TDC, 1-2, 11-12, 33-34, 43-44, 85-86)

Lanyer’s repetition of ‘Grace’ (TDC, 2, 12) denotes both spiritual and financial grace and anticipates Philips’s female-female esoteric-exoteric compounding terminology: ‘rich [...] eminence’ (TML, 30, 36). Furthermore, as evinced in this chapter, the *Hermetica* describes how ‘herbs, trees, stones, and spices’ have ‘within themselves [...]’

144 Chernaik, ‘Philips [née Fowler], Katherine (1632-1664), poet’, *ODNB*.
a natural force of divinity'.\(^{147}\) It is arguably these Hermetic-alchemical ‘plant[s]’, ‘floure[s]’ and ‘tree[s]’ (TDC, 33) that are activated and transmuted by Margaret Clifford in ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’. Here Lanyer foresees and perhaps inspires Anne Clifford’s account of her mother in her 1652 family memorial: ‘She [Margaret Clifford] was a lover of the study and practice of alchimy [...] for she had [...] knowledge in most kind of minerals, herbs, flowers, and plants’.\(^{148}\) For Lanyer’s speaker in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, Margaret Clifford heals both bodies and souls:

To heale the soules [...]  
By thy [Margaret Clifford’s] faire virtues; [...]  
[...]  
If they be blind, thou giv’st to them their sight;  
If deafe or lame, they heare, and goe upright.  
(SDRJ, 1371-72, 1375-76)

This natural sensual-spiritual curative capability also imbues Philips depiction of Lucasia:

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never had Orinda found  
A Soule till she found thine;  
Which now inspires, cures and supply’s,  
And guides my darken’d brest [...]  
(TMEL, 11-14)
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Lucasia, whose rich soule had it been known  
In that time th’ancients call’d the golden One,  
[...]  
Choosing what nature, not what art prefers;  
[...]  
Ev’n then from her the wise would coppys draw [...]  
(L, 13-14, 17, 19)

This representation of female inner/outer nature contrasts with Henry Vaughan’s ‘Vanity of Spirit’. As we have seen, in ‘Vanity of Spirit’, Vaughan’s speaker fretfully ‘peirc[es]’ and ‘rifle[s]’ Dame Nature’s ‘wombe’, ‘bosome’ and ‘head’.\(^{149}\) For Lanyer and Philips, however, the female muse is a spiritual Dame Nature at one with the inner and outer landscape who requires no phallocentric rifling or piercing.

By describing Margaret Clifford as a hermaphroditic Arabian bird, a ‘Phænix’ (TDC, 44), Lanyer echoes the *Hermetica’s* emphasis on androgyny: ‘Man [...] being hermaphrodite, or Male and Female [...] he is governed by, and subjected to a Father,

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that is both Male and Female’. Marvell’s speaker insinuates in ‘The Garden’ that androgyny is a state of perfection that man finds himself in before the creation of Eve. However, as demonstrated, in Philips’s poem ‘God’ and here in Lanyer’s ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’, metamorphic androgyny is reclaimed and celebrated for women. Both Margaret Clifford and Lucasia are women who possess and bestow a Mosaico-Hermetic masculine ‘Will’ (TDC, 86) and ‘Law’ (L, 20).

A Chymicall Dictionary (1650) describes the phoenix as the ‘quintessence of Fire; also the Philosopher’s Stone [Christ]’ and it is a resurrective Christ-like supremacy that Lanyer’s speaker endows to Margaret Clifford:

The swelling Bankes deliver’d all their pride,
When such a Phœnix once they had espide.
[...]
In these sweet woods how often did you [Margaret Clifford] walke,
With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
To meditate what you therein did see [.]

(TDC, 43-44, 81-84)

Lanyer’s woman-to-woman searching for the stone, Christ, is similarly recounted by Philips in her ‘Lucasia’ poems: ‘Though ne’r stone to me, ’twill stone for me prove, / By the peculiar miracle of Love’. There is no archival evidence to prove that Philips read and responded to Lanyer’s writings. As outlined above, however, there is textual evidence to suggest that a ‘partial’ and ‘strange’ inter-poetic dialogue might have taken place between these two writers.

But Lanyer never explicitly mentions Hermes Trismegistus by name in Salve Deus Rex Judæorum. Philips, however, does and this is revealed in an epitaph:

EPITAPH.
ON HECTOR PHILLIPS. at S’t Sith’s Church
[...]
Seaven years Childless Marriage past,
A Son, A Son is born at last;
So exactly limm’d and Fair
[...]

150 The Divine Pymander, trans. by Everard, pp. 21-22.
153 Rosalind Smith argues that there are ‘partial’ and ‘strange’ feminine literary traditions in the Renaissance and my use of these adjectives here is indebted to her. Smith, Sonnets and the English Woman Writer, p. 11.
Yet, in less than six weeks, dead.
Too promising, too great a Mind
In so small room to be confin’d:
Therefore, fit in Heav’n to dwell,
He quickly broke the Prison shell.
So the Subtle Alchymist,
Can’t with Hermes=seal resist
The Powerfull Spirit’s subtler flight

Lyndy Abraham notes that here Philips’s speaker compares the ‘flight of her dead son’s spirit from his body to the escape of alchemical spirits from the hermetically sealed alembic’. Indeed, Philips’s speaker intimates that her son’s spirit is so ‘Powerfull’ (E, 17) that it can transcend ‘Hermes=seal’ (E, 16). The subtle exoteric alchemist may not be able to contain Hector Phillips’s spirit, but the spiritual Hermetic alchemist knows that the ‘dissolution’ of the body ‘is not death’. The Hermetica imparts that at the dissolution of the material body, man gains an immortality of the soul:

dissolution is not death [...] they [Bodies] are dissolved, not that they may be destroyed, but that they may be made new.

... We must now speak of the Soul and Body, O Son; after what maner the Soul is Immortal; and what operation that is, which constitutes the Body, and dissolves it.

Hermes addresses these esoteric mystical words to his son, Tat, and Philips adapts this father-to-son discourse to console and regenerate herself, a sorrowful mother, and her dead child.

Yet the Hermetica does not construct a binary opposition between the material body and the immortal soul, but foregrounds a lexicon of contiguous oppositions:

contrariety, [in] all things must consist. And it is impossible it should be otherwise.

... The Minde is in Reason, Reason in the Soul, the Soul in the Spirit, the Spirit in the Body. [...] The Spirit being diffused, and going through the veins, and arteries, and blood, [...] moveth the living Creature [...]
Man [...] seeth and toucheth Heaven by his Sense.\textsuperscript{158}

The \textit{Hermetica}'s conflation of soul and body is arguably utilized by Ficino to establish and validate an erotic-spiritual connection between himself and his patron/friend/disciple, Lorenzo de’ Medici:

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

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

\begin{quote}
I love my own in you. I praise you in art, and I value art in you. I honour you in nature, and I marvel nature in you. I revere you through God, and I reverence God through you.\textsuperscript{159}
\end{quote}

This published letter to Lorenzo encapsulates Ficino’s esoteric writing style, as he fuses the spiritual, the erotic, the Platonic, the transcendental, the sensual and the alchemical. The \textit{Hermetica} tells us that ‘[s]oul and corporeal substance together are embraced by nature’ and it is this corporeal-immaterial love for human/divine Nature that Ficino reveres through Lorenzo.\textsuperscript{160} The cluster of imagery in the above-cited letter that relates to cooling, burning and heating captures the movements of the alchemical alembic that transforms metals, herbs, minerals and plants. But Ficino is not searching for an exoteric ‘alchemy’ which ‘turns iron into gold’, but is celebrating an inner alchemy that sublimates man into the divine: ‘He who transforms human love into divine is transformed from man into God’.\textsuperscript{161} It is thus an inner heat and fire that Ficino is conjuring in his Hermetic friendship with Lorenzo.

There was, of course, a flurry of interest in Ficino’s writings in Queen Henrietta Maria’s court and Katherine Philips is likely to have come across Ficino’s \textit{Epistolae} in Italian (a language in which it was translated and published).\textsuperscript{162} However, for a woman

\textsuperscript{158} The Divine Pymander, trans. by Everard, pp. 48, 50, 155.

\textsuperscript{159} Ficino, The Letters of Marsilio Ficino, I, pp. 69, 70, 71.

\textsuperscript{160} Hermetica, ed. and trans. by Scott, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{161} Ficino, The Letters of Marsilio Ficino, IV, p. 56; VI, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{162} For the circulation of Ficino’s writings in Henrietta Maria’s court, see Jayne, ‘Introduction’, p. 22. An Italian translation of Ficino’s \textit{Epistolae} was undertaken by F. Figliucci and printed as Le Divine Lettere.
to adopt a Ficinian sensual-spiritual voice could lead to scandalous accusations of sexual dissidence.

Indeed, prior to 1653, the poet, John Taylor (1578-1653), attacked Katherine Philips in a manuscript poem. As Kate Lilley points out, Taylor’s accusations against Philips are phrased in the ‘sodomitical rhetoric of abuse and inversion’: ‘The Jangling of bells backward rung / So is thy [Philips’s] tongue’. Taylor assails Philips for being a ‘dame of Corinth’ and a ‘second Sapho’, commanding her to ‘Committ no Rape. / Vpon the Muses be not bold’. Moreover, Taylor portrays Philips as an adulteress:

Save then you, the Cyprian Queene [Venus]
Is often seen.
Not in her Glory, but the Nett,
By Vulcan sett:
That Sooty God, had Eyes & Art.
And playd his part.

Vulcan is the god of fire, the patron of artists who worked iron and metal. Taylor’s use of Vulcan here may be a satiric dig at Philips’s use of exoteric alchemical imagery in her poetry. Vulcan catches his wife, Venus, in an act of adultery with Mars. What Taylor is implying here is that Philips’s husband will catch her committing adultery with his political oppositions, the Royalists. Taylor presents Katherine Philips as a sexual and political sodomite.

Given this context, how can Philips safe-guard her reputation from critics such as Taylor and simultaneously engage in the act of writing erotic poetry? One way is to appropriate a Hermetic secret style of writing that will speak to different interest groups for different purposes. Martinus Rulandus argues that

[i]n the writings of Hermetic Science, the Philosophers never express the true significance of their thoughts in the vulgar tongue, and they must not be interpreted according to the literal sense of the expressions. The sense which is presented on the surface is not the true sense. They discourse in enigmas, metaphors, allegories, fables [...] Some Philosophers have had recourse to a mute language by which to speak to the eyes of the spirit.
Rulandus’s above-quoted statement makes two salient interconnected points. First, Hermetic discourses are allegorical and are designed to be read on multiple levels concurrently. Secondly, Hermetic idiom is permeated with a silent-speaking ‘mute language’ that can have different meanings for different readers.\(^{169}\) This second point originates from the seventh book of the Hermetic *Pymander*, which is entitled ‘His [Hermes] secret Sermon in the Mount of Regeneration, and the Profession of Silence’.\(^{170}\) On this mount, Tat declares to his father, Hermes: ‘Now [...] instruct me of Regeneration, either by word of mouth, or secretly’.\(^{171}\)

This Hermetic silent-speaking allegorical lexicon, I would argue, is manipulated by Philips to create a cryptic woman-to-woman sensual-spirituality:

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To my Lucasia, in defence of declared friendship

O! my Lucaisa, let us speak our Love,
[...]

Although we know we love, yet while our soule
Is thus imprison’d by the flesh we wear,
There’s no way left that bondage to controule,
But to convey transactions through the Eare.

Nay, though we read our passions in the Ey,
It will obleige and please to tell them too:
Such Joys as these by motion multiply,
Were’t but to find that our souls told us true.
[...]

And as a River, when it once has pay’d
The tribute which it to the Ocean ow’s,
Stops not, but turns, and having curl’d and play’d
On its own waves, the shore it overflows:

So the Soul’s motion does not end in bliss,
But on her self she scatters and dilates,
And on the Object doubles, till by this
She finds new Joys, which that reflux creates.
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(DDF,\(^{172}\) 1, 29-36, 41-48)

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\(^{170}\) The *Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 80.

\(^{171}\) The *Divine Pymander*, trans. by Everard, p. 81.

This above-cited poem begins as a ‘defence’ – Philips’s speaker and Lucasia will ‘speak’ their ‘Love’ (DDF, 1) in defiance of critics such as John Taylor. This ‘Love’ will be articulated via ‘transactions through the Eare’ (DDF, 1, 32) – visible to all, but privy to none but the lovers themselves. Philips in this poem constructs an ambivalent Hermetic mode of discourse whereby the physical and spiritual are not always clearly discernable. The poem is designed to be read on a spiritual level, a physical level and on both these levels simultaneously. The reading of the poem is ultimately dependent on the ‘passions’ (DDF, 33) of the onlooker.

Take, for example, Philips’s above-cited metaphor of the River/Ocean. For the twenty-first-century critic, Andrea Brady, Philips’s River image is a metaphor for spiritual baptism: ‘divine grace can ‘dilat[e]’ [DDF, 46] the vicious soul [...] the achievement of salvation is not the end of the soul’s motion, but the beginning of its self-anointing in ‘bliss’ [DDF, 45]’.173 Brady’s interpretation can certainly be sustained by textual evidence. The ‘passio[n]’ (DDF, 33) that Philips’s speaker finds in her lover’s ‘Ey’ (DDF, 33) is a potential commemoration of the Passion of Christ. Philips’s speaker discovers an *amici Christi* through the eyes of her beloved.

For the critic, Valerie Traub, however, Philips’s ‘passions’ (DDF, 33) seem to entail bodily passions and sexual impulse. Traub argues that ‘To my Lucasia, in defence of declared friendship’ figures ‘in humoral terms’ a ‘female orgasm: a dilation, swirling, and scattering of fluids’.174 For Traub, Philips is an erotic *lesbian* poet (Traub’s italics marking the ‘epistemological inadequacy’ and ‘historical contingency’ of the term).175 For Brady, on the other hand, Philips is a stoical Platonic philosopher (inspired by her male contemporary, the Cambridge Neoplatonist, Henry More).176 What I am suggesting here is that Philips’s Hermetic, esoteric style of writing facilitates both these readings and this is intentionally epitomised by the River image, which has shape-shifting alchemical connotations.

According to the fifteenth-century French alchemist, Nicolas Flamel, the ‘moist river’ often ‘transfigures himselfe from one forme to another’.177 The river, for some alchemical thinkers, was a mercurial symbol. Michael Maier, for instance, compares the potency of King Mercury to the fertility of the Prince of Rivers, the Nile:

[My [Mercury’s] utility to man] is so immense and so rich, that like the Prince of Rivers, the Nile (which dischargeth itself by a seven-fold streame unto the Mediterranean Sea) spreads and divides it self into so many branches, according to the number of Metallick formes, which merely draw their rise and being from me [Mercury].  

But these transformative mercurial waters were not just gendered as male – they were dual-natured – male and female. The ‘Hermetis Trismegisti tractatus aureus’ states that ‘there are two Stones of the Wise, found in the Shores of the Rivers’ which are ‘Male and Female’. In Robert Herrick’s 1648 poem, ‘To the King and Queene, upon their unhappy distances’, the parted ‘Man and Wife’ are compared to separated streams which will unite and become ‘chemically mixed’: ‘Like Streams, you are divorc’d: but’twill come when / These eyes of mine shall see you mix agen’. Philips, in ‘To my Lucasia, in defence of declared friendship’, however, does not confront her readers with two rivers (male and female), but one river – a potent female force that connects one woman to another. Philips reclaims the fertile mercurial waters to delineate the fluvial interconnections between the tributaries of the female soul and body. Philips’s River/Ocean moves backwards and forwards (DDF, 43), appealing to a variety of onlookers, but fully understood by no one but the whispering female lovers figured in the poem (DDF, 32). In this manner, the River/Ocean image arguably becomes a self-referential reflection of the protean nature of language itself that leads to the creation of poetry – a flumen orationis or flumen verborum (a river of speech). These creative waters come back to ‘her self’ (DDF, 46) – the speaker’s own body, mind, spirit, consciousness and writing. Lucasia creates ‘bliss’ (DDF, 45) in the speaker because she arouses a secret verbal and written dilation. 

Philips’s ‘mute’ secret language was certainly registered in the seventeenth century. It was regarded by some as being dangerously risqué. This is evinced through Philips’s coterie member, Sir Francis Finch (‘Palaemon’). In 1654 Finch privately published his treatise, Friendship, which begins ‘D.[ear] Noble Lucasia-Orinda’. As Patrick Thomas notes, Finch’s compounding of the two names ‘Lucasia-Orinda’, is intended to express the women’s achievement of ‘one soul in bodies twain’ ideal of

180 Robert Herrick, ‘To the King and Queene, upon their unhappy distances’, cited in Abraham, A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery, p. 192.
Platonic friendship. Finch contends that ‘Friendship is virtuous [...] Every Motion, Passion, Affection, and Alteration of the Soul, is indeed first perceptible in the Eye [of the friend]’. It may have been in response to this statement that Philips writes of the ‘passions in the Ey’ (DDF, 33) – the receptacle of the soul. By dedicating Friendship to ‘Lucasia-Orinda’, Finch indicates that he is also gaining inspiration for ‘virtuous’ friendship from Orinda’s ‘Lucasia’ poems.

Philips encourages Finch’s reading, interpretation and dissemination of her verse, as she writes a poem of praise to him, eulogizing his treatise, Friendship:

To the noble Palaemon on his incomparable discourse of Friendship

Hadst thou [Finch] not been her [Friendship’s] great deliverer, And first discover’d, and then rescu’d her; And raising what rude malice had flung down, Unvayled her face, and then restor’d her Crown [...] (TNP, 15-18)

Here Philips’s speaker implies that Finch’s adumbration of ‘Lucasia-Orinda’ as ‘virtuous’ friends has the power to eradicate the ‘rude malice’ (TNP, 17) flung down on Philips by slanderers such as John Taylor. Finch (in opposition to Taylor) has ‘[u]nvayled’ (TNP, 18) the true virtuous hermeneutic of Philips’s friendship poems.

Yet Finch’s Friendship also contains a tacit warning to Philips:

Love is the Crown and Perfection of all our Passions, Friendship of our Love. [...] ’Tis more then once that Abraham is stiled in Scripture the Friend of God. And we find one of the highest and constituent qualities and effects of Friendship expressed clearly by God in the preambulatory chapter to Sodoms destruction, to wit, Communication of secrets and counsels; Shall I (sayes God) hide from Abraham the thing I am about to do? What followes we know, a positive Declaration of the doom of Sodom [...] (TNP)

According to Finch, ‘virtuous’ friendship is distinct from the ‘doom of Sodom’ and emanates from the sacred love of God. The ideal friend, for Finch, is typified by God

183 Finch, Friendship, pp. 10, 15.
184 Katherine Philips, ‘To the noble Palaemon on his incomparable discourse of Friendship’, in The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I, pp. 83-84. From henceforth ‘To the noble Palaemon on his incomparable discourse of Friendship’ is abbreviated as TNP and is proceeded by the line reference.
185 Finch, Friendship, p. 4.
186 Finch, Friendship, p. 4.
who explicitly communicates all ‘secrets and counsels’ to his followers.\textsuperscript{187} What Finch is arguably insinuating here is that Philips should employ an open, non-secret idiom in her friendship poems – this would prevent any scandalous slanders of sodomy.

In what appears to be an outright rejection of Finch’s advice, Philips writes:

\begin{quote}
The fruit of Sodom will impayr,  
And perish at the touch:  
In being then in fancy Less,  
And we expect more then possess.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
For by our pleasures we are cloy’d,  
And so desire is done;  
Or else, like Rivers, they make wide  
The Channells where they run [...].  
\textsuperscript{(AP,\textsuperscript{188} 9-16)}
\end{quote}

The first-century Romano-Jewish historian, Josephus, claimed that the fruit growing near the Dead Sea contained Sodom’s ashes and would dissolve into ashes when plucked.\textsuperscript{189} It is this corrupt fruit of Sodom that is consumed by Satan’s cohorts in Milton’s Pandemonium:

\begin{quote}
greedily they plucked  
The fruitage fair to sight, like that which grew  
Near that bituminous lake where Sodom flamed;  
[...]  
Their appetite with gust, instead of fruit  
Chewed bitter ashes [...].\textsuperscript{190}
\end{quote}

The ‘fruit of Sodom’ (AP, 9) in Philips’s poem, however, is ambiguously placed and is not explicitly aligned to the Satanic. For Philips’s speaker, the ‘fruit of Sodom’ may ‘impayr’, damage and injure, but its ‘touch’ also leads to the pleasurable, mercurial, River-like ‘run’ of waters (AP, 9, 15-16). Philips’s ‘fruit of Sodom’ (AP, 9) is simultaneously touched, scorned, rejected and tasted. Philips’s above-cited River-like ‘run’ (AP, 15-16) of waters has been interpreted by Carol Barash as a radical delineation of ‘female ejaculation’.\textsuperscript{191} Patrick Thomas, on the other hand, avers that this very same poem is a categorically ‘conventional lyric’ written on ‘a conventional

\textsuperscript{187} Finch, \textit{Friendship}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{188} Katherine Philips, ‘Against Pleasure. set by D’ Coleman’, in \textit{The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: Volume I}, pp. 137-38. From henceforth ‘Against Pleasure’ is abbreviated as AP and is proceeded by the line reference. ‘Against Pleasure’ is undated by Thomas and so could have been written after the publication of Finch’s \textit{Friendship} (1654).
\textsuperscript{191} Barash, \textit{English Women’s Poetry, 1649-1714}, p. 99.
seventeenth-century theme’. What I am arguing here is that Philips’s ‘fruit of Sodom’ (AP, 9) exemplifies her use of double-speak. Far from opting for an explicitly ‘virtuous’ mode of discourse, Philips fosters an ambivalent ‘mute language’ that can be read concurrently on multiple levels – conventional and radical.

Unlike Sir Francis Finch, the libertine writer, Aphra Behn, celebrates and wishes to emulate Philips’s cryptic double-speak. Whereas John Taylor berates Philips for being a dissident ‘second Sappho’, Behn in circa 1676 praises her for the very same fact:

Let me [Behn] with Sappho and Orinda [Philips] be
Oh ever sacred Nymph [Daphne], adorn’d by thee;
And give me Verses Immortality.

Behn aspires to belong to a ‘sacred’ female lyric tradition that is initiated by Sappho and upheld by Orinda.

It is Orinda’s sacred-libidinal double-speak that Behn uses and venerates in her own homoerotic love poetry to women:

To The Fair Clarinda, Who Made Love to Me,
Imagined More Than Woman

Fair lovely maid, or if that title be
Too weak, too feminine for nobler thee,
Permit a name that more approaches truth:
And let me call thee, lovely charming youth.
[...]
And without blushes I the youth pursue,
When so much beauteous woman is in view,
[...]
In pity to our sex sure thou wert sent,
That we might love, and yet be innocent:
For sure no crime with thee we can commit;
Or if we should – thy form excuses it.
For who, that gathers fairest flowers believes
A snake lies hid beneath the fragrant leaves.

[...]
When ere the manly part of thee, would plead
Thou tempts us with the image of the maid,

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While we the noblest passions do extend  
The love to Hermes, Aphrodite the friend.  

(TFC, 195 386-87)

The above-quoted poem is instilled with a latent woman-to-woman Hermetic-alchemical imagery that is generated by Behn’s reading of Clarinda/Orinda.196 The Hermes (TFC, 387) that Behn cites refers to the Greek God, Hermes, who with Venus produced Hermaphroditus.197 But Clarinda’s alluring Hermes-like androgyny also in part stems from the Hermetica: ‘Man [...] being hermaphrodite, or Male and Female, [...] he is governed by, and subjected to a Father, that is both Male and Female’.198 Behn’s portrayal of Clarinda is reminiscent of the ideal alchemical hermaphrodite – the philosopher’s stone. In alchemical texts the union of two metallic seeds was often presented as the chemical wedding of male and female (Figure 1).

![The alchemical hermaphrodite. From Johann Mylius, Phiolosophia reformata (Francofurti, 1622), Emblem 10, p. 262. © The British Library Board. Shelfmark 1033.i.7.](image)

Nicolas Flamel, for instance, describes the product of metallic union as ‘the Androgyne, or Hermaphrodite of the Ancients’.199 It is arguably this shape-shifting androgynous alchemical quality that is embodied by Behn’s Clarinda, as she is a ‘lovely maid’ (TFC, 386) who simultaneously reveals and conceals the ‘manly part’ (TFC, 387).

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196 Barash notes that Behn’s ‘Clarinda’ tropes on Philips’s poetic persona, Orinda, and recalls the female knight, Clorinda, from Tasso’s Gerusalemme Liberata (1581). Barash, English Women’s Poetry, 1649-1714, p. 128.
198 The Divine Pymander, trans. by Everard, pp. 21-22.
Furthermore, the ‘flowers’ and ‘snake’ (TFC, 387) that Behn conjures also have an alchemical significance. Paracelsus proposed that the Philosopher’s ‘stone doth discover most fair colours in the production of its Flower’ and Behn’s flower-gatherer discovers the ‘snake’ (TFC, 387) – the uroboros – the alchemical opus and symbol of eternal life (Figure 2).

![Figure 2, Uroboros with alchemical flowers. From ‘Alchemistisches Manuskript’ (1550), Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS L IV 1, p. 293. © Universitätsbibliothek, Basel.](image)

Behn’s alchemical fusion culminates in the union of spirit, body and text. Clarinda’s ‘form’ (TFC, 387) signifies spiritual form, bodily form and ultimately poetic form. Behn seems to have cracked Clarinda/Orinda’s secret Hermetic erotic-poetic ‘form’, but far from critiquing it (like Francis Finch) she imitates it and thus seeks to continue a female Hermetic poetic tradition.

The reading of Philips’s verse is dependent on the subjective ‘passions’ of the reader’s ‘Ey’ (DDF, 33). I have argued that Philips appeals to these subjective ‘passions’ through her use of a mercurial Hermetic double-speak that enables her to engage with both a ‘virtuous’ spirituality and a risqué eroticism. Moreover, the Hermetica’s emphasis on the ‘friendship [...] of contraries’ allows Philips partially to liberate herself from the binaries that she was struggling against: soul/body; public/private; male/female; esoteric/exoteric; Royalist/Parliamentarian. The wide dissemination of Ficino’s 1471 translation of the Hermetica made it possible for a writer like Katherine Philips to offer her own pro-woman hermeneutic of the Hermetic.

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Chapter 6

Conclusion

‘[T]his same Metaphisicall / God, Man, nor Woman, but elix’d of all’:¹

Engendering the Metaphysical

In 1601, an anonymous poet genders the ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) in the following way:

Now yeeld your aides, you spirites that infuse
A sacred rapture, light my weaker eie:
Raise my inuention on swift Phantasie,
That whilst of this same Metaphisicall
God, Man, nor Woman, but elix’d of all
My labouring thoughts, with strained ardo
My Muse may mount with an vncommon wing.

(AN, 20-26)

This above-quoted extract is taken from the poem, ‘A narration and description of a most exact wondrous creature, arising out of the Phœnix and Turtle Doues ashes’, which was first printed in Robert Chester’s Loves Martyr (1601, reprinted 1611). Chester’s volume also includes poems by Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, George Chapman, John Marston, ‘Ignoto’, and ‘Vatum Chorus’. For the anonymous poet-speaker of ‘A narration’, the ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) is not an exclusive male category (as Dryden would have us believe), but involves an ‘elix’d’ (AN, 24) mixing of ‘Man’, ‘Woman’ and ‘God’ (AN, 24).² In Plato’s Symposium, Aristophanes states that ‘[l]ong ago, our nature was not the same as it is now but quite different. [...] Then “androgy nous” was a distinct gender as well as name, combining male and female’.³ This ‘combining’ of ‘male and female’ is linked to the divine in the Hermetica:

the first Mind [...] which is Life and Light, being bisexual, gave birth to another Mind, a Maker of things;
[...]

He, [God] filled with all the fecundity of both sexes in one, and ever teeming with his own goodness, unceasingly brings into being all that he has willed to generate [4]

¹ Anon. (John Marston?), ‘A narration and description of a most exact wondrous creature, arising out of the Phœnix and Turtle Doues ashes’, in Robert Chester, Loves Martyr (London, 1601), p. 173, lines 23-24. From henceforth ‘A narration and description of a most exact wondrous creature, arising out of the Phœnix and Turtle Doues ashes’ has been abbreviated as AN and is preceded by the line reference.
⁴ Hermetica, trans. by Scott, pp. 49, 133.
By engaging with this Platonic-Hermetic bisexuality, the poet-speaker of ‘A narration’ is able to attain a ‘sacred rapture’ (AN, 21) that transforms procreative ‘labouring thoughts’ (AN, 25) into innovative poetic ‘inuention’ (AN, 22). For the poet of ‘A narration’ it seems that the divine androgyne is a ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) maker par excellence.

The birds cited in the title of ‘A narration’ (the ‘Phœnix’ and the ‘Turtle Dou[e]’) recall the biblical Song of Songs where the bride declares: ‘The flowers appeare in ye earth: the time of the singing of birdes is come, & the voice of the turtle is heard in our land’. The mixing of the birds, the ‘Phœnix’ and the ‘Turtle Dou[e]’ in ‘A narration’, brings to life an elixed ‘wondrous creature’, Christ. By using the alchemical verb ‘elix’d’ (AN, 24), the poet of ‘A narration’ anticipates George Herbert’s 1633 poem, ‘The Elixer’:

This [elixer] is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.

Both the poet of ‘A narration’ and Herbert imply that the elixir of eternal life can only be granted by God through Christ.

As Caroline Walker Bynum points out, in the medieval period, Christ was often depicted as a gender-fluid mother. This has is its origins in the Gospel of St Matthew where Christ likens himself to a hen gathering her chicks under her wings: ‘I [Christ] haue gathered thy [Jerusalem’s] children together, as the henne gathereth her chickens vnder her wings’. This passage in the Bible is exposited by the twelfth-century writer-theologian, Anselm of Canterbury, who states: ‘But you, Jesus, good lord, are you not also a mother? [...] Christ, mother, who gathers under your wings your little ones, [...] by your gentleness, those who are hurt are comforted; by your perfume, the despairing are reformed’. This medieval trope of portraying Christ as both ‘lord’ and ‘mother’ is revived (in part) in the early sixteenth century by women writers. For the influential

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early-sixteenth-century writer, Marguerite of Navarre, for instance, Christ possesses both a vast maternal womb-like capacity and an implanting penetrative phallus:

> Il s’ayme donc en moy et par m’aymer,  
> Il faict mon cueur par amour enflammer.  
> Par ceste amour il se faict aymer tant,  
> Que son effect (non moy) le rend content.  
> Se contentant, tousjours il multiplie  
> Trop plus d’amour, qu’amour ne luy supplie.  
> O vray aymant, de charité la source,  
> Et du tresor divin la seule bourse,  
> Doib je penser, ny oseroie je dire  
> Que c’est de vous? le puis je bien escripre?  
> Vostre bonté, vostre amour se poeuit elle  
> Bien comprendre de personne mortelle?  
> Et s’il vous plaist ung petit l’imprimer  
> Dedans ung cueur, le poeuit il exprimer?  
> Certes, nenny! car la capacité  
> N’est pour tenir la grande immensité [.]

[He loves himself in me and by loving me,  
he fills my heart with love.  
In such loving he makes himself to be so loved  
that its consequence (not mine) brings him joy.  
Making himself happy, he endlessly multiplies  
greater love than love can give.  
True lover, source of all devotion,  
the unique font of heavenly riches,  
may I believe, dare I say  
that it comes from you? Am I able to write it?  
Your munificence and love,  
can a human heart understand them?  
And whatever small amount you implant  
in a heart, can the heart express it?  
Surely not. For it is not large enough  
to contain your vastness.]\(^\text{10}\)

Christ, for Marguerite of Navarre’s speaker here, can ‘endlessly’ multiply (spiritually) because he simultaneously ‘implant[s]’ and ‘contain[s]’\(^\text{11}\). It is arguably Marguerite of Navarre’s widely-circulating representation of the gender-fluid Christ that anticipates and influences the sacredly androgynous depiction of the ‘wondrous creature’ of ‘A narration’: ‘God, Man, nor Woman, but elix’d of all’ (AN, 24). Marguerite of Navarre’s *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse* has special relevance for Chester’s *Loves Martyr* because the ‘Phænix’ in Chester’s volume is likely to be a personification of


\(^{11}\) Marguerite de Navarre, *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse*, pp. 142-43, lines 1311, 1319, 1322.
Elizabeth I, who in 1544 had translated into English Marguerite of Navarre’s *Le miroir*.

Furthermore, it is most probably Marguerite of Navarre’s portrayal of the sacrosanct hermaphroditic Christ that Elizabeth I herself uses to consolidate her own political-divine gender-fluid identity in her renowned 1588 speech at Tilbury: ‘I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king’.

This mixing of male and female was manipulated by other non-royal Renaissance women, who used it to gain ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) agency:

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

In this above-quoted anonymous extract (by Marie Maitland?) from the Maitland Quarto (c. 1586), the female speaker embodies a mercurial gender-shifting identity that is attained through an alchemical ‘vaill’/phial (MQ, XLIX, 44). This Scottish female-voiced poem foreshadows the gender-fluctuating definition of the ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) found in ‘A narration’. What I am suggesting here is that the Renaissance gender-fluid metaphysic is not simply an English male phenomenon, but one that was influenced by a polyglottal female metaphysical culture.

Poem XLIX’s and ‘A narration’’s adumbration of the ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) androgyne finds its way into Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611). This is how Lanyer presents the ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) hermaphrodite in her dedicatory poem to the alchemical enthusiast, Mary Sidney:

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When bright Bellona, so they did her call,
Whom these faire Nymphs so humbly did receive,
A manly mayd which was both faire and tall,
Her borrowed Charret by a spring did leave.
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(ADLM, 33-36)

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12 Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen argue that the ‘Phœnix’ of *Loves Martyr* refers to Elizabeth I, who was often described as a ‘rare [...] Phœnix’ by her courtiers. Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen propose that the ‘Turtle Doe’ of *Loves Martyr* is likely to be a personification of Elizabeth I’s courtier and cousin, Sir John Salusbury (the principal dedicatee of Chester’s volume), a ‘man who suffered much for his unshakeable determination to serve his close kinswoman Elizabeth’. Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen, ‘Introduction’, in William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare’s Poems: Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece and the Shorter Poems*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones and H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007), pp. 1-124 (pp. 108-11, 118-19).


14 See Chapter 3 of this study for evidence of Mary Sidney’s interest in alchemy.
As outlined in Chapter 3 of this study, the alchemical process of conjunction (the union of two metallic seeds), was often depicted as a chemical wedding of Sol and Luna, sun and moon, which gave birth to the hermaphrodite or double-being (*rebis*).\(^{15}\) George Ripley spoke of the joining of the ‘Red Man and the Whyte Woman’ and according to Nicolas Flamel, this union resulted in the creation of the ‘Androgyne [...] of the Ancients’.\(^{16}\) Lanyer’s ‘manly mayd’ (ADLM, 35), Bellona, appears in the liminal twilight of morning, where Sol, *Apolloe*, graces ‘his eie’ (ADLM, 68) and Luna, *Phoebe*, mixes with *Aurora* (ADLM, 61-62). Bellona’s helmet is laden with ‘myrtle bayes’ and ‘olive branches’ (ADLM, 39). Myrtle plants blossom with white-scented flowers, which were distilled in the later Middle Ages and used in perfumery and from olive branches precious oil could be obtained (*OED*).\(^{17}\) In Lanyer’s poem, nine ‘faire Virgins’ (ADLM, 9) surround Bellona with their ‘Harps and Vialls [phials?]’ (ADLM, 10), waiting to decoct Bellona’s herbal gifts. According to Ficino, the ‘Egyptian’ Hermetic ‘priests’ practised ‘medicine, music and the mysteries’ as ‘one and the same study’, and Lanyer places this syncretic theory within a gender-fluid femino-centric context in her dedicatory poem to Mary Sidney.\(^{18}\) Lanyer’s gender-bending punning on Viall/phial (ADLM, 10) is reminiscent of Poem XLIX of the Maitland Quarto: ‘My sex intill his vaill [phial?] convert’ (MQ, XLIX, 44) and provides further evidence of Lanyer’s reading of the Maitland Quarto.

The ‘manly mayd’ (ADLM, 35), Bellona, prefigures Lanyer’s gender-ambivalent representation of Christ. As outlined in Chapter 3 of this study, Christ in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* is accessed through a spiritual alchemical process: the *nigredo* or chaotic darkness (‘He [Christ] in the waters laies his chamber beames, / And cloudes of darknesse compasse him about’ [SDRJ, 97-98]); the *albedo* or cleansing (‘The Innocent [...] as a Dove shall flie / [...] Her [the Virgin Mary’s] teares did wash away his [Christ’s] pretious blood’ [SDRJ, 119, 1017]); the *rubedo* or dawning light (‘Thou [Christ] as the Sunne shalt shine; or much more cleare’ [SDRJ, 56]). This exoteric-esoteric process culminates in the birth of the ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) divine hermaphrodite, Christ:


\(^{17}\) For further exposition on the domestic usefulness of myrtle and the ‘Oyle’ of ‘Oliue’, see Newton, *An Herbal for the Bible* (1587), pp. 37, 201.

This is that Bridegroome that appeares so faire,
So sweet, so lovely in his Spouses sight,
That unto Snowe we may his face compare,
His cheekes like skarlet, and his eyes so bright
As purest Doves that in the rivers are,
Washed with milke, to give more delight;
   His head is likened to the finest gold,
   His curled lockes so beauteous to behold;
Blanke as a Raven in her blackest hew;
His lips like skarlet threeds, yet much more sweet
Than is the sweetest hony dropping dew,
   [...] 
His cheekes are beds of spices, flowers sweet;
   His lips, like Lillies, dropping downe pure mirrhe,
   Whose love, before all worlds we doe preferre.
   (SDRJ, 1305-15, 1318-20)

As Erica Longfellow observes, Lanyer’s above-quoted blazon of Christ offers a poetic rendering of the description of the lover, Christ, found in the biblical Song of Songs (5. 11-16). Indeed, the Song of Songs was interpreted in the early seventeenth century through the lens of spiritual alchemy. Joseph Hall’s 1609 printed paraphrase of the Song of Songs, for example, is imbued with alchemical imagery. Hall’s church/bride proclaims:

[W]hen once my royall and glorious husband hath brought mee both into these lower roomes of his spirituall treasures on earth, and into his heauenlie chambers of glorye, then will we reioyce [...] 
the sweet influence of his graces, like to some precious ointme[n]t, spreds it selfe ouer my soule [...] 
My welbeloued [...] is of perfect beautie, in whose face is an exact mixture of the colours of the purest & healthfullest complexion of holinesse [...] 
His actions, and his instruments [...] are set forth with much port & maiestie, as some precious stone beautifies the ring where in it is set [...] 
the mysteries of his wil are most pure and holy [...]

Christ’s gift to his church/bride (according to Hall) is a ‘spirituall treasur[e]’: a ‘precious ointme[n]t’, an ‘exact mixture’, a ‘precious stone [...] pure and holy’. What I am suggesting here is that Lanyer uses Hall’s alchemical interpretation of the Songs of Songs and instils it into Salve Deus Rex Iudaearum to appeal to the alchemical healer, Margaret Clifford. Christ is the ‘gold’ that Lanyer bestows to her principal dedicatee,

20 Joseph Hall, An open and plaine Paraphrase, vpon the Song of Songs (London, 1609), pp. 3-4, 9-10, 53-54, 56.
21 Hall, An open and plaine Paraphrase, vpon the Song of Songs, pp. 3, 9, 53, 56.
the alchemical enthusiast, Margaret Clifford: ‘I deliver you [Margaret Clifford] the health of the soule; [...] this perfect gold growing in the veines of that excellent earth of the most blessed Paradice’ (LM, 9-13).

It is the gender-fluid Christ who is resurrected via Margaret Clifford in Lanyer’s ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’:

The swelling Bankes deliver’d all their pride,
When such a Phænix once they had espide.
[...]
In these sweet woods how often did you [Margaret Clifford] walke,
With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
To meditate what you therein did see [.]

(TDC, 43-44, 81-84)

By describing Margaret Clifford as a hermaphroditic Arabian bird, a ‘Phænix’ (TDC, 44), Lanyer evokes the holy ‘Phænix’ of Chester’s Loves Martyr. Margaret Clifford (for Lanyer’s speaker) embodies a newly resurrected Elizabeth I. According to Roger Prior, Elizabeth I may have visited Cooke-ham in the summer of 1592, so Lanyer’s allusion to the Christ-like ‘Phænix’, Queen Elizabeth, in ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’ is not unlikely.22

As we have seen in Chapter 5 of this study, ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) gender ambiguity features in Katherine Philips’s poem, ‘God’:

When shall those cloggs of sence and fancy break,
That I may heare the God within me speak?
When with a Silent and retired art,
Shall I with all this empty hurry part?
To the still voice above, my Soule advance;
My light and Joy fix’d in God’s Countenance;
[...]
With such distinctions all things here behold,
And so to separate each drosse from Gold [.]

(G, 49-54, 57-58)

For Philips’s poet-speaker here, the ‘Silent and retired art’ (G, 51) is implicitly left open to all sexes and genders. At no point in the poem ‘God’ does the poet-speaker

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unequivocally refer to her/his sex or gender. ‘God’ elucidates Philips’s contention that ‘soules no sexes have’. For Philips, the ‘still’ (distilled) ‘voice’ of God (G, 53) is accessed through gender mutability and Philips here seems to celebrate the definition of the gender-fluctuating ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) found in ‘A narration’.

One seventeenth-century male poet known for ‘Metaphisicall’ (AN, 23) alchemical mixing is Andrew Marvell. Lyndy Abraham and Maren-Sofie Røstvig have argued that Marvell’s country-house poem, ‘Upon Appleton House’ (written in circa 1650-1653), is an alchemical-Hermetic poem, dedicated to the Hermetic devotee, Thomas, third Lord Fairfax (1612-1671). Abraham and Røstvig suggest that Marvell was ‘widely read’ in the ‘alchemical literature’ of his time and they compare ‘Upon Appleton House’ to Giordano Bruno’s De gli eroici furori (1585), Michael Maier’s Atalanta Fugiens (1618), Elias Ashmole’s Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum (1651), and Lord Fairfax’s manuscript commentary on the Hermetica (written after 1650). What I would like to propose here is that Marvell was certainly ‘widely read’ in the alchemical literature of his time and his sources for ‘Upon Appleton House’ include the writings of Renaissance metaphysical women: the poetry of Lanyer, Philips and Marie Maitland.

The female metaphysical strand in ‘Upon Appleton House’ is prevalent in Marvell’s presentation of Lord Fairfax’s daughter, Mary Fairfax (1638-1704):

The young Maria [Mary Fairfax] walks tonight:
[...]
*She*, that already is the law
Of all her sex, her age’s awe.

See how loose Nature, in respect
To her, itself doth recollect;
And everything so whisht and fine,
Starts forthwith to its *bonne mine*.
The sun himself, of her aware,
Seems to descend with greater care;
[...]

The modest halcyon comes in sight,
Flying betwixt the day and night;
[...]

Maria such, and so doth hush
The world, and through the evening rush.
(...) by her flames, in heaven tried,
Nature is wholly vitrified.

‘Tis she that to these gardens gave
That wondrous beauty which they have;
She straightness on the woods bestows;
To her the meadow sweetness owes;
Nothing could make the river be
So crystal pure but only she;
She yet more pure, sweet, straight, and fair,
Than gardens, woods, meads, rivers are.

(...)

She counts her beauty to converse
In all the languages as hers;
Nor yet in those herself employs
But for the wisdom, not the noise;
Nor yet that wisdom would affect,
But as ’tis heaven’s dialect.

(UAH, 25 651, 655-62, 669-70, 681-82, 687-96, 707-12)

Marvell’s depiction of Mary Fairfax here is reminiscent of Lanyer’s portrayal of Margaret Clifford in the country-house poem, ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’:

Farewell (sweet Cooke-ham) where I first obtain’d
Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain’d;
(...)
Yet you (great Lady [Margaret Clifford]) Mistris of that Place,
From whose desires did spring this worke of Grace;
(...)
each plant, each floure, each tree
Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee:
The very Hills right humbly did descend,
When you to tread upon them did intend.
(...)
The gentle Windes did take delight to bee
Among those woods that were so grac’d by thee.
And in sad murmure uttered pleasing sound,
(...)
The swelling Bankes deliver’d all their pride,
When such a Phænix once they had espide.

(TDC, 1-2, 11-12, 33-36, 39-41, 43-44)

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25 Andrew Marvell, ‘Upon Appleton House’, in *The Complete Poems*, ed. by Donno, pp. 75-99. From henceforth ‘Upon Appleton House’ has been abbreviated as UAH and is proceeded by the line reference.
Both Lanyer and Marvell seem to be invoking the description of Dame Nature/Sapience/Lady Alchymia found in the *Hermetica*:

> God smiled, and bade Nature be; and there came forth from his voice a Being in woman’s form, right lovely, at the sight of whom the gods were smitten with amazement; and God the Forefather bestowed on her the name of Nature. And he conferred on Nature the government of all things in the world below, and bade her be productive of all manner of seeds. And Nature communed with herself [...] And God filled his august hands with the abundance of seeds which Nature supplied, and gripping the handfuls firmly, said ‘Take them, thou holy Earth, take them, all-honoured one, thou that art destined to be mother of all things [...]’

Both Mary Fairfax and Margaret Clifford embody the Hermetic Dame Nature, as they command and transform the natural landscape that surrounds them:

> ‘Tis she [Maria/Mary Fairfax] that to these gardens gave
  That wondrous beauty which they have;
  She straightness on the woods bestows;
  To her the meadow sweetness owes;
  Nothing could make the river be
  So crystal pure but only she;
  She yet more pure, sweet, straight, and fair,
  Than gardens, woods, meads, rivers are.
  (Marvell, UAH, 689-96)

> each plant, each flore, each tree
  Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee
  [Margaret Clifford]:
  The very Hills right humbly did descend,
  When you to tread upon them did intend.
  [...] The gentle Windes did take delight to bee
  Among those woods that were so grac’d by thee.
  (Lanyer, TDC, 33-36, 39-40)

The *Hermetica* has particular appurtenance for both ‘Upon Appleton House’ and ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’ because the Fairfax and Clifford families were actively involved in Hermetic-alchemical practices. This is evinced in the case of the Fairfax family through Lord Fairfax’s manuscript commentary on the *Hermetica* and his wife’s (Lady Anne Vere Fairfax’s) extant domestic alchemical receipt book. Likewise, Margaret Clifford’s passion for Hermetic alchemy is captured in Anne Clifford’s account of her mother in her 1652 family memorial: ‘She [Margaret Clifford] was a

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27 Lord Fairfax’s manuscript commentary on the *Hermetica* is held in the British Library, London, MS Additional 25447. Lady Anne Vere Fairfax, *Booke of Receipts* (c. 1640-1650), Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College, MS 118.
lover of the study and practice of alchemy [...] for she had [...] knowledge in most kind of minerals, herbs, flowers, and plants’. 28 As outlined in Chapter 3 of this study, Margaret Clifford also kept an alchemical receipt book. 29

Both Mary Fairfax and Margaret Clifford summon (by their presence) the elixed symbol of regeneration, the philosopher’s stone. This is evinced in ‘Upon Appleton House’ through the symbol of the flaming ‘halcyon’ (UAH, 669, 687). According to the influential sixteenth-century Swiss medic-alchemist, Paracelsus, the halcyon is a symbol of rebirth: ‘The renovation and restoration of our nature are none otherwise than in the case of the halcyon which bird, indeed, is renewed in its own proper nature’. 30 Mary Fairfax arouses the regenerative power and motion of the halcyon:

The young Maria walks tonight:
[...]

The modest halcyon comes in sight,
Flying betwixt the day and night;
[...]

by her flames, in heaven tried,
Nature is wholly vitrified.
(UAH, 651, 669-70, 687-88)

Similarly, it is the elixed Christ-like ‘Phænix’ (TDC, 44) that Margaret Clifford resurrects in ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’:

The swelling Bankes deliver’d all their pride,
When such a Phænix once they had espide.
[...]

In these sweet woods how often did you [Margaret Clifford] walke,

With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
To meditate what you therein did see. [,]
(TDC, 43-44, 81-84)

What I am suggesting here is that Lanyer’s alchemical-Hermetic country-house poem, ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’, presages Marvell’s ‘Upon Appleton House’. It is likely that Marvell, in his presentation of Mary Fairfax, drew conceptual and textual

29 MS WD/Hoth/A988/5.
inspiration from Lanyer’s delineation of Margaret Clifford in ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’.  

By describing Mary Fairfax as a divine lawgiver – ‘She, that already is the law / Of all her sex, her age’s awe’ (UAH, 655-56) – Marvell invokes Katherine Philips’s representation of ‘Lucasia’ (Anne Owen): ‘she [Lucasia] to th’infant = World [sic] had given Law’ (L, 20). Both Marvell and Philips here hark back to the book given to Hermes in the mosaic in Siena Cathedral on which is written ‘SVSCIPITE O LICETERAS ET LEGES EGIPTII’ (Take up thy letters and laws O Egyptians). As Frances Yates points out, this Latin motto is a supplication from the lawgiver of the Hebrews, Moses. But it is arguably the female Hermetic Sibyls who will distribute this sacred law, as it is the Hermetic Sibyls who flank the mosaic of Hermes in Siena Cathedral. If Lord Fairfax is a patriarchal Mosaico-Hermetic figure in ‘Upon Appleton House’ – ‘The trees before their Lord divide’ (UAH, 620) – then Mary Fairfax presumably takes on the role of a Hermetic Sibyl, disseminating the Mosaico-Hermetic ‘law’ to ‘all her sex’ (UAH, 655-56). As indicated above, one source for Marvell’s play on this feminized Hermetic ‘law’ is Katherine Philips’s scribally circulating ‘Lucasia’ poems.

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

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31 For the circulation of Lanyer’s poetry in the mid seventeenth century, see Miller, Engendering the Fall, p. 49.
33 Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, p. 45.
36 Michael Maier, Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum (1617), cited in Patai, The Jewish Alchemists, pp. 76, 77, 78.
Marvell’s Mary Fairfax evokes the Prophetess Maria, as she revives the flaming ‘halcyon’ (UAH, 669, 687), the bird of Hermes, and uses her ability as a polyglottal linguist to access ‘heaven’s dialect’ (UAH, 712).37

She counts her beauty to converse
In all the languages as hers;
Nor yet in those herself employs
But for the wisdom, not the noise;
Nor yet that wisdom would affect,
But as ’tis heaven’s dialect.
(UAH, 707-712)

Marvell’s tacit word-play on Mary Fairfax’s/Maria’s name – ‘The young Maria walks tonight’ (UAH, 651) – is presaged by Poem LXIX of the Maitland Quarto (c. 1586):

Marie I thocht in this wod did appeir
mait land and gold scho gave aboûndantlie
Syne in hir hand ane flourishit trie did beir
q[uhai]rin wes writtin with letteris properlie
This is in sing of trew Virginitie [.]
(MQ, LXIX, 41-45)

As outlined in Chapter 1 of this study, the figure of Marie Maitland in Poem LXIX of the Maitland Quarto evokes the Prophetess Maria as she distributes alchemical ‘gold’ (MQ, LXIX, 42) – a synonym for pristine, esoteric knowledge. Poem LXIX’s placing of Marie Maitland/the Prophetess Maria within the locus amoenus foreshadows and arguably influences Marvell’s depiction of Mary Fairfax as the Prophetess Maria. Indeed, Marvell was certainly interested in pro-union Scots, evinced in his delineation of the Scottish army officer, Archibald Douglas (d. 1667), who Marvell presents as the ideal alchemical hermaphrodite in the poem, ‘The Loyal Scot’ (written in c. 1670):

brave Douglas, on whose lovely chin
The early down but newly did begin;
And modest beauty yet his sex did veil,
While envious virgins hope he is a male.38

Marvell’s above-quoted line from ‘The Loyal Scot’ (‘And modest beauty yet his sex did veil [phial?]’) is reminiscent of Poem XLIX from the Maitland Quarto (‘My sex intill his vaill [phial?] convert’ [MQ, XLIX, 44]) and provides further textual evidence for the scribal circulation of the Maitland Quarto in the seventeenth century.

37 For further exposition on the bird of Hermes, see Abraham, A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery, pp. 25-26.
Reading Marvell’s ‘Upon Appleton House’ through the lens of Renaissance women’s writing forces us to re-assess the potential sources for Marvell’s metaphysical Hermetic country-house poem. When Marvell’s poet-speaker of ‘Upon Appleton House’ states, ‘Out of these scattered sibyl’s leaves / Strange prophecies my fancy weaves’ (UAH, 577-78), we are left wondering who precisely these sibyls are who motivate Marvell’s poet-speaker’s poetic ‘fancy’ (UAH, 578). Marvell’s sibyls recall the Hermetic Sibyls that surround Hermes in Siena Cathedral and lead Marvell’s speaker to his ‘mosaic read’ (UAH, 582). But I would argue that Marvell’s sibyls also evoke the ‘scattered’ (UAH, 577) writings of Renaissance women that permeate ‘Upon Appleton House’. Reading ‘Upon Appleton House’ alongside the writings of Lanyer, Philips and Maitland demonstrates that the Renaissance metaphysical tradition is not simply a male tradition, but one that is ‘elix’d’ (AN, 24) of both male and female literary traditions.
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