

Women Writers in Tudor England: Male Occluded Female Agency and the  
Recovery of Authorial Voice

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## ABSTRACT

### Women Writers in Tudor England: Male Occluded Female Agency and the Recovery of Authorial Voice

This thesis examines the relationship between occluded authorial agency and women writers of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, looking at the work of four writers – Margaret More Roper, Anne Askew, Isabella Whitney, Elizabeth Grymeston – and the different genres in which they wrote: religious translation, memoir, secular poetry, maternal advice. Through examining their works, this thesis analyses the ways in which paratextual techniques negotiate women's precarious position on the margins of mainstream male literary culture. It argues that, despite these patriarchal beliefs, early modern women writers still succeed in achieving agency and an authorial voice. Although More Roper's religious translation is ushered into print through male intervention and she remains anonymous, paratextual apparatuses disclose who the real author is. Askew, despite heavy intrusion by two major male reformers – John Bale and John Fox – manages to manifest her suffering and consequent death at the hands of the Catholic clergy to the outside world. Whitney moves into the public sphere by writing secular verse which challenges conventional male traditions. Grymeston uses the maternal advice book to showcase her various rhetorical skills while remaining within an acceptable female genre which permits her to make it into print.

In this study, it is contended that precisely due to this complex relationship between female authors and male authorities, sixteenth-century women writers remained side-lined by their contemporary readers and, subsequently, modern critics. By understanding these women's various struggles – limited educational opportunities with the exception of few women who managed to acquire an instruction, the confinement of women to the domestic sphere, a rigid patriarchal culture, distortion of female-authored texts by male authorities – the twenty-first-century reader can comprehend better these women writers' contribution to the literary world and admire them not just for their rhetorical skills but also for succeeding in leaving their own legacies.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Marc, with all my love and appreciation for believing in me when I did not; for encouraging me when I needed it; who never once complained about the time I devoted to this study; and whose love and strength will always support me.

To my two children, Matt and Mae, whose innocent eyes make life seem less complicated, and who fill my days with so much laughter and happiness. You have made me stronger.

And to the memory of my parents who raised me the person I am today and who have instilled in me priceless values. Their good examples taught me to strive hard to reach one's goals in life. I hope that this achievement has made them proud.

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## Introduction

### Women Writers in Tudor England: Male Occluded Female Agency and the Recovery of Authorial Voice

And is not a young gentlewoman, thinke you, thoroughly furnished, which can reade plainly and distinctly, write faire and swiftly, sing cleare and sweetely, play wel and finely, understand and speake the learned languages, and those toungues also which the time most embraseth, with some logicall helpe to chop, and some Rhetoricke to brave.

(Richard Mulcaster, 1581, Z3r-v)

The kind of woman that Richard Mulcaster depicts here is a very accomplished one: one who has the sort of education associated with boys in this period (“learned languages” – Latin and Greek – logic, rhetoric) as well as other skills (music and adequate handwriting). Mulcaster insists that “such there be, and such we know” (1581, Z3v), but the fact that he is here needing to make a forceful case for the education of women suggests that the argument has not yet been won.

Joan Kelly Gadol states “that there was no actual renaissance for women ... at least not during the Renaissance” (Gadol, 1977, p. 139). However, to understand this contention, it is necessary to understand the dynamics which formed part of sixteenth-century England. The notion of “rebirth” associated with the word “renaissance” brought several

developments which affected not solely the heritage of England but also that of civilisations across Europe. Heather Sharnette (1996) gives a brief overview of these changes happening across centuries. She states that “the fifteenth century saw the discovery of the ‘New World’” bringing along new ideas and customs which spread around the continent and fostering a curiosity for the acquisition of new knowledge (Sharnette, 1996, p. 1). Moreover, Sharnette continues, the sixteenth century brought “a whole new religious outlook which challenged almost every aspect of life” (Sharnette, 1996, p.1). “The reformation,” in fact, “played an important role in creating a new attitude to education” since the practice of “Protestantism” with its emphasis on Scripture and verbal communication over ritual required more advanced literacy skills (including among the lay community) than Catholicism (Sharnette, 1996, p. 1). An advanced level of education was needed, to nurture both competent preachers, well-versed in Scripture, and literate members of the lay community, who would be able to read the Bible. It was, thus, desirable that in later sixteenth-century England, one had “to be literate,” and that “demanded at least a rudimentary education” (Sharnette, 1996, p. 1). This meant a new surge of interest in the vernacular besides the Latin language which was synonymous until then with a superior intellectual and cultural status. When humanists discovered “how undeveloped their native languages were, they tried to enhance the vocabulary, to enable more eloquent and elegant means of expression” (Sharnette, 1996, p. 2). This offered non-Latinate people a whole new perspective of the world which was otherwise denied by the Latin language.

Another noteworthy development of the fifteenth century, but which became increasingly important in England during the sixteenth century, was the invention of the printing press. This “German invention” led to an extensive increase in textual material across Europe and revolutionised the nature of communication (Sharnette, 1996, p. 1). Jeremiah Dittmar writes that “fifty years after the invention of the printing press” (c.1450), this technology was quickly “diffused across Europe” (Dittmar, 2009, p. 2). Printers became active in at least “110 different places” including “Germany, Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, England, Bohemia and Poland” (Febvre & Martin, 1976, p.58). From the early sixteenth century, it can be “assumed that the printed book was in universal use in Europe” (Febvre & Martin, 1976, p. 58). Not only did the press make the printing of books possible, but it allowed the possibility to make multiple copies of the same book a reality. This was significant as “it made textual criticism simpler and more practical, enabling scholars to communicate with each other” and discuss texts in an easier manner (Sharnette, 1996, p. 1). The simultaneous mechanising of paper manufacture “also helped to reduce the cost of books,” thus making the circulation of books more viable and easier to access (Sharnette, 1996, p.1). Robert Burns states that papermaking centres reduced “the price of paper to one sixth of parchment and then falling further” allowing “for a massive expansion of production” (Burns, 1996, p. 417).

As a result, the development of the printing press and cheaper paper had a considerable impact on disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of

education and learning. Sharnette argues that it is difficult to establish if Martin Luther's arguments and opinions about Protestant beliefs would still have reached "such a vast audience, and thus giving inertia<sup>1</sup> to the Protestant movement, had not it been for the coming of the printing press" (Sharnette, 1996, p. 1). The political and religious movement of the Lollards, for example, which originated from the teachings of John Wyclif during the late fourteenth century, never became a European-wide movement since it relied solely on manuscripts and word-of-mouth. It remains, however, problematic to determine the degree of influence the printing press had on women writers since print itself was culturally considered as "(male) gendered" (Smith, 2017, p. 1). This, therefore, raises the question of whether there was a renaissance for female authors.

Indeed, Kim Walker believes that the "developments taking place in the social, economic, political, and religious life of Renaissance England ... did not affect men and women equally" (Walker, 1996, p. 2). Even though, as Sharnette claims, these "developments ... were to exercise an incredible influence on the lives of millions of people across Europe," it is hard to establish the degree of influence each one exerted on the new English culture, as they "are so entangled in each other" (Sharnette, 1996, p. 1). Walker argues that the reformation only served to confirm men's place in society which "led to a division of labor that took men outside the household into the 'public' world to

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<sup>1</sup> Heather Sharnette uses the word "inertia" in the more technical sense (from the laws of Physics) to mean a uniform motion or an existing state of rest which is changed by an external force and, thus, not in its everyday use of "statis" (OED).

earn an individual wage, while women ... were relegated to the 'private' domestic sphere of 'huswifery'" (Walker, 1996, p. 2). The family became "a little church, a little commonwealth" writes Anthony Fletcher, where the woman learnt the art of submission in the private sphere and at the same time acted in partnership with her husband "over children and servants to prepare the young for a moral life and dutiful citizenship" (Fletcher, 1995, p. 347).

During sixteenth-century England, gender beliefs remained ingrained in an inherently patriarchal society. The enforcement of this system drew upon the notions of women's frailties, and therefore there was a strong belief in the need for women to be chaste and under the constant supervision of men. This subservience, as Keith V. Thomas has maintained, was built on "the desire of men for absolute property in women" (Thomas, 1959, p. 216). For example, a wife was expected to forgive a husband of adulterous acts, "but a husband could not forgive a guilty wife, no matter how momentarily and involuntarily her error" (Thomas, 1959, p. 216). "A woman's adultery," claims Fletcher, disrupted "the household order and thus the social order ... the woman took the blame and was held responsible" (Fletcher, 1995, p. 101). Marriage, therefore, served as another way for bolstering female subjection.

In this research I examine if women in early modern England, specifically the sixteenth century, attained a real renaissance by making their authorial voice heard in a culture dominated by males. More particularly, I am interested in: the topics they wrote about, which enabled or prompted them to speak out; the ways in which social structures and attitudes, then and since,

shaped or denied their voices; and whether – like educated men – they were able to leave a lasting legacy through their writing. My aim is to demonstrate whether writing elevated the female figure as subject, not object, of her works in an exceedingly patriarchal culture. Based on the texts of four female authors – Margaret More Roper, Anne Askew, Isabella Whitney and Elizabeth Grymeston – and personal accounts of their meditations, religious exercises and secular writing, this thesis discusses the impact of humanist values on the education of women in early modern England, as well as the influence religion and male authors had on women's writing experiences. In the process, this study focusses on the significant political positions held by some of these women writers. Their works were more vital in fostering female agency than has been hitherto assumed, inscribing gender roles and shedding light on the social position women held in a patriarchal society. It will also explore how the movement of women's writing into print is often controlled by the men around them, but also how men subsequently get credit for their writing, denying female agency. Nevertheless, in spite of such patriarchal resistance, these female writers also inspired other women authors to follow their own example, thus leaving their own legacy.

This study provides a discussion of these four very different women writers who wrote in very diverse genres and lived in distinctive eras across the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. They also hailed from different social and religious backgrounds. More Roper (1505 - 1544), a dedicated Catholic and daughter of Thomas More, was the first non-royal woman to publish a religious translation from Latin into English of Erasmus' *Precatio Dominica*

(1523), known as *A Devout Treatise* (1526). Askew (1521 - 1546), an ardent gentry reformer at a time when that counted as heresy, detailed her imprisonment and interrogations by the Catholic clergy in the *Examinations* (1546). Whitney (c.1546 - c.1624), like Askew, was a gentlewoman but she was an impoverished one; she was a conforming Elizabethan Protestant although her probable brother Geoffrey was patronised by the zealously Protestant circle around Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester (ODNB). Her writing consists of two works of lyric poetry: *The Copy of a Letter* (1567) and *A Sweet Nosegay* (1573). Grymeston (c.1563 – c.1603), was part of the gentry and Catholic circles at a time when that faith was problematic. She was one of the first to start the form of the maternal advice book written for her son Bemye, portraying herself as a reader and quoting both secular and religious writers. This study argues that despite such diverse forms of writing, spiritual beliefs and social backgrounds, the discourse of these women writers was shaped by men around them. Men, whether directly or indirectly, made it possible for these female writers to make their voice acceptable in public at a time where the printing world was highly dominated by the masculine gender. Although often the writing of these women was used for ideological purposes by men – to further their religious and/or political agendas – these women succeeded in overstepping social conventions which restricted female voices.

To understand exactly the role each of these women writers occupied in early modern England, this section will address three important aspects which helped to shape women's writing: cultural ideology, education and marriage. Firstly, early modern social and religious beliefs as well as traditional

dogmas from the classical world placed the masculine gender at the head of society while maintaining women in a submissive position. Secondly, education played a crucial role in restricting women to the domestic domain. Even as it seemed to progress the social position of women, in reality education, even a humanist one, kept them under the control of males. Thirdly for many girls, marriage provided an “escape” from strict patriarchal rules by their fathers and brothers, only to be placed under another rigidly dominated male household: that of their husbands. By evaluating diverse sources such as literary texts and historical data, this section will demonstrate how these aspects – social ideology, education, marriage – hinder the public voice of early women writers in Tudor England. This section will conclude with an analysis of how women writers across different epochs were generally perceived by other writers and critics.

## Women and Cultural Ideology

During the early modern period, the physiological and intellectual differences between men and women were extended to also embody the idea that womanliness was associated with unruliness: at best, emotional; at worst quarrelsome, deceitful, and “dangerous” (Brenner, 2009, p.164). These renaissance ideas were rooted in classical ones. A common belief, emerging from Greek philosophy, depicted women as naturally frail and intellectually inferior while Roman law denied women any legal power and subjugated

them to the control of men (Cartwright, 2014). Aristotle also confirms the existence of inequality between genders when he states that “Nature makes a similar differentiation in the mental characteristics of the sexes” (Aristotle in I. Maclean, 1980, p. 42). He mentions that “the female is less spirited than the male ... softer ... more mischievous, less simple, more impulsive, and more attentive to the nurture of the young” (Aristotle in I. Maclean, 1980, p. 42). He continues by saying that “she is more prone to despondency and less hopeful than the man, more void of shame and self-respect, more false of speech, more deceptive, and of more retentive memory” (Aristotle in I. Maclean, 1980, p. 42).

Religious beliefs about these seeming inequalities that existed between men and women also played their part in instilling a sense of disparity between the sexes. Alletta Brenner states that the apparent physical and intellectual dissimilarities between men and women have been in existence from the time of one of “the oldest of Christian mythologies, Adam and Eve” (Brenner, 2009, p.164). Christopher Dyer comments that religious writers point out the fact that men and women were dissimilar naturally since God created men and women unequal in strength and size (Dyer, 1989, p. 316). These Biblical and classical traditions exerted a great influence on how these early modern women came to approve indisputably of this apparent natural weakness.

Secular beliefs during this time also acknowledge this seeming discrepancy between women and men. The London physician Simon Forman, for example, makes a list of diseases that afflict only “women and not men and are more than the number 70,” attributing the cause for the woman being the

embodiment of Eve (Traister, 2001, p. 133). This way of thinking led not only to men but eventually also to women to believe in the frailty of their sex. Amongst these, there is the duchess of Newcastle, Lady Margaret Cavendish, who in the preface to one of her works *The Worlds Olio* written in 1650 and published in 1655, writes that:

Women can never have so strong Judgment nor clear understanding nor so perfect Rhetorick, to speak Orations with that Eloquence, as to Perswade so Forcibly, to Command so Powerfully, to entice so Subtilly, and to Insinuate so Gently and Softly into the Souls of men.

(Margaret Cavendish, 1655, A4v)

Suzanne W. Hull points out that women's self-deprecation must have developed from the fact that "women were told over and over and over that they were inferior, that they had lesser minds, that they were unable to handle their own affairs" (Hull, 1982, pp. 140-141). Undeniably male authors preferred to let Tudor women believe in their "natural weakness" to restrict any misconduct from the private sphere (Hackett, 1995, p. 238). Caninius in Thomas Elyot's *Defence of Good Women* (1540) brings out clearly women's allegedly imperfect nature:

But what saye you to Aristotel, whom ye haue kypte ouer, in the namynge of philosophers? he sayth, that a woman is a worke of nature

unperfecte. And more ouer, that her propertie is to delyte in rebukyng, and to be alway complayning, and neuer contented ... Perfection is euer constante and neuer chaungeth, but a woman is a creatue vnperfite, she therefore may neuer be stable or constante.

(Thomas Elyot, 1540, C2v-C3r)

Even Richard Mulcaster, the humanist supporter of educating women, believed in this seeming inherent weakness of women:

As for bodies the *maidens* be more weake, most commonly euen by nature, as of a moonish influence, and all our whole kinde is weake of the mother side, which when she was first made, euen then weakned the mans side.

(Richard Mulcaster, 1581, Y4v)

Indeed, articulate women who dared to move into the public sphere were deemed potentially aberrant and had no place in Tudor and Stuart England. Helen Hackett declares that Elizabethan England “regarded anomalously powerful women with suspicion, disquiet, and even revulsion” (Hackett, 1995, p. 238). By “anomalously,” Hackett implies that women who dared to trespass into the public sphere were considered as deviating from their natural course and what was expected of them: to remain confined within the household, to

help raise the children in a pious, religious environment and to remain silent, chaste and obedient.

These prejudiced beliefs against women shaped one common perspective: women, in general, were seen as physically and intellectually inferior to men, more irrational, more deceitful and, therefore, should be controlled and confined to the private sphere as “stepping outside their proper roles” only had “disastrous results” (Brenner, 2009, p. 169). The seventeenth-century writer John Ray draws attention to the number of English proverbs which were derogatory towards women. He lists around a hundred, observing that “in no country of the world the men are so fond of, so much governed by, so wedded to their wives yet hath no language so many proverbial invectives against women” (Ray, 1670, p. 64). Furthermore, the notorious pamphlet by Joseph Swetnam, *The arraignment of lewd, idl, froward, and vnconstant women* (1615), ridiculed women’s audacious propensity to break into the public world. He criticised women’s inconstant and insubordinate nature, calling them “necessary euills” whose “mind was set vpon mischief” to procure “man’s fall” (Swetnam, 1615, A2v, B1r). The popularity of this pamphlet is obvious with its repeated ten editions by 1637, with others as late as 1807.

There is also an extensive amount of literature from this period portraying women as potentially dangerous and unfaithful. Just as Desdemona in Shakespeare’s *Othello* is used as a pawn to activate the jealousy of Othello and ends up tragically punished for a sin she did not commit, so is Hermione in *The Winter’s Tale* depicted by her husband as an

adulteress, a “bed swerver” (Act II, Sc.i, ll.93-94). Both these women are innocent of the crime they have been accused of, and the audience is aware of this, revealing a cultural paranoia about women’s fidelity. Moreover, in *King Lear*, Goneril and Regan are seen as a disruption to the patriarchal order by their eloquence (in Act 1) and by their powerful “female sexuality [which] has man unnaturally in its thrall” and which threatens the bonds of marriage (Jardine, 1983, p. 114).

Women are, therefore, frequently figured as disruptive forces and harbouring an underlying destructive motive and their place in society “was determined in theory and to a great extent also in practice by a universal belief in their inferior capacity” (Coles, 2010, p. 3). Christine de Pisan, the fifteenth-century French poet and author, confirms this misogynist framework. When writing *The Cyte of Ladyes* (1405, trans. into English in 1521), she distances herself from Pisan-the-reader who is being indoctrinated to believe that one is merely frail because one is female. Pisan-the-reader feels that being intellectually weak is a natural flaw in women: “myne understandyng for his symplenesse and ygnoraunce ne coude not knowe my grete defautes” (De Pisan, 1521, B2r). She even senses “a grete dyspleasaunce and sorowe of courage in dyspraysynge [her]self and all womenkynde” (De Pisan, 1521, B2v). However, her sense of insecurity as a reader arises predominantly from the constant attacks of men: “Alas good lorde why haddest thou not made me to be borne in to this worlde in the masculine kynde” (De Pisan, 1521, B3r). This alleged “natural weakness” inherent in women made it possible for patriarchy

to remain deeply ingrained in sixteenth-century English culture. Men sought to keep women – wives and daughters – under their dominion since, as Fletcher argues, an inversion of women’s role “seemed to carry a hidden threat” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 28). Although women were considered as inherently weak, their moral frailty seemed to pose a risk to men: they brought disgrace upon their male relatives if they were freed from the control of men. Indeed Thomas More, the influential humanist advocate for female education, encourages his daughter, Margaret More Roper, not to step outside her family circle even though she possesses a great skill in writing:

Content with the profit and pleasure of your conscience, in your modesty you do not seek for the praise of the public, not value it overmuch even if you receive it, but because of the great love you bear us, you regard us – your husband and myself – as a sufficiently large circle of readers for all that you write.

(Thomas More in E. V. Beilin, 1987, p. 24)

Religious ideology continued to reinforce this idea of women’s weakness portraying them as either saintly, like the Virgin Mary, or corrupted, like Eve. The teachings of St Paul supported this thinking, instructing women, as wives, to submit to their husbands “in everything” (Ephesians 5:24, Geneva Bible). For moralists and social satirists, and the zealously religious Pro-Pauline and Calvinists authors, such as Philip Stubbes and John Knox, the “new, reformed”

woman of the sixteenth century is far from “liberating”: she represents “the negative outcome of too much indulgence of the weaker sex, which in turn confirms a general breakdown of law and order” (Jardine, 1983, p. 39). Knox wrote his controversial work *The First Blast of the Trumpet* (1558), emphasising women’s submissiveness: “Woman in her greatest perfection was made to serue and obey man, not to rule and command him” (1558, B5r). Therefore, people of both genders believed that God had ordained that women were inferior to men and should be brought up differently. The father represented the dominant figure in the household while girls were moulded from a tender age to submit to their inferior role and obey the male person. Thomas More clearly instructs his daughter, Margaret, on this matter in one of his letters: “I am ever wont to persuade you to yield in everything to your husband” (More in A. De Silva, 2000, p. 149). This requirement of obedience was also extended to other male relatives, such as older brothers, uncles and male family friends. Fundamentally, females were taught that God commanded them to submit to men, be it fathers or, later, husbands. Knox reaffirms this when writing about female rulers:

To promote a woman to beare rule, superioritie, dominion or empire aboue any realme, nation, or citie, is repugnant to nature, contumelie to God, a thing most contrarious to his reueled will and approved ordinance; and finallie it is the subuersion of good order, of all equitie and iustice.

(John Knox, 1558, B1r)

As a result, the role of early modern woman in society was determined, not only by a universal belief in her limited physical capabilities, but also through the definite instructions requesting her complete obedience and subjection found in the teachings of Genesis and the Epistles of St Paul. St Paul confirms that “the husband is the wife’s head, even as even Christ is the head of the Church” and therefore he instructs wives to “submit yourselves unto your husbands as unto the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22-3, Geneva Bible). Explicitly, he describes the wife as “the weaker vessel” in need of her husband’s protection (1 Peter 3:7, Geneva Bible). Knox confirms the apparent weakness of women’s temperaments:

Nature I say, doth paynt them furthe to be weake, fraile, impacient, feble, and foolishe: and experience hath declared them to be vnconstant, variable, cruell and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment.

(John Knox, 1558, B2r)

Therefore, weakness and subordination in women were thought to be founded on religious beliefs “and woman’s natural physical inferiority” (Fletcher, 1995, p. xvii). Richard Sibbes, the late sixteenth-century Anglican theologian, for instance argues that since the woman represented the image of sinful Eve, she needed more than men to be “nearer communion with God” (Sibbes in P.

Crawford, 1993, p. 73). At the same time Henry Paynter, the English landowner and politician (1560 – 1634), accredited women's piety and submission to their seeming sense "of their own imbecility and weakness" and advocated the constant need "to shroud themselves under the shadow of the Almighty and to be much and often under his wing" (Parsons in P. Lane, 1987, p. 147).

Furthermore, this ostensibly destructive and weak nature inherent in the female form led to a surge in the persecution of women accused of practising witchcraft by the Catholic Church in the late fifteenth to mid-seventeenth century throughout Europe. In 1487 *The Malleus Maleficarum* treatise, also known as *The Hammer of Witches*, was written by a Catholic clergyman Heinrich Kramer after he was appointed by Pope Innocent VIII to eliminate heresy in southern Germany. It describes the perils of sorcery and offers a legal and theological debate against women, arguing that they were more susceptible to evil doings due to their carnal desires:

All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. See *Proverbs xxx*: There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, a fourth thing which says not. It is enough; that is, the mouth of the womb. Wherefore for the sake of fulfilling their lust they [women] consort even with the devils.

(Heinrich Kramer, 1487, trans. by Christopher S. Mackay, 2009, p. 47)

The *Maleficarum* acquired immediate success with thirty-six editions issued between 1487 and 1669, proving its popularity as “second only to the Bible in sales” (Guiley, 2008, p. 223). Moreover, Jeffrey Russell claims that after the publication of the *Maleficarum*, seventy-five percent of the persons persecuted for witchcraft were, in fact, women in Europe (Russell, 1982, p. 145). This potentially strong disapproval of women brought the female gender to try even more conscientiously to behave in the very opposite manner as “a domesticated version of the Virgin: remaining at home to keep the household goods” since “a good woman was pious, humble, constant, and patient, as well as obedient, chaste, and silent” (Beilin, 1987, p. xix). As long as the woman was seen as the living embodiment of Eve, tainted with sin and responsible for the fall of mankind, she could only remain “an excellent ornament of man” and nothing else (Lapide, 1638, p. 284).

An exception to this ornamental, passive image of the female form was Queen Elizabeth herself. As a female ruler endowed with a powerful, intellectual personality she needed to be accepted by her subjects without disrupting a predominantly patriarchal culture. The only way to do this “was to represent her as a wonder and a miracle, an ‘exceptional’ woman whose marvellous gifts stand out in contrast to the general fallibility or even depravity of her sex” (Hackett, 1995, pp. 238-239). In fact, “it was not long before the young Elizabeth was portraying herself as a Virgin Mother” (Greenblatt, 1980, p. 168), which became known as the “cult of Elizabeth” (Hackett, 1995, p. 6). The cult of Elizabeth was built around the notion of creating a new “mother”

of the nation, replacing the Roman Catholic most prominent icon, the Virgin Mary cultivated during the previous reign of Mary Tudor. Dorothy Connell confirms this image of the sanctified Queen when she states in her book about Philip Sidney “that Elizabeth, as the Virgin Queen of Protestantism, came to be identified symbolically with the Virgin Mary” (Connell, 1977, p. 54). Elizabeth, thus, “became a sort of Protestant substitute for the Virgin Mary, filling a post-Reformation gap in the psyche of the masses, who craved a symbolic virgin-mother figure” (Hackett, 1995, p. 7). Frances Yates confirms this:

The bejewelled and painted images of the Virgin Mary had been cast out of churches and monasteries, but another bejewelled and painted image was set up at court, and went in progress through the land for her [Queen Elizabeth] worshippers to adore.

(Frances Yates, 1947, p. 75)

The adoration of Elizabeth seems to have provoked diverse reactions from being considered “sacrilegious” to being considered “holy in the sense that she personified the English Protestant Church, regarded as the true Church” (Jardine, 1983, p. 235, p. 237). However, above everything else the woman-ruler has “produced intense fascination, awe and devotion towards the abnormally elevated female figure” (Jardine, 1983, p. 238). Hackett affirms that in a society which is first and foremost Christian, “the bestowal of marvellous powers on a mere woman could also be used as evidence of the

power of God, choosing a weak vessel as his instrument to better show his strength" (Hackett, 1995, p. 239).

Apart from Queen Elizabeth, who remained a "controversial religious" figure (Hackett, 1995, p. 7), learned women continued to be categorically viewed as "as pathetically isolated eccentrics" (Martin, 1997, p. 7). Women writers were resented by their contemporary society for their intellectual privilege which made it possible for them to be dynamic and creative at the apparent cost of their most basic virtues: silence, chastity and obedience. Thomas Heywood's work, *Nine Bookes of Various History Concerning Women* (1624), which links women poets and witches in its eighth book "Intreating of Women everie way learned" (p. 369), is a case in point. Therefore, sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century England did not cease to be patriarchal despite its introduction of "new" developments in religion and education (as it will be discussed in the next section). Even though spiritual doctrine, in particular Protestantism, encouraged greater literacy possibilities for women, in practice it had "withdrawn much of that encouragement" (Jardine, 1983, p. 51). This was mainly due to the fact that although Protestantism gave education "an enormous boost" (Fletcher, 1995, p. 298), it prioritised the instruction of boys. The central theme regarding women's education remained focused on "humility and obedience," whereas males' education was intent on learning fully "their gender role and destiny" to be intellectually prepared for the outside world (Fletcher, 1995, p. 168, p. 297). Writers who discussed women's learning "could not dissociate the subject of chastity and virtue" (Walker, 1996, p. 7): like Thomas Elyot (cited earlier), these

writers find “no problem inherent in educating a woman while assuming that she will continue content to be private and domestic” (Beilin, 1987, p. 11). Giovanni Michele Bruto, the sixteenth-century Italian historiographer and deacon of the Order of St Augustan, advised prudence in substituting exemplary literature and training in the domestic arts, such as sewing, for the unsuitable liberal subjects as, for example, music. In his work, *The Necessarie, Fit and Conuient Education of a Yong Gentlewoman*, translated into English from Italian and French in 1598, he counsels against such learning for women:

Let the small profit got by learning, be compared with the great hurt that may happen vnto them, and they shall be shewed ... how much more conuient the needle, the wheele, the distaff, and the spindle, with the name and reputation of graue and honest matrons is for them, then the booke and pen with an vncertaine report: if in them there be more learning than honestie & virtue.

(Giovanni M. Bruto, trans. 1598, G2r)

The educated woman provoked a sense of anxiety in men because of her potential to disrupt the social hierarchies by preferring “learning” to “honestie & virtue” (Bruto, 1598, G2r). For this reason, patriarchy together with conventional religious convictions remained profoundly rooted in sixteenth-century culture. Elizabeth Jocelin’s letter to her husband offering advice on their daughter’s upbringing frames this concept to perfection:

I desire her bringing vp may bee learning the Bible, as my sisters doe, good houswifery, writing and good workes; other learning a woman needs not: though I admire it in those whom God hath blest with discretion, yet I desired not much in my owne, hauing seene that sometimes women haue greater portions of learning than wisdome, which is of no better vse to them than a maine saile to a flye boat, which runs it vnder water ... Yet I leaue it to thy will. If thou desirest a learned daughter, I pray God giue her a wise and religious heart, that she may vse it to his glory, thy comfort, and her owne saluation.

(Elizabeth Jocelin, 1624, B3v-B4r)

Jocelin confirms the conventional image of the good and pious wife who is brought up “learning the Bible ... houswifery, writing and good workes.” Additional “learning” is considered “of no ... vse” to the traditional role of sixteenth-century wife and mother. In the broadest sense, domestic learning increased feminine virtue and obedience, embedded also in Jocelin’s submissive statement to her husband: “Yet I leaue it to thy will.” Moreover, the daughter is perceived as bringing comfort solely to her father (“thy comfort”), not both father and mother (“our comfort”).

Having established that sixteenth-century English culture was embedded in strict patriarchal and religious doctrine designed to subdue women in modes of passivity, humility and obedience, the next section will now consider the role education occupied in the lives of these early modern

women. It will discuss if female learning advocated by major humanist advocates such as Juan Luis Vives, Thomas Elyot, Richard Mulcaster and Thomas More, sought to advance women's intellectual skills in the public sphere or if the type of instruction that humanists were encouraging still privileged men.

## Women and Education

While the reformed religion stressed the importance of literacy to salvation, this advancement in women's education never occurred. Statistics show that during the sixteenth and seventeenth century there was no remarkably higher literacy rate among women. David Cressy claims that between 1580 and 1640, around 95% of women remained unable to "sign their names" (Cressy, 1977, p. 146). However, it is important to acknowledge that since writing was taught separately from reading, it does not necessarily mean that these women were all illiterate because they might have been capable of reading but not writing. Norma McMullen affirms that there can be no evidence that women in schools during the sixteenth century "advanced to the grammar school level, let alone finished the course" (McMullen, 1977, p. 91). Moreover, schools that admitted girls, such as those at Bunbury Cheshire, Thaxted in Essex and West Chiltington in Sussex between the 1590s and 1630s were unwavering in allowing girls to learn to read only English and their admittance at the school was only acceptable till the age of nine or ten. At the same time, schools in

Harrow, Southwark, Essex and Devon “forbade the admission of females” completely (McMullen, 1977, p. 91).

Female education in Modern England was mainly distinguished from boys’ on the basis of “the educational setting, the nature and range of subjects taught and the social purpose of instruction” (Daybell, 2005, p. 696). As James Daybell notes, “whereas men were educated for public roles, in order that they might serve the state as able administrators, proponents of female education sought to instruct women for the domestic sphere, to be ‘good’ wives and mothers” (Daybell, 2005, p. 697). It was, thus, universally considered that the role of a woman was to marry, bear children, and take care of the household and their husbands since, as Cressy affirms, “most women did not need to be able to write” for “the domestic routine of cooking, sewing and child-rearing had little need for reading” (Cressy, 1980, p. 128). Thus, the little informal education they received were such skills acquired “informally and formally by mothers, governesses or tutors,” depending on their social ranking (Daybell, 2005, p. 696).

Rosemary O’Day confirms that while “there had been several well-known highly-thought of convent schools” before the reformation including those of Polesworth Convent, Warwickshire and Oxford: “Boarding education for girls seems to have been in abeyance between the dissolution of religious houses to the later sixteenth century” (O’Day, 2007, p. 325). Only about one such secular boarding school before the 1600 was ever documented through a letter between Anne Higginson to Lady Ferrar of Tamworth “recommending

a boarding academy at Windsor" (O'Day, 2007, p. 325). It was run by a gentlewoman who charged "sixteen pounds a year a piece, for diet, lodging, washing and teaching them to work, reading, writing and dancing this cometh unto £32 a year" (O'Day, 2007, p. 325). O'Day confirms that "the curriculum was equivalent to that of a finishing school" including the learning of the viol, singing, the virginals and the lute (O'Day, 2007, p. 325).

By the mid-seventeenth century, more schools had opened around the London suburbs, amongst them the highly reputed Ladies Hall at Deptford in Greenwich in 1617, which was "attended by daughters of the gentry and nobility" (D'Amore & Lardy, 2012, p. 71). Other schools soon opened such as, "that of Mrs Friends in 1628 in Stepney, others in Convent Garden, in Chelsea, but most of all in the neighbourhoods located in the north of London, reputed to be a healthy district, especially in Hackney which soon became famous as 'The Ladies University of the Female Arts'" (D'Amore & Lardy, 2012, pp. 71-72). Other boarding schools for girls documented were those run by a Mrs Winch and Mrs Salmon some time in 1637 "whose pupils belonged to the nobility" (D'Amore & Lardy, 2012, p. 72). That of Mrs Perwich was established in 1643 and Putney also seemed to have become a fashionable location for the capital's finishing school.

However, on analysing the type of learning that took place in such female institutions, D'Amore and Lardy contend that "it does not differ from that available to girls who were taught at home" (D'Amore & Lardy, 2012, p. 72). This is so, continue D'Amore and Lardy, since the "young ladies learnt reading, writing and calligraphy, took lessons in French, dancing, singing,

playing an instrument and needlework, as well as in the domestic art;. . . such as silk work and lacquer work . . . But they studied none of the subjects that were accessible to their brothers at University” (D’Amore & Lardy, 2012, p. 72). Therefore, even if some very few girls did make it into one of these fashionable boarding schools, most of them still “spent much more time than boys being educated at home” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 370). On the other hand, the education of boys was of a different class since opportunities for them “increased enormously between 1500 and 1800” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 298). “Boys’ schooling and further education at university, the Inns of Court and through the Grand tour, were the foundation of the gentry’s patriarchal command of English society,” continues Fletcher (Fletcher, 1995, p. 298). Moreover, the “new grammar schools” founded “between 1560 and 1660, were quickly confined to boys and their curriculum was based firmly on the classics” which included the learning of Latin, logic and rhetoric (Fletcher, 1995, p. 299). Such skills were required to function outside the private realm.

Education, therefore, did nothing to erase the conviction that females were inferior to males. “The breeding of men were after a different manner of ways from those of women,” observed Margaret Cavendish around 1630 (Cavendish in L. A. Pollock, 1989, p. 238), referring to the upbringing of herself and her brothers. Moreover, the subject of women’s education in the sixteenth century was given little consideration by contemporary male writers. They only briefly refer to it, preferring rather to advocate and dwell on the most appropriate ways of instilling appropriately feminine conduct. For instance, when writing about education in the *Tractate of Education* (1644), John Milton

excludes the instruction of girls completely. Milton's tract was more concerned with creating "brave men and worthy patriots, scorning all their childish and ill-taught qualities" (Milton, 1644, pp. 75-77). Other individuals, like Henry Percy, 9<sup>th</sup> earl of Northumberland, believed that girls were uneducable by nature. He instructs his son Algernon Percy in 1609:

And this you may observe generally, that women at very young years are as grave and well fashioned, as ever after, for their outward carriage, making small progress in any learnings after; saving in love, a little craft and a little thriftiness, if they be so addicted out of disposition, handsomeness and trimness being the idol of their hearts, till time write deep wrinkles in their foreheads.

(Henry Percy, 9<sup>th</sup> earl of Northumberland, in H. Markland, 1838, pp. 330-331)

In contrast to Henry Percy's views, major humanist writers such as Juan Luis Vives, Thomas Elyot, Richard Mulcaster and Thomas More were more in favour of women receiving an education. Mulcaster, for example, in his book *Positions* (1581) challenges the notion that women are unable to educate themselves:

We see yong *maidens* be taught to read and write, and can do both with praise: we heare them sing and playe: and both passing well, we

know that they learne the best, and finest of our learned languages, to the admiration of all men.

(Richard Mulcaster, 1581, X4v)

However, although in part Mulcaster promotes female education, in the same treatise (1581), he also marks a clear distinction between the two sexes:

Young *maidens* must giue me leaue to speake of *boyes* first: bycause naturally the *male* is more worthy, and politikely he is more employed, and therefore that side claimeth this learned education.

(Richard Mulcaster, 1581, R2v)

Mulcaster instructs that girls' education should not comprise the same type of 'academic' curriculum as boys' education does, including the learning of Latin and Greek for example, but should be one to suit their 'wifely' and 'motherly' role in society. Thus, he emphasises that women should be educated "with distinction in degrees, with difference of their calling, with respect to their endes" (Mulcaster, 1581, X4v). The educational programme suggested by Mulcaster is built around basic reading and writing, mainly of a religious nature, playing musical instruments and singing to entertain good company until motherhood whilst he recommends her to "be able to gouerne and direct her houshold, to looke to her house and familie, to prouide and keepe necessaries, though the goodman pay, to know the force of her kitchin, for sicknes and health" (Mulcaster, 1581, Z1v). The subjects of geometry, law, physics and

divinity remain exclusively for the male sphere and she is only allowed some study of philosophy so that “tongues be most proper, where they do naturally arme” (Mulcaster, 1581, Z3r). He, therefore, proposes a curriculum for girls that frames them into becoming obedient and dutiful wives and mothers since, as Fletcher notes, through Mulcaster’s programme, girls were more “educated for marriage through a moral and social programme rather than an academic one” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 376). Beilin also remarks that “Mulcaster does not want stupid women, but he does not wish for intellectual ones either” (Beilin, 1987, pp. 13-14).

However, Mulcaster was not the only one to uphold a gender division. In his works on education, *De Ratione Studii Puerilis* (1523) and *De Institutione Feminae Christianae* (1523, trans. by R. Hyrde in 1529), Juan Luis Vives proposes an educational paradigm for girls which is also intended to generate dutiful and virtuous wives. While he concentrates on a sound education in Latin and Greek, taught together with Christian learning, his aim remains to develop a moral and learned woman “wherewith she may refreshe her husbände / and make hym mery / whan he is wery” (Vives, tr. 1529, E2r). However, when Vives writes about the education of girls, his concern is with the schooling of highly privileged women. He thus neglects non-elite women who remained in their majority “unable to read and write throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century” (Friedman, 1985, p. 58). His work is dedicated to Catherine of Aragon praising her for encompassing both “vertue and wysedome” and for being an ideal example in her daughter Mary’s upbringing (Vives, tr. 1529, B4r). Although at first glance it appears that Vives suggests an educational programme for

girls which was on a par with that suggested for boys, integrating the study of Latin and style through works such as of Thomas Linacre's *Grammatical Compendium* and Valla's *Elegantiae* and reading of history books, Vives was adamant that women were not by nature suited for learning:

Therefore bicause a woman is a fraile thyng / and of weake discretion / and that maye lightly be disceyued: whiche thyng our fyrst mother due sheweth / whom the deuyll caught with a lighte argument. Therefore a woman shulde not teache / lest whan she hath taken a false opinion and beleue of any thyng ... and lightly bringe other in to the same error.

(Juan Luis Vives, tr. by R. Hyrde, 1529, E2v - E3r)

For Vives and other male writers, women continued to exist in the representation of Eve leading man to temptation and causing his downfall. Therefore, Vives centres "women's education on the development of her virtue, primarily defined as chastity, and with it, the attendant qualities of domesticity, privacy and piety" (Beilin, 1987, p. 5). According to Vives, being chaste and private were of utmost importance for women, but not necessary for men since they require other virtues such "as wysedome / eloquence / knowlege of thynges / with remembraunce / some crafte to lyue bye / lustice / Leberalite / lustye stomake / and other thynges moo / that were to longe to reherce" (Vives, tr. 1529, G4r). Vives believes that since women were made of

an inferior intellect, it poses a threat to their virtue and he thus prescribes a specific list for women's reading which avoids those books that will do more harm than good, such as poetry and romances. For example, the books of "Amadise / Florisande / Tirante / Tristane" are described by him as "vngratious" written by "idell menne who sawe neuer so moche as a shadowe of lernyng them selfe" (Vives, tr. 1529, E4r-v). The reading of such literature, continues Vives, will infect women "with poyson" and "quick[en] [them] vnto vice" (Vives, tr. 1529, F1r), making it difficult for women to retain a "chaste mynde" (Vives, tr. 1529, E3v). These books should, therefore, be taken "out of [their] handes" (Vives, tr. 1529, F2r). His idea was to prohibit imaginative literature and he discouraged the "development of language, rhetoric, and particularly eloquence" (Beilin, 1987, p. 7). He points out that women have no need for learning the art of rhetoric as their accepted social position is within the household, taking care of the family and rearing children:

For it neither becometh a woman to rule a schole / nor to lyue amonge men / or speke abroad & shake of her demurenes & honestie / eyther all to gether or els a great parte: whiche if she be good / it were better to be at home within / and vnknowen to other folkes. And in company to holde her tonge demurely. And let fewe se her / and none at all here her.

(Juan Luis Vives, tr. by R. Hyrde, 1529, E2v)

Vives advocates that the primary role of physical purity is gained by avoiding the company of men, dressing modestly, conforming to a chaste and spiritual life and, thus being a constant exemplar of virtue:

For hit is conuenient / that the wyfe be all at her husbandes wyll / and that a syngle woman gyue her selfe hollye to Iesu Christe / whiche is spouse of all good and vertuous woman. Therefore than let passe all that trymyng and arayeng of her body / whiche whan her husbände lyued / might seme to be done for his pleasure: but whan he is deed / all her lyfe and all her apparell muste be disposed and ordered after his will / that is successour vnto her husbände / that is immortall god vnto mortall man.

(Juan Luis Vives, tr. by R. Hyrde, 1529, R2r)

In *De Institutione*, Vives made it clear that in order for the woman to appear chaste, she needs to scorn dancing, playing at dice, and dressing in elaborate clothes. His educational plan, immersed in classical and Christian literature, serves to draw women away from traditional courtly literature and the way of life associated with it. In fact, women were to be sheltered from “voyde verses” and “tryflynge songes” and must treasure the love of the husband above everything else (Vives, tr. 1529, E2r). He deems that the primacy and importance of a woman’s role is that of the running of the household and raising children:

Let her handell so her house & householde / and so bryng vp her children  
/ that her husbände may be glad / and thinke that he is happy to leaue  
suche a wyfe behynde hym. And let her nat behaue her selfe so / that  
his soule haue cause to be angry with her / and take vengeance on  
her vngratiousnes.

(Juan Luis Vives, tr. by R. Hyrde, 1529, R2r)

By encouraging the role of the obedient and silent wife, he is encouraging women to remain in the private sphere while deterring any public or professional skills, such as reciting, reading aloud or writing, that they might have learnt through a humanist educational programme followed by their male peers.

Vives's assumption is that a woman should be a learned individual to the extent that she can maintain her chastity, making her appear more of an ideal woman. In this respect he brings out the example of Cleobulina who was "so gyuen vnto lernynge and philosophie / that she clerely dispised all pleasure of the body / and lyued perpetuallye a mayde" (Vives, tr. 1529, D3v). Perhaps, his thinking has been influenced by the fact that Catherine was queen of England at the time – and she encompassed both the learned and chaste woman – and a righteous model "for all other women" to follow (Vives, tr. 1529, B4v). In *De Institutione*, Vives was determined to provide a rigid model of a woman's life which did not include recreational activities outside her home, while constructing a viable Christian alternative that places "chastity" at its highest:

But you shall nat lyghtlye fynde an yll woman / excepte it be suche one  
/ as eyther knoweth nat / or at leste way consydereth nat what chastite  
& honestie is worthe: nor seeth what myschiefe she doth / whān she for  
goth it: nor regardethe howe great a treasure / for howe fowle / for  
howe lyght / and transitorie an image of pleasure she changeth: what  
a sort of vngratiousness she letteth in / what tyme she shutteth forthe  
chastite: nor pondreth what bodily pleasure is / howe vayne and folyshe  
a thyng / whiche is nat worth the turnynge of an hande / nat only  
vnworthy: wherfore she shulde cast away that / whiche is moost goodly  
treasure / that a woman canne haue.

(Juan Luis Vives, tr. by R. Hyrde, 1529, D3r)

Therefore, while Vives's *De Institutione* tries to present an image of the learned woman, at the same time it paradoxically subjugates females in exchange for teaching them obedience and grace. His humanistic tailor-made programme of education portrays women as lesser creatures undermined by traditional religious beliefs and continues to position them under the strict control of male family relations. In fact, Friedman states that Vives's humanist educational approach only succeeded in fitting women more for their role of a caring wife and mother and the managing of the household, "thus narrowing rather than expanding their intellectual and professional choices" (Friedman, 1985, p. 64).

Similarly, the educational humanist and poet, Sir Thomas Elyot, makes the reasons for a distinction between the education of boys and girls very clear in his book *The Booke named The Governour* printed in 1531. Beilin affirms that

while supporting women's education, he is "seemingly unable to relinquish a belief in their secondary position and limited sphere" (Beilin, 1987, p. 9). He believed that women should acquire an education but with an awareness of the inherent inferiority of their sex and acceptance of the privacy and domestic sphere to which God has ordained them. Walker stresses this point as she states that "Humanists and Reformers alike produced treatises in the renaissance advocating the education of women, but such encouragement was clearly a mixed blessing in terms of its paternalism" (Walker, 1996, p. 5). *The Governor* is written from a humanist perspective but deals solely with the significance of children destined for public roles, exclusively boys, to be taught Greek and, in particular, Latin: "It shall be expedient / that a noble mannes sonne, in his infancie haue with hym continually / onely suche / as may accustome hym by litle and litle to speake pure and elegant latin" (Thomas Elyot, 1531, C3v). In his treatise, Elyot completely neglects the subject of female education. He seldom mentions women and when they are cited, it is only as inferior beings to men whose purpose is merely to oversee that boys acquire the best of learning. He advocates "that the nourises [nurses] and other women ... speke none englisse but that / whiche is cleane / polite / perfectly / and articulately pronounced" (Elyot, 1531, C3v). He also does not hesitate in calling them "folishe women" as he puts on them the blame when young boys make mistakes in pronunciation "wherby diuers noble men / and gentilmennes chydren, (as I do at this daye knowe) haue attained corrupte and foule pronuntiation" (Elyot, 1531, C3v). He counselled that at the age of seven a boy should be removed "from the company of women" as the sight of them

might cause “sparkes of uoluptuositie” to increase “often tymes in to so terrible a fire / that therwith all uertue and reason is consumed” (Elyot, 1531, C4r-v).

Elyot's contradictory discourse regarding women's education continues in his *Defence of Good Women* (1540). This work revolves around a dialogue between Candidus and Caninius about the possibility of female virtue. The argument is concluded with the arrival of Zenobia, queen of Palmyra. While Zenobia has the qualities of a virtuous and learned woman, she nevertheless is a captive queen. Although, as Beilin states, she “provides dramatic evidence of woman's ability to learn moral philosophy and to become a ruler,” having “all the appropriate virtues of that position,” she is removed from the public sphere and happy to lead a private life out of the limelight (Beilin, 1987, p.9). She is “well lerned in greke ... and doth competently vnderstand latine, but excellently the Egiptian language” (Elyot, 1540, D7r). Candidus even praises her “nobylitye uertue and courage” (Elyot, 1540, D7r). She taught her children and feared for her reputation for she “drede[s] infamy, ... more than euer [she] did the losse of [her] lyberty” (Elyot, 1540, D8r). As queen, she conducted matters of state diligently, was effective at public speaking, assertive in her passing of laws and was a just ruler as she herself clarifies that she “made lustice chiefe ruler of [her] affection” (Elyot, 1540, E4v). She made sure, above everything else, to keep her “virtue,” her “temperaunce,” her “silence” and exhibit a decorous conduct and “retained always suche gruitie, that ... none coulde conceyue of [her] any suspicion” (Elyot, 1540, E3r). However, Zenobia affirms that such performances “mought be sayd to be done womanly” (Elyot,

1540, E4r), implying that, as Beilin writes, Elyot's queen "did not act like the rest of weak and inconstant womankind but like a reasonable man" (Beilin, 1987, p. 10). This is very reminiscent of a speech by Queen Elizabeth in 1558 "To the Troops of Tilbury" during an impending invasion from the Spanish Armada, where she is reported to have said "I know I have the body of a weake and feble woman, butt I have the harte and stomack of a king, and of a king of England too" (Elizabeth I, 1558, Tilbury, in Leonel Sharp's Letter to the Duke of Buckingham c. 1623).

In spite of such resistance to girls' education by humanists, there was a very small group of young women who were highly educated during the sixteenth century. They mainly hailed from the socially elite families and were taught the classical curriculum at home. Amongst them we find Thomas More's three daughters as well as the daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke who obtained the same humanist education as boys. Also, for example, Lucy Hutchinson, born in 1620, who "having a Frenchwoman as her dry nurse, learned to speak French and English" at the same time and started reading at four (McMullen, 1977, p. 99). At seven years of age, she had "eight tutors" teaching "her languages" besides "writing, music, dancing and needlework" (McMullen, 1977, p. 99). Hutchinson herself comments on her "exceptional" education:

I was so apt that I outstrip my brothers who were at school, although my father's chaplain that was my tutor was a pitiful dull fellow. My brothers,

who had a great deal of wit, had some emulation at the progress I made in my learning, which very well pleased my father, though my mother would have been contented I had not so wholly addicted myself to that as to neglect my other qualities.

(Lucy Hutchinson in N. McMullen, 1977, p. 99)

Margaret Ezell (1987) gives examples of a number of other families who hired tutors for girls during the seventeenth century. Lady Judith Barrington (d.1657), for example, is one of these ladies who was singled out for being highly educated in Latin and “was described in a funeral sermon by Thomas Goodwin as exceeding most of her sex and being in the very upper form of female scholars” (Ezell, 1987, p. 15). The daughters of Viscount Hatton were described as “good Latin scholars” in the late seventeenth century (Pollock, 1989, p. 240). However, such girls were very much the exception. The level of literacy that was felt desirable for women during the sixteenth and seventeenth century was one which fostered a high degree of piety and obedience. Henry Slingsby in 1640 wrote about his young daughter of five, Barbara, that by this time she was already capable to “say all her prayers, answer to her catechism, read and write a little” (Pollock, 1983, p. 243). Lady Grace Mildmay also records her childhood and upbringing in the 1560s at Lacock in Wiltshire. She has been brought up in virtue and piety by her godly governess:

I had experience of a gentlewoman ... brought up by my mother from her childhood, whom afterwards she trusted to be governor over her own children. She proved very religious, wise and chaste, and all good virtue that might be in a woman were constantly settled in for her. For, from her youth, she made good use of all things that ever she did read ... and set her mind down in writing either by letters indited or otherwise as well as most men could have done.

(Lady Grace Mildmay, 1560s, cited in L. A. Pollock, 1993, pp. 25-26)

Mildmay's father, Sir Henry Sharrington, and her mother Anne were also very strict in preserving their children's morality and often Anne used to instruct her daughter to "trust in God only and hang upon him alone in all my necessities" (Anne Mildmay, 1560s, citing in Pollock, 1993, p. 26). Mildmay was never allowed to be idle and often her mother would read to her from the Bible, the *Imitation of Christ* and Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, while her governess taught her writing, reading medical books, psalm-singing and needlework. When she married Sir Anthony Mildmay at the age of fifteen in 1567, she moved to Apethorpe and found herself much alone due to the frequent absence of her husband while away at court. During this solitary time, she writes that she spends her days reading the Bible, singing the psalms, playing the lute, sewing and reading medical books:

Also every day I spent some time in the herbal and books of physic and ministering to one or other by the directions of the best physicians of mine acquaintance, and ever God gave a blessing thereunto.

(Lady Grace Mildmay, 1560s, cited in L. A. Pollock, 1993, p. 35)

However, Jardine argues that these women remained the exception as this level of education “was only available to high-ranking women” and even for these women, education “was regarded as an ornament – an adornment along with beauty and manners, needlepoint and music” (Jardine, 1983, p. 51). This is backed up by Fletcher who confirms that in the early modern period there was a general “dislike of intellectual women” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 367). Jardine adds that considering female scholars and intellectuals as “monstrous, unnatural, and (inevitably) sexually rapacious” is necessary to “remind us that it is a matter of considerable patriarchal importance for social stability to celebrate brilliant exception to the female ‘rule’ only reluctantly, and then as exceptions” (Jardine, 1983, pp. 56-57). The belief that emerged out of a humanist education, rather than being liberating for women, was more a question of affirming the conventional views of obedience, serving, duty, silence and chastity. For instance, Roger Ascham writing to John Sturm in April 1550, recalling his tutoring of the young Elizabeth, stressed above all that purity, chasteness and modesty were the prevailing qualities that the queen had learnt as a result of her humanistic schooling. In his evaluation of the young queen’s academic progress, he asserts that:

She talks French and Italian as well as English ... When she writes Greek and Latin, nothing is more beautiful than her hand-writing. She is as much delighted with music as she is skilful in the art ... She likes a style that grows out of the subject; chaste because it is suitable, and beautiful because it is clear. She very much admires modest metaphors, and comparisons of contraries well put together and contrasting felicitously with one another.

(Roger Ascham, 1550, in B. A. Kimball, 2010, pp. 191-192)

Throughout the sixteenth century the paradigm of a humanist education generated “a new world of male authority which pushed women into the ranks of the disadvantaged” (Friedman, 1985, p. 67). With its focus on the acquisition of virtues such as “prudence, moderation and control” (Friedman, 1985, p. 62), humanist teaching served to confine women even further under male dominion. Jardine claims that achieving a level of education for a woman was not a “symptom of incipient emancipation” but rather “a suitable pastime for the noble-women of the Tudor Royal House and their companions” (Jardine, 1983, p. 52). She argues that what the humanist education actually did was to “conveniently [distract] able women from any studies which might have led them to notice that change was opening up possibilities for emancipation in social and political fields” (Jardine, 1983, p. 52). In other words, cultivating girls' intellect, even through an education similar to what men achieved, would have unlikely led to a radical involvement in social or

political matters. Margaret King sums up very pointedly the predicament of educated women:

The learned woman of the Renaissance received no degrees. She wrote no truly great works. She exerted no great influence on emerging trends in the history of ideas. She was probably unhappy. But she was perhaps the earliest figure of the type of the learned woman who is still with us. She was educated and excelled in the highest tradition of learning available to male contemporaries – not in needlework, not in graceful conversation, not in tinkling accomplishments, but in the language and literature that were the vehicles of the most profound thoughts the age produced ... Learned women fascinated learned men, and men applauded, of course, their retreat to quiet studies apart from male society. There, in solitude, they were both magnificent and chained: fierce goddesses in book-lined cells. Thus, confined, it is no wonder they won no battles.

(M. L. King in P. Labelme, 1984, pp. 79-80)

This is what seems to have been the purpose of education in sixteenth and early seventeenth century: that of keeping women “chained” in “solitude.” Jardine adds that keeping women away “from idleness” through an education which only helped to promote conservative virtues of obedience and virtues, moulds women into “pious and suitable companions for their husbands, and mothers for their children” (Jardine, 1987, p. 54). Indeed, “girls

must expect to contain their expectations of living to the utmost of all their abilities: moulding and repression are the essence of female training" (Fletcher, 1995, p. 369). Although humanists as Vives, More and Mulcaster thought that it was the right of girls to receive an education in order "to have our childrens mothers well-furnished in minde, well strengthened in bodie" (Mulcaster, 1581, p. 169), it seemed however that the kind of educational programme chosen for a woman served solely two main purposes: to increase a woman's chastity and marital prospects. Although, for instance, Mulcaster was one of the few to believe in women's own "natural towardnesse" to be cultivated by education, he remarks that "their braines be not so much charged, neither with weight nor with multitude of matters, as boyes heads be, and therefore like empty caske they make the greater noise" (Mulcaster, 1581, p. 176). Likewise, he reiterates that he sees no harm in having a woman "very well trained," but only on the condition that they are kept within limits (Mulcaster, 1581, p. 172). He tenaciously insists that women should not neglect "their most laudable dueties in marriage" (Mulcaster, 1581, Y1v).

Indeed, Friedman believes that the humanist pedagogy had far-reaching effects since the type of education that humanists were proposing for women channels them solely to fulfil the role of a good wife: to raise children and help their husbands in the running of the household, an ability which was deemed a "crucial part of a woman's education" (Friedman, 1985, p. 60). She declares that "by the mid-sixteenth century, humanism had become not simply a scholarly movement," "it was also a system of thought which affected

the intellectual life of Europe" (Friedman, 1985, pp. 57-58). Walker also remarks that while "Humanist education principles brought a brief spell in which aristocratic women were encouraged to study classical literature and languages," the humanist perception of a woman's education was not that she could be involved in matters of state, "but rather that cultivation and learning was an 'accessory' suited to the gentlewoman's existence in a civilised society, making her a fit wife and companion for men of her class" (Walker, 1996, pp. 5-6). Hence, the perfectly organised humanist educational programme for girls only seemed to create the ideal woman to serve her sole purpose in the domestic and private realm. Building on this idea, the next section will explore if the prospect of marriage elevated the female figure on the same level as that of her husband or if the wife's sole responsibilities remained those of taking care of the household including the rearing of children. If this was the case, then these wives continued to be confined within the private circle.

## Women and Marriage

Marriage persisted as the central institution to which sixteenth-century women should aspire; their highest priority was not acquiring an education but becoming ideal, obedient wives. Marital life remained one of the few possible routes for women in Tudor and Stuart England to move from a household under her father's control, albeit to one under her husband's authority. Another

option was going into service, which again placed women under another's authority. The potential of humanism to bring any social advancement to women through education was minimal and was more inclined to develop the ideal spiritual woman who embraced chastity, virtue and obedience. Even though humanists appear to promote a liberal type of education for women by giving them access to books and encouraging them in their studies, their views about women's public position remained conservative. The contradiction stemmed from the indoctrination of what the nature of female education was aimed to encourage and develop. While male integrity emerged from an active public life, female virtue, on the other hand, arose from a sense of "humility, patience, obedience, and chastity – and salvation" within the household (Beilin, 1987, p. xiv). Hence, "marriage and a domestic role were seen as the ultimate fulfilment and objective," placing matrimony as the "the highest priority in [girls'] upbringing and training" (Fletcher, 1995, p. 375). In the opening scene of Thomas Heywood's tragedy, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1602), Anne Frankford encompasses this image of the virtuous woman and obedient wife:

*Master Frankford,*

Y'are a happy man Sir; and much ioy  
Succede your marriage mirth: you have a wife  
So qualified, and with such ornaments  
Both of the minde and body. First, her birth  
Is Noble, and her education such

As might become the daughter of a Prince:  
Her own tongue speaks all Tongues, and her owne hand  
Can teach all strings to speake in their best grace,  
From the shrill treble, to the hoarsest Base.

(Thomas Heywood, 1617, A3r)

Lady Anne Frankford is here regarded as a “perfect wife already, meeke and patient” (1617, A3v). She is educated as “might become the daughter of a prince” (1617, A3r), and there is a sort of “equality” in marriage as husband and wife are “both Schollers, both yong, both being descended nobly” (1617, A4r). Such marriage was one which forecasted much “expectation of ... ioy” (1617, A4r). The English reformation had promised women nearly the same prospects that the Frankfords’ marriage sought to offer: the emergence of women in England as readers and writers “which gave women a freedom and a voice they had hitherto never had,” and the ability to find an appropriate marriage partner (Jardine, 1983, p. 38). Having said this, however, the promising discourse of equality in the Frankfords’ marriage does not flourish at the end. Anne is disloyal to her husband and when discovered, she is sent away to live on her own in one of her husband’s other houses. There, she starves herself. The vision of seeming equality makes the failure of the Frankfords’ marriage even more sad and inexplicable.

Equality within marriage remained virtually non-existent during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, so much so that most males would have shaken “their heads in disbelief” at the notion (Mortimer, 2013, p. 62). Since

marriage was deemed as an institution of God's creating order, the submission of a wife to a husband was considered not only as natural but also voluntary since man and woman "become one flesh" in marriage (Genesis 2:18). Christopher Ash writes in his essay, "A Biblical View of Marriage," that the notion of partnership in reformist thinking only existed in the sense of the woman becoming a "helper" to work alongside the husband when God "put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Thus, the man is given the position of guardian or farmer in God's Garden, while the woman must act as a companion to help him maintain this garden. Sixteenth-century England remained, in fact, a highly patriarchal society where the male person represented the dominant figure in the household and "his wife or daughter automatically [fell] under his authority" (Mortimer, 2013, p. 63). Ian Mortimer also adds that "all property is vested in him, so a wife's possessions are legally her husband's property, not her own" (Mortimer, 2013, p. 63). Gentlewomen expounded also on this point and had only patriarchal advice to give to newly-wed daughters in their letters. In the seventeenth century, Lady Peyton, for instance, counselled her daughter Anne Oxenden to always "love honour and obey [her] husband in all things that is fitting for a reasonable creature" (Pollock, 1989, p. 247). She continues that through submission, the wife will gain herself "a good repute" and present herself as "a virtuous wife whose price is not to be valued" (Pollock, 1989, p. 247). Lady Cotton speaks more plainly and in c.1625 she tells her daughter Frances Montagu that once she marries her husband she has "subjected [herself] to him and made him [her] head" (Pollock, 1989, p. 248).

However, besides being submissive and obedient, “these women were also expected to be competent, for the current notion of household order was that it be secured by an active and practical partnership between husband and wife” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 173). Louise Schleiner comments that even the role of waiting-women started to change during the sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England. She writes that the duties of both women-in-waiting and household servant women involved “not only housework, childcare, meal planning, shopping, and message posting, but also reading aloud to their ladies” (Schleiner, 1994, p. 3). These conflicting characteristics expected of women brought “an acutely felt anxiety [by men] in Tudor and early Stuart England about how women could best be governed and controlled” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 27). On the one hand, men wanted to keep exerting their authority on the opposite gender, but husbands also expected their wives to take an active role within the family, to help in the business as well as rearing up the children. This is explained clearly in Henry Smith’s allegory of the cock and the dam when referring to the conventional roles of husbands and wives: “the cock flyeth abroad to bring in and the dam sitteth upon the nest to keep all at home” (Smith in A. Fletcher & P. Roberts, 1994, p. 170). In this allegory, there is a strong sense of mutual consensus where the “physical capacities [of man and wife] made this kind of arrangement ineluctable” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 61).

The dilemma about the degree of autonomy of English wives and women had in general brought about diverse opinions during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. In 1599, Thomas Platter wrote that women in

England “have far more liberty than in other lands and know just how to make good use of it ... for they often stroll out or drive by coach in very gorgeous clothes and the men must put up with such ways and may not punish them for it” (Platter in C. Williams, 1937, pp. 181-182). The overall idea was that English wives “enjoyed a peculiar degree of freedom” especially when confronted by the stricter marital systems of continental countries (Fletcher, 1995, p.3). This can be seen in one of Thomas Middleton's characters in his Jacobean drama *A Mad World my Masters*, first performed in 1605 and published in 1608, who observes “that Italians keep their wives under lock and key: we Englishmen are careless creatures” (Middleton, 1608, B1r).

Consequently, the role of the good and moral wife in the sixteenth century fluctuated between exhibiting a small degree of partnership when she was needed to run the household in the absence of the husband, to the wife who remained in total submission. Real testimonials, such as personal and private letters, and diaries of Tudor women, provide a good indication of the politics of marital relationships of this era. The marriage in 1575 of John Thynne and Joan Hayward, mistress of Longleat, offers a good example of a gentry-marriage between a girl of sixteen and a youth of twenty-four founded mainly on mutual collaboration. The wife's correspondence gives us an idea of the world of Tudor-Stuart gentlewoman whose husband's life at court leaves her with “considerable responsibility for the running of the estates ... in addition to her usual concern with provisioning, medical and family problems” (Wall, 1983, p. xvii). Joan was described “as wise and very well brought up both in learning and in all things that do appertain to a gentlewoman” (Wall, 1983, p. xix). From

her correspondence with her husband, we know that John was often absent from his home during marriage, attending Parliament in London. In her letters to him, Joan complained about this, affirming that since his departure, she has “thought it no short time” (Letter, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1576). However, her letter suggests that she was running the estate in his absence through giving her husband domestic instructions:

Good Mr Thynne, here is great want of a brewing furnace, therefore I would desire you to take some order that there may be one provided, with all the speed that may be for that they cannot longer brew with this but to your great loss. He must contain thirty gallons at the least.

(Joan Hayward, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1598)

In the same letter, she also instructs him on the needs of the children:

Good Mr Thynne let me entreat you so soon as may be to send so much of the like cloth as the children last had as will make them three gowns and John Thynne a hose and jerkin but of some other pretty colour. I would have it the sooner because otherwise I shall hardly have it made before Christmas.

(Joan Hayward, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1598)

Joan often resented the amount of work she had to do especially as this was received by her husband with often hard and irascible words towards her

which “in some sort deceived [her] expectations” (Letter, 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1600). Still, she remained devoted and respectful towards him as he was always “Good Mr Thynne” in her letters and she always ends them with “your loving and faithful wife” or “your obedient wife.” Later in their marriage, they matured into a couple who were more like partners in business. Her highly spirited personality led her husband to accept her criticism and advice on how he should handle political affairs, as when she urges him to do what he may have to do to “have that sealed out of the Chancery for the dismissing of the suit between that wicked Lord Stafford and you” (Letter, 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1602). Her husband appreciated her wit and competence and in his later letters he addresses her as “My Good Pug” and also apologises for his long delay in London: “I must confess that I have been long absent and much longer than my desire.” He signs off with “Your ever loving husband during life” (Letter, 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1601). However, Wall concludes that in spite of such marital arrangement between the two, “it is difficult to judge how far she was representative of the gentlewomen of her time and how far she was exceptional” since “there is little comparable material for this period” (Wall, 1983, p. xvii).

On the other hand, the correspondence of Brilliana written to her husband, Sir Robert Harley, in the spring of 1626, discloses the patriarchal marriage between them. She writes to him while he is away in Parliament longing for her husband’s approval in naming her new-born son: “Because you said nothing of the name,” wrote Brilliana anxiously, “I chose that name I love the best it being yours” (Letter, 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1626). Emotionally, she confesses how much his absence is discomfoting her: “I would fain tell you that, which I can

not, I am sure not all I can not, how much I long to see you" (Letter, 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1626). However, her faith brought her to accept "the will of the Lord and as the public good is to be preferred before the private ends, so at this time I must show that indeed I love that better than my own good" (Letter, 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1626). As Jardine writes a "compassionate and thoughtful approach to woman's place in marriage ... incorporates some measured recognition of the woman's need to be guided by her husband ... a need for the willing submission of the wife to her husband's authority" (Jardine, 1983, p. 40).

This same submission and unreserved compliance of wives is also reflected in sixteenth-century literature where we see Portia surrendering all her wealth to Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*: "Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours / Is now converted" (Act III, Sc.ii, ll. 166-167). Petruchio, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, claims his Kate with these proprietary words: "She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house / My household stuff, my field, my barn / My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything" (Act III, Sc.ii, ll. 203-205). Moreover, Cornelius Lapide writes in 1638 that:

A woman is an excellent ornament of man since she is granted to man not only to help him to procreate children, and administer the family, but also in possession and, as it were, in dominion, over which man may exercise his jurisdiction and authority. For the authority of man extends not only to inanimate things and brute beasts, but also to reasonable creatures, that is, women and wives.

(Cornelius Lapide, 1638, pp. 284-285)

A marriage based on equality was close to impossible in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England. Due to their assumed natural weakness and intellectual inferiority, women were regarded as nothing more than an “excellent ornament” and a “possession” of men (Lapide, 1638, pp. 284-285). They were, thus, relegated to the private realm under strict supervision from their male counterparts which continued to impede the prospects of females ever finding their own voice.

The evidence highlights that dominant cultural beliefs, a humanist educational system and marital relationships during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century in England persisted in placing women under the control of men. Hence, the only way for Tudor women writers to acquire a possible public acknowledgement was to rely on their own scholarly skills. The next part of this introduction will look at how specific early women writers were perceived through the lens of more modern critics and writers including one of the most important female authors of the twentieth century, Virginia Woolf. Through some of the thoughts portrayed by Woolf, I will explore how the variety of literary genres synonymous with sixteenth and seventeenth-century female writers – diaries, letters, religious translations, lyric poetry and secular writing – were recognised when compared especially with the more established form of writing during the nineteenth and twentieth century: the novel. Having established the relationship across different genres and epochs of female writers, the section will conclude with a specific focus on the four women writers chosen for this research and the rationale behind the consideration of this group of female authors.

## Early Modern English Women Writers

Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind

(Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, p. 90)

In Virginia Woolf's observation about the freedom of mind, she voices a central tenet of all feminist scholarship. Indeed, her concept of liberating one's mind, the desire to reveal one's own identity and be deemed "exceptional" by contemporary society was something beyond the usual parameters of women of the English renaissance. It was a significant hurdle for early women writers to be acknowledged as autonomous artists and this caused them to remain undiscovered by scholars for many years after. There is a growing interest in the area of women writers before the 1700 by twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics, however Margaret Ezell suggests that these early women writers "are still not part of the tradition as it is currently formulated" (Ezell, 1993, p. 4). Certainly, important scholarly study of the works of Lady Mary Wroth, Mary Sidney, and Lady Elizabeth Carew, to name just a few, have clearly advanced the premise that women were also writers in the early modern period, but they did not provide "the model of women's literary history put forward by Virginia Woolf and her twentieth-century theoretical elaborators, Gilbert, Gubar, and Showalter" (Ezell, 1993, p. 4). Virginia Woolf herself makes a reflection about this:

But what I find deplorable ... looking about the bookshelves again, is that nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century. I have no model in my mind to turn about this way and that.

(Virginia Woolf, 1929, p. 274)

Another argument is that early women writers were intimidated in using pseudonyms or constrained in remaining anonymous. Woolf herself claims that: "I would venture to guess than Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman" (Woolf, 1929, p. 51). Jacqueline Pearson suggests that the use of "fanciful pseudonyms" acts as a protective device (Pearson, 1988, p. 197), while Dale Spender emphasises the notion that in the past "women understood that they got 'better hearing' if it was thought they were males" (Spender, 1980, pp. 196-197). Louise Bernikow asserts that women "knew quite well that if one woman signed her work with her own name ... she opened herself to moral and social abuse" (Bernikow, 1979, p. 20). This seems to imply that the use of pseudonyms or choosing to remain anonymous by women writers acts simultaneously as a preservation of their sense of decorum without compromising the circulation of their book.

Woolf seems to have been an inspirational source behind this perpetual myth of early women writers' absence. She claims that during the sixteenth century "no woman could have written poetry" (Woolf, 1929, p. 61). Additionally, Woolf claims that any woman who would have attempted to write verse, she "would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must

have lost her health and sanity to a certainty" (Woolf, 1929, p. 51). Woolf's analysis of these early women writers proves to be "one of isolated, embittered, or embattled creatures" (Ezell, 1993, p. 46). This thinking would have discouraged sixteenth-century women from making any form of contribution to literature since their writings would not have been read. This has also led to the critical assumption by other twentieth-century female literary historians who, like Woolf, assume that only "the paid professional writer" can make "the turning point in women's literary history" (Ezell, 1993, p. 47). In fact, Woolf's consideration of the real writer was one "who could be independent of men, who earned her keep by means other than performing menial labor or being a dependent wife" (Ezell, 1993, p. 48). According to Woolf, therefore, coterie literature of the early modern women writers such as letters, diaries and manuscripts did not constitute a form of literature since her representation of what constitutes literature revolves around economic independence. It is worth noting, however, that during the sixteenth century it was extremely hard to make a living through writing for women, as well as for men. Isabella Whitney, the female author discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, admits in *Nosegay* that although she strived to be an author as a means for self-preservation, she remained "haruestlesse" (Whitney, 1573, A5v).

It was assumed by modern critics, such as Bridget Hill (1986), that early women writers were actually "restricted to 'private' literary forms such as letters, diaries, and poetry which remained unpublished, intended either for a small uncritical audience or for none at all" (Ezell, 1993, p. 33). Hill defines such literary genres as a "private expression of [women writers'] thoughts in spiritual

diaries, letters and poetry" (Hill, 1986, p. 23). The assertion that early women writers were restricted to the "private" and "informal" literary genres of letters and diaries may not be entirely true, however, as Ezell affirms that letters during the early modern period were an "established literary form" and, besides being private, they were also considered as "conventional public forms of address, 'epistles' on weighty matters written to display the author's rhetorical graces and intended to be circulated" (Ezell, 1993, p. 34). Therefore, the idea that letters were intended only for personal correspondence is not completely accurate.

The function of diaries was also different from what we intend today. Whereas during the nineteenth century and beyond, diaries were mostly considered as a private mode of expression, during the early modern period they acted more like "spiritual autobiographies" (Ezell, 1993, p. 35). Ezell believes that they "were most commonly kept by those in quest of spiritual improvement" as a form of spiritual introspection and to instruct others about Christian life (Ezell, 1993, p. 34). However, as with letters, the popularity of diaries soared during the nineteenth century when "the forms tended to be the private modes of expression which we use today" (Ezell, 1993, p. 35).

In spite of Ezell's claims that early women writers "were intimidated from writing because of the aggressive competitive nature of publication" (Ezell, 1993, p. 33), some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century women writers still succeeded in making their voice heard by publishing their works, albeit they were the exceptional few. "Publication," therefore, was an area dominated by men which precluded women from writing and restricted female literary

endeavours to reach a wider audience other than their intimate family circle. This division of “women’s writing into the ‘proper private sphere’ and the ‘improper public sphere,’” writes Dale Spender, is one which does not “operate for men” (Dale, 1980, p. 193). It comes “not from the writing but from the sex” of the author which prevents “women’s participation in the public sphere” (Spender, 1980, p. 193, p. 203). Therefore, the literary efforts of female authors who did manage to break into the public sphere were never accomplished without a certain amount of fear of print publication. Quite often their writings, as sometimes also happened with male writers’ works, ventured into print accompanied by their justifications for publishing. Julius Schwietering refers to this defence of writing as the “humility formula” also known as *humilitas topos*, which flourished around the thirteenth century by courtly poets such as the Dutch writer Heinrich Von Veldeke and the German poets Hartmann von Aue and Wolfram von Eschenbach, as an “act of piety” towards God (1954, p. 1286). For instance, Margaret Tyler, the first English woman to translate and publish a Spanish romance, *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood* (1578), provides such reasons. In her dedicatory preface to her husband, Thomas Howard, she justifies the publication of her translation by stating that her work was not on her own initiative but the result of her friends’ insistence:

The earnestnesse of my friends perswaded me that it was conuenient to laie foorth my talent for increase, or to set my candle on a candlestick,

& the consideration of my sufficiencie droue me to thinke it better for my ease, either quite to burie my talent, thereby to auoide the breaking of thriftlesse debtes, or rather to put my candle cleane out, then that it should bewraie euery vnswept corner in my house, but the opinion of my friends iudgement preuailed aboue my own reason.

(Margaret Tyler, 1578, A2r)

Tyler is defending her authorial work in two ways. First, she is doing it at her friends' request, a protestation that is also commonly found in work by male authors. Secondly, her justification also comes with Biblical sanction: the parable of the talents and the instruction not to hide your light under a bushel are both drawn from the Bible (Matthew 25:14-30 & 5:15, Geneva Bible). The recourse to Biblical authority is significant in that it is something much less commonly found in the prefaces of secular works of male authority and thus it portrays Tyler putting in more effort to justify her actions. Finally, Tyler commends her work to her husband and expresses her concern of seeming "vngratefull" to her in-laws from whom she has "reaped especiall benefit" (Tyler, 1578, A2v). She implores them to accept her work as a "simple testimonie of that goodwill" (Tyler, 1578, A2v). Thus, she puts herself under patriarchal authority by recognising the authority of her husband as well as his family.

The emergence of various manuscript miscellanies written by women writers in the early modern period (starting from the sixteenth century onwards)

such as those written by Katherine Parr, wife of Henry VIII, and Mildred Cecil also known as Lady Burleigh, does counter the argument made in Woolfian paradigms which privilege commercial print and overlook sixteenth- and seventeenth-century women writers who did not make it into print or did not write for economic profit. It is clear from the circulation of manuscripts that these early women writers were producing that their intention was definitely not to be economically independent. Their mode of production centred on acceptable "female" genres and topics which included religion, the rearing of children and translations of male-authored works. These early women writers may have wanted to uphold and celebrate their family's literary reputation or to find intellectual or social fulfillment outside their relationships with men rather than aspire to economic reward. This is so since most women writers hailed from the gentry and nobility, with few exceptions such as Isabella Whitney and Aemilia Lanyer, who both wanted to improve their economic situation through publishing their writings in print. Nevertheless, even though most women did not seem to aspire to print publication nor for any financial remuneration, they did attract some "patronage and preferment" (Martin, 1997, p. 5). Randall Martin considers another issue why the works of early women writers were neglected, apart from the Woolfian view, and that is owing to the "lack of sympathy for the religious subjects that interested so many of them" by modern readers (Martin, 1997, p. 8).

This research will look at some of those early women writers who made it into print, in spite of a restrictive patriarchal society with limited access to

female education and an encumbrance of marital and religious responsibilities on women. Chapter one focuses on Margaret More Roper, the daughter of Thomas More. Roper was much admired for her learning by both the Dutch philosopher and Catholic theologian, Desiderius Erasmus, and the Spanish scholar, Jean Luis Vives. Eugenio M. Olivares-Merino (2007) writes that “for Vives, as well as for Erasmus, Meg would always be his favourite,” especially because she “shared with Vives a genuine interest in medicine” (Olivares-Merino, 2007, p. 394). By looking at her work, *A Devout Treatise* (1526), an English translation from Latin of Erasmus’ *Precatio Dominica* (1523) and her posthumously printed correspondence with her father whilst he was incarcerated in the Tower, this chapter explores how Roper comes to be represented in a highly patriarchal sixteenth-century society. It seeks to discover if through a humanist educational programme, she manages to break into the public world by achieving an authorial voice or if her voice remains occluded by the men around her.

Chapter two looks at the Protestant and martyr Anne Askew, who through her written interrogations for presumed profanation represented herself as an ardent contender in front of the ecclesiastical and state authorities. Her testimonials are recorded by John Bale in *The First Examination* (1546) and *The Second Examination* (1547). Later on, they are also inserted in John Foxe’s work, *Acts and Monuments* (1563). Through a comparison of how Askew is portrayed by these two male authors in their works, this chapter investigates how much of Askew’s testimony comes to be shaped by men to

accommodate their own religious agendas or if Askew still succeeds in finding her own voice.

Chapter three discusses Isabella Whitney, notorious for being the first early modern woman writer to write secular poetry for print publication. To do this “she had to overcome her lack of formal training, the self-inhibiting realization that women poets were a novelty, the attendant fear of censure, and perhaps most difficult, she had to present herself publicly in an authoritative role” (Beilin, 1987, p. 87). This chapter analyses her two published works, *The Copy of a Letter* (1567) and *A Sweet Nosegay* (1573), to identify the strategies by which she negotiated the male world of print.

Chapter four is concerned with Elizabeth Grymeston, another early modern woman writer who sought to defy conventional beliefs of the submissive and weak woman. She is the first woman whose mother's advice book makes it into print. Her *Miscelanea: Prayers, Meditations, Memoratives* (1604) was published posthumously and consists of fourteen chapters offering her son pious advice on matters of religion, life and marriage. This was an age in which a mother's right to educate her child within the privacy of a home was well-established. This chapter explores how Grymeston uses the form of a maternal advice manual, not so much to instruct her son, as to give a “true portrature” of her mind (1604, A3v). The chapter also considers to what extent the expanded editions of the *Miscelanea* (1605/6, 1608 and 1618) were used by the men who knew her for ideological and political purposes: the promotion

that Catholics could be loyal both to the state as well as its Protestant monarch.

By bringing this cluster of female authors together in this study, I challenge Woolf's perception of the absence of early women authors. These women held different religious beliefs, and wrote in different genres – religious translation and letters (More Roper), testimonial (Askew), poetry (Whitney), advice (Grymeston) – across a timespan stretching from before Henry VIII's split with Rome to the death of Elizabeth I. This thesis shows how the works of all four women were shaped by the men who ushered their work into print, or who framed the discourses in which they wrote, and how their critical reception in the twentieth and twenty-first century has been framed almost exclusively in terms of their gender. Through this thesis, I therefore reveal how the production and reception of sixteenth-century women's writing has been moulded by perceptions of gender.

## Chapter 1. The Voice behind Margaret More Roper's Works

If I would, with my writing, my own good daughter, declare how much pleasure and comfort, your daughterly loving letters were unto me, a peck of coals would not suffice to make me the pens and other pens have I, good Margaret, none here: Margaret therefore can I write you no long process, not dare adventure, good daughter, to write often.

(Thomas More, 1534, cited in Alvaro De Silva, 2000, p. 99)

In trying to locate Margaret More Roper's voice within her works, scholars have found it difficult to separate it from that of her father, Thomas More. The eldest of three daughters and a son, Margaret was her father's favourite. When writing to his eldest daughter, More consistently praises her highly addressing her: *puella iucundissima* (sweetest girl), *Margareta charissima* (dearest Margaret), *dulcissima filia* (sweetest daughter), and *dulcissima nata* (sweetest daughter) (Rogers, 1947, p. 97, p. 134, p. 154). He affectionately calls her "Meg" and she is always "my dearly beloved daughter," while he remains her "loving father" when he wrote to her from the Tower (De Silva, 2000, p. 76, p. 112, p. 115).

Margaret possessed a great skill for writing and shared her father's humanist ideals. Thomas Stapleton, Thomas More's early sixteenth-century biographer, praised her for having obtained "a degree of excellence that would scarcely be believed in a woman" (Stapleton in P. Hallett, 1966, p. 103). Their intense mutual devotion is again documented by Stapleton who declares

that after More's beheading in 1535, "Margaret Roper was brought before the King's Council, and charged with keeping her father's head as a sacred relic" (Stapleton in P. Hallett, 1966, p. 193). Elaine V. Beilin dismisses this anecdote as a "persistent legend" not least because Stapleton was born the year More was executed in 1535, and therefore certain facts may have become distorted by the time Stapleton came to write them down in the 1580s (Beilin, 1987, p. 27). However, this does nothing to alter the widespread perception about the strong bond between More and Roper: an affiliation so close that scholars have often found it difficult to detach Roper from the shadow of her father. Beilin states that in "examining Margaret Roper's authorship, we find that her writings fulfill her father's criteria" in that it was rigorously spiritual (Beilin, 1987, p. 22). Additionally, Jaime Goodrich affirms that Margaret Roper and her father "are nearly inseparable" because "More and his circle publicly constructed Roper as a representative of her father" (Goodrich, 2008, p. 1023). For these reasons, Margaret More Roper presents a challenge to contemporary scholars, especially to feminist critics. Mary Ellen Lamb contends that Roper's "life and work pose a conundrum – perhaps even an embarrassment – to current feminist critical projects" (Lamb, 1999, p. 83). This is because while Roper appears to be exceptional in that she acquired a brilliant reputation as a writer, she nevertheless remained overshadowed by her father's influence. This apparent submission to patriarchy disappoints those feminists who are keen to identify, and celebrate, women who break free from such ties. Therefore, feminist critics have attempted to differentiate between

her personal voice and that of her father in order to document “some measure of her independence from More” (Goodrich, 2008, p. 1022).

Bearing in mind these contentions, one cannot however refute that during the early modern period women’s main chance of emerging in the public domain was through the authority and power of renowned men. Thomas More’s political life as a lawyer, a staunch supporter of the humanist movement and his position on Henry VIII’s council from 1518 (ODNB), made Roper’s emergence from the purely private sphere possible. Indeed, Goodrich confirms that due to More’s notoriety, even Roper’s domestic life hardly remained “private” since he fashioned her as “a symbol of his private and domestic existence” (Goodrich, 2008, p. 1023).

These concepts of “privacy” and “domesticity” mirror very closely the very essence of humanist doctrine for women. It is true that some humanists advocated the need for women to acquire an education, however – as we saw in the introduction – the idea which prevailed is that this had always been restricted tightly to the women’s “natural” domestic life. In other words, humanists promoting female education thought that instruction should cultivate qualities which would enhance women’s usefulness as daughters, wives or mothers. Such virtues included above all a sense of “obedience, silence and chastity” (Beilin, 1987, p. 4). This confinement of educated women to the private realm has led critics such as Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine to believe that “humanist education was a virtually useless acquisition with only decorative value” (Grafton & Jardine, 1986, p. 55). Beilin also endorses this as

she states that the writings of such women reveal constantly “how their learning had indeed increased their virtue” and nothing else (Beilin, 1987, p. 4).

The other problem for Roper and female authorship is that in the early sixteenth century women could not appear to be striving for the rhetorical exercise of preaching but should, instead, “remain silent” as highlighted by St Paul’s teachings (1 Corinthians, 14:34). Thus, while religion was seen by humanists and other male counterparts as an appropriate subject for women authors to write about, at the same time they could not be seen as potentially providing spiritual instruction. Therefore women writers, such as Roper, had to tread difficult and potentially dangerous ground. The influence of humanism, spurred on by such Pauline beliefs, continued to confine women writers within their private, domestic realm despite their arguments in favour of women’s education.

This chapter examines the construction of early sixteenth-century female authorship in a patriarchal society with a focus on Margaret More Roper’s translation, *A Devout Treatise* (1526). Through exploring how Roper came to be represented and shaped by the men around her, we can understand some of the political and cultural conventions which marked a period of social upheaval. In contrast to evidence which presents the view that Roper has been overshadowed mainly by her father’s influence but even by other men around her, such as Desiderius Erasmus, I will argue that Roper succeeded in finding her own voice and came to be recognised by the readers around her, ensuring that she left her own legacy.

This chapter will first outline some of the most influential works written by leading humanists regarding the perception of sixteenth-century women and will then establish the degree of impact this female depiction has left on Roper as well as on other female writers. Next, it closely examines Roper's translation, *A Devout Treatise* (1526) in relation to its original source *Precatio Dominica* written in Latin by Erasmus in 1523, with a careful analysis of rhetoric, imagery and the particular timbre of her voice. Finally, it focuses on Roper's correspondence with her father whilst he was imprisoned in the Tower and whether or not More's ventriloquism of his daughter has affected her public voice.

## The Influence of Humanists' Thinking on Margaret More Roper and Other Women Writers

Some of the leading humanist writers began exhibiting a greater interest in works about women during the early sixteenth century: Desiderius Erasmus published two colloquies "The Young Man and the Harlot" (1523) and "The Abbot and the Learned Lady" (1524). Juan Luis Vives wrote *Instruction of a Christian Woman*, first published in Latin in 1523 and translated in English by Richard Hyrde in 1529. Post-dating Roper's treatise, Thomas Elyot similarly published two influential tracts, *The Boke named the Governour* (1531) and *The Defence of Good Women* (1540). Male authors wanted to voice their opinions on the appropriate role of women with common topics centering around

morality and domesticity, but the subject of women's sense of inferiority remained a common thread. This led to the widespread belief in the need to secure a "good wife" by taming her wild nature through an education which encourages women to remain confined within their private, domestic environment, relegating "women into the ranks of the disadvantaged (Friedman, 1985, p. 67). The German physician, theologian and humanist Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, for example, in his treatise *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus* (*On the Nobility and Superiority of the Feminine Sex*) 1529, writes critically about this submissiveness of women:

For anon as a woman is borne euen from her infancy, she is kept at home in ydelnes, and as thoughe she were unmete for any hygher busynesse, she is permitted to know no farther than her nedle and her threedde. And than whan she commeth to age, able to be married, she is delyuered to the rule and gouernance of a ielous husband, or els she is perpetually shutte up in a close nounrye. And all offyces belongynge to the common weale, be forbydden theym by the lawes. . . And thus by these lawes the women being subdewed as it were by force by armes, are constrained to give place to men, and to obeye theyr subdewers, not by no naturall, no diuynne necessitie or reason, but by custome, education, fortune, and a certayne tyrannical occasion.

(H. C. Agrippa, 1529, trans. by D. Clapam, 1542, F8v & G1r-v)

In this treatise, Agrippa reveals his disappointment regarding women's existing social and political status. He criticises the habitual preparation of women as home-keepers and the presumption that they are inherently unfit for "hygher busynesse." He is also critical of a woman's unappealing future where she is faced by a rigid choice: she is either "delyvered" to the control of a jealous husband or confined to a "nourye." Agrippa believes that these "rules" are social constraints imposed on women. Beilin confirms that the "belief in woman's inherent intellectual weakness justified both advocating that her mind be improved and insisting that she was incapable of learning" (Beilin, 1987, p. 4). Humanist supporters did, in fact, attempt to motivate women intellectually but not at the level of making them on a par with their male counterparts, but by confining them to the domestic world. Women also perceived these cues and "felt compelled" to appear incessantly virtuous, honest and humble, thus making themselves as agreeable as possible for their husbands (Beilin, 1987, p. 4).

As discussed in the introduction to the thesis, the expectation that women be submissive is evident from the works of leading sixteenth-century humanists, such as Juan Luis Vives and Thomas Elyot. In these works there is the assumption that women are lesser beings appropriate for their household environment. In *The booke named the Governour* (1531), for instance, Elyot marks clearly a distinction between the education received by boys and that by girls. The role of women is simply seen as that of nurturing and cultivating the boys' mind so they in turn can be successful in the public realm. Similarly,

in his *Defence of Good Women* (1540), although Zenobia once occupied a public, authoritative position (as queen), she is nevertheless confined to a secluded life behind closed walls which she herself gloomily expresses as “the losse of [her] liberty” (Elyot, 1540, D8r). Further to that, it is not Zenobia herself who argues for a woman’s capacity to rule wisely but a male spokesperson: Candidus.

Similarly in the colloquy of Erasmus’ “The Abbot and the Learned Lady” (1524), Magdalia, a cultivated woman and an emblem of female competence, assumes a refined but unpretentious voice when confronting Antronius on the right of a woman to be educated:

MAGD. And do you think it unsuitable for me to know Latin in order to converse daily with authors so numerous, so eloquent, so learned, so wise; with counselors so faithful?

ANT. Books ruin women’s wits - which are none too plentiful anyway.

MAGD. How plentiful *yours* are, I don’t know. Assuredly I prefer to spend mine, however slight, on profitable studies rather than on prayers said by rote, all-night parties, and heavy drinking.

(Desiderius Erasmus, 1524, in C. R. Thompson, 1965, p. 222)

In this dialogue, there is mention of “the More girls” as exemplars of learned women (Erasmus in C. R. Thompson, 1965, p. 223). In fact, Magdalia could well

be a direct representation of Margaret More Roper, a theory suggested by C. R. Thompson who writes that there “was no other learned woman whom Erasmus knew so well or esteemed so highly” (Thompson, 1965, p. 218). Like other humanists, however, Erasmus believed that as long as a woman’s education does not hinder her morally nor disturb her domestic harmony, it is beneficial. Magdalia herself stresses this importance of female learning to the good housewife:

MAGD. Isn’t it a wife’s business to manage the household and rear the children?

ANT. It is.

MAGD. Do you think she can manage so big a job without wisdom?

ANT. I suppose not.

MAGD. But books teach me wisdom.

(Desiderius Erasmus, 1524, in C. R. Thompson, 1965, p. 221)

Later on, Magdalia reiterates the same concept:

ANT. I’m sure I wouldn’t want a learned wife.

MAGD. But I congratulate myself on having a husband different from you. For learning renders him dearer to me, and me dearer to him.

(Desiderius Erasmus, 1524, in C. R. Thompson, 1965, p. 222)

Like Elyot's Zenobia, Magdalia is highly acquiescent in patriarchal influence and ultimately does not seem to challenge male authority although she is a learned woman. While she argues in favour of a woman's right to be educated, she still conforms to the domesticated model of humility, obedience and chastity as she admits that her husband "heartily approves" of her "reading a good author" (Erasmus in C. R. Thompson, 1965, p. 220).

Comparably, Vives' publication, *Institutione Foeminae Christianae* (*The Education of a Christian Woman*) 1523, translated from Latin into English by Richard Hyrde in 1529, speaks of the importance of educated women while at the same time encouraging the fostering of virtue and obedience as was seen in the previous chapter. He writes of Cleobulina, the ancient Greek poet, who was "gyuen unto lernynge and philosophie and [...] she clerely despised all pleasure of the body and lyved perpetually a mayde" (Vives, tr. 1529, D3v). The paradox we see nowadays in Vives' work, however, is that although he sees women as capable of learning, and even draws on More's children as examples, nevertheless he does not propose a programme for women to function in the public life. Their learning is only meant to keep them contained in a sheltered, masculine world so as not to remain idle with the risk of "walkyng and wanderyng outside their home," a belief also manifested by Hyrde's preface in *A Devout Treatise* which will be discussed later in this chapter (Vives, tr. 1529, C3v).

Vives substantiates this apparent women's natural weakness by alluding to "our first mother," referring to Eve, whom "the deuyll caught with a light argument" (Vives, tr. 1529, E2v). Thomas More, a humanist like him, makes the same allusion in the Tower correspondence as it will be explored in detail later. The argument presented by Vives against the nature of women is two-edged: it is not only wrong that Eve sinned against God and man, but she was also easily deceived; therefore her inherent lack of mental fortitude is made obvious. Hence, Eve's failure is taken as a prototype of weakness in the female gender, casting women as the reason for the fall of mankind. Vives sees this weak feminine disposition as a threat to the masculine gender which leads him to further believe that women's intellectual capabilities should only lead to a virtuous demeanor within their domesticated world. Contradictory notions, therefore, are easily perceived in Vives' *De Institutione*. His model of humanist learning for women, while it might seem progressive, only serves to constrain women within a rigid patriarchal system. Indeed, when he makes an allusion to More's children, including Margaret, in the *De Institutione*, he praises their intellectual advancement but above all he praises their virtues such as chastity:

I wolde reken amonge this sorte the daughters of Sir Thomas More. Knight. Margaret. Elizabeth. And Cecily. and with them theyr kyns woman Margaret. Giggs: whom theyr father nat content only to have them good and very chast, wolde also they shulde be wel lerned:

supposing that by that meane they shulde be more truely and surely chaste.

(Juan Luis Vives, tr. 1529, E1r-v, emphasis added)

Vives believed that a woman's most esteemed virtues were to be "good and very chast." He even goes on to emphasize this by re-stating that "they shulde be more truely and surely chaste" through their learning (tr. 1529, E1r-v).

Vives had the opportunity to verify personally More's education of his daughters when he first visited their home in Chelsea during 1523. Roper was about eighteen years old and had been married to William Roper since 1521, when she was aged sixteen. At the time, Roper's ability "to read and compose in Latin and Greek" together with her skill in "philosophy, grammar, rhetoric, logic, poetry, astronomy and mathematics" prompted Vives to admire her sense of learning (Olivares-Merino, 2007, p. 394). In Vives' *De conscribendis* (1536), first published after More's execution, he writes fondly of Margaret and explicitly demonstrates his sincere admiration for her:

*Ne obliviscare accuratissimam mea vice salutationem adiungere ipsi et liberis, sed in primis Margaritae Roperae meae, quam ego ex quo primum novi, non amavi minus quam si mihi esset soror germana.*

Don't forget to greet [...] my Margaret Roper above all, whom I have known from the first, and have not loved less than if she were my own sister.

(Juan Luis Vives, 1536, in C. Fantazzi, 1989, p. 95)

Vives' confirmation of his appreciation of Margaret in this letter, referring to her as "sister" (*soror germana*), is also the result of his admiration for her learning. Moreover, circumstantial evidence points to the fact that Vives may well have encouraged Roper in her translation of Erasmus' *Precatio Dominica*, first published in Latin in 1523 then translated by Roper in 1526, due to the recentness of its publication and Vives' frequent visits to the More household between 1523 and 1528. Also noteworthy is the fact that between 1521 and 1522, Vives was writing an annotation on St Augustine's *City of God*, a task set by Erasmus himself and which would be eventually included in Erasmus' complete edition about the same saint. The acquaintance with Erasmus might have further prompted Vives to encourage Roper to translate Erasmus' work. Moreover, Richard Hyrde's prefatory letter in Roper's treatise and his own endeavour in translating Vives' *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* (1529) are also indicative of Vives' possible support for Roper's work.

The following section will analyse in detail *A Devout Treatise* (1526) and how the publication of the treatise and the representation of its author in print were negotiated by a close circle of men. Through a detailed investigation of the paratextual and visual materials in Roper's work, it explores the level of

control the rules of patriarchy exerted on Margaret More Roper's voice, especially since Pauline teaching limited the extent to which Roper could be seen to provide spiritual instruction. At the same time, it will also demonstrate how Roper's skill allows a distinct voice to emerge.

### Margaret More Roper's *A Devout Treatise*: Visual Paratext

Erasmus' *Precatio Dominica*, translated by Margaret More Roper as *A Devout Treatise upon the pater noster* (1526), consists of seven meditations, one on each verse of the Lord's Prayer. Each meditation is a contemplation about mankind's unworthiness, the fallibility of earthly life, spiritual nourishment provided by the Eucharistic host and divine mercy through Jesus. This treatise was written at a time when an on-going controversy between Erasmus and the German reformer Martin Luther was taking place. Erasmus opposed Luther's views when the latter attacked some of the main canons of the Church of Rome such as matters of indulgences and the concept of free will (ODNB). Erasmus' first public attack on Luther came with his polemical Latin work *De libero arbitrio* (*The Freedom of the Will*) in 1524, written explicitly to refute these Lutheran criticisms. Before this time, Erasmus had refrained from entering into any theological disputes. However, on this occasion he was urged by Pope Clement as well as by his friend Thomas More to write a treatise in response to Luther's condemnations (Goodrich, 2008, p. 1029). More, on Henry VIII's request, had already challenged Luther's views by writing *Responsio ad*

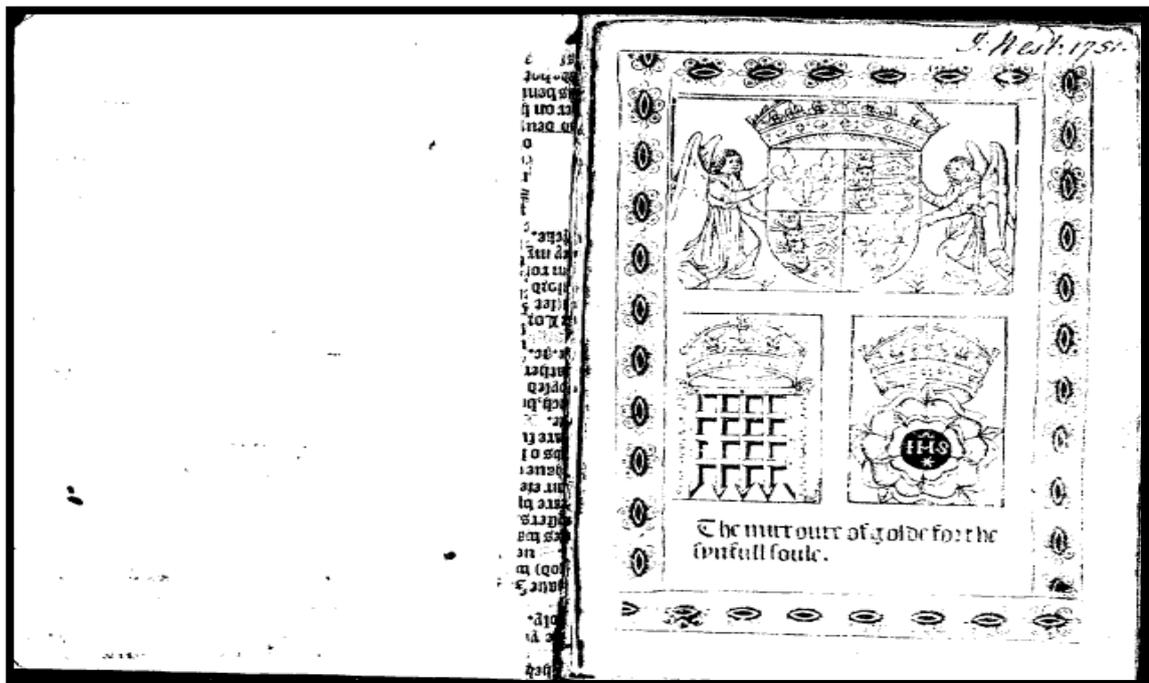
*Lutheram* (1523), in which he had denounced Luther and shown his own support for the Catholic Church. Therefore, Roper's involvement in this translation was not purely by chance: she was translating a book by her father's friend, at a time when – like her father – its author was involved in pressing theological debate with Lutherans.

*A Devout Treatise* was first published in 1526, with a second edition in 1531. The title-page indicates that it is the work of a female, however, there is complete anonymity as regards Roper's name. She is referred to only as a “yong, uertuous and well lerned gentywoman of. xix. yere of age.” The information on the front page that is the contribution of a woman author and a very young one, however, highlights Roper's achievement. At the time of its first publication in 1526, few Englishwomen had been involved in similar work. Only two religious translations by English women had previously been printed under their names, both by Lady Margaret Beaufort, grandmother to Henry VIII: *A full deuout and gostely treatyse of the lmytacion and folowyng the blessyd Lyfe of oure moste mercyfull Sauyoure criste* (c.1504; reprinted c.1517) and *The mirroure of golde for the synfull soule* (1506). In the second translation (1506), Beaufort is presented in all her aristocratic glory. An imposing royal coat-of-arms together with a Tudor portcullis and Tudor rose are prominently placed on the title-page of this translation (Fig. 1.1). By displaying her royal status, the publishers clearly wanted to demonstrate that she was no ordinary woman. This would have aided the work's acceptance by its readers despite it being one of the earliest printed English translations composed by a woman.

Although she is not named on the title-page as the author, she is acknowledged as the writer at the very beginning of its preface:

This present boke is called the Mirroure of golde to the sinfull soule / the whiche hath ben translated at parice oute of laten in to frenshe / and after the translacion seen and corrected at length of many clarkis / Doctours / and maisters in diuinite / and nowe of late translated oute of frenche in to Englishe by the right excellent princesse Margaret moder to oure souerain lorde kinge Henry the .vii. and Countesse of Richemond & derby.

*(The Mirroure of golde, 1506, A2r)*



*The Mirroure of golde, Title-page, 1506, A1r (Fig. 1.1)*

Beaufort's *Imytacion* appears appended to one edition (1504) and two subsequent editions (1517, 1519) of William Atkinson's translation of the *Imitatio Christi*, sometimes attributed to Thomas a` Kempis. It is, however, absent from at least one copy of another, later edition (1528).<sup>2</sup> Margaret's translation – which supplies the fourth book of the *Imitatio Christi* – begins on a new gathering (A). It might have been designed to be sold separately and was only bound with some copies of Atkinson's translation, or the fact that it begins on a new gathering would have made it easy to detach the work. In all three editions (1504, 1517, 1519) of the *Imytacion*, Lady Margaret Beaufort is recognised as the translator of this fourth book but on an internal title page:

In prynted at the comaundement of the most excellent prynces  
Margarete: moder unto our souereyne lorde: kinge Henry the vii.  
Countes of Richemound & Darby And by the same prynces it was  
translated oute of frenche into Englisse in fourme and maner ensuinge.  
The yere of our lorde god M.D.iiii.

*(A full deuoute and gostely treatyse of the Imytacion, 1504, A1r)*

Significantly, in these three publications of the *Imytacion*, the title draws attention to Lady Margaret's aristocratic status and to her son, Henry VII, while her royal-coat-of arms is made evident on the title-page of her translation:

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<sup>2</sup> There are three surviving copies of this edition: two in the British Library, one in Cambridge University Library. The one on EEBO (from Cambridge) lacks Margaret's treatise. Owing to the pandemic, I have been unable to check the British Library copies.



A full deuoute and gostely treatyse of the Imytacion, 1517, A1v

Interestingly there is also a strong similarity between the title of this work and that of Roper's English translation: *A Devout Treatise*. This could be a deliberate attempt by Roper, or those around her, to evoke the work of a renowned aristocratic lady as Margaret Beaufort in an effort to facilitate the public acceptance of her own translation. This is more probable when one considers the vulnerability of Roper to accusations of impropriety due to the fact that she was not protected by royal status as was Lady Margaret Beaufort. Moreover, Roper was still very young when she published her work. Therefore,

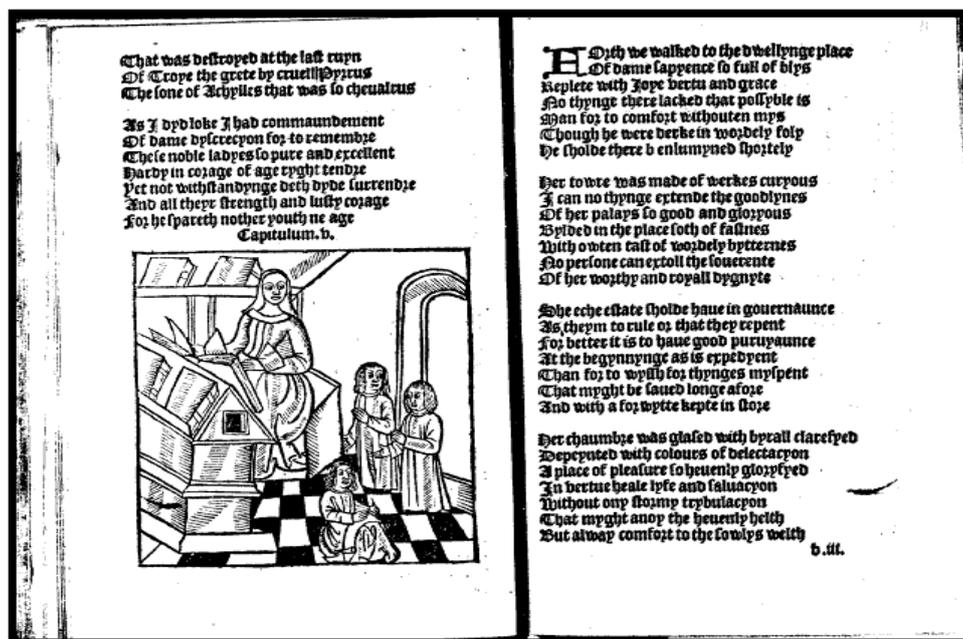
someone of Lady Margaret Beaufort's social status and reputation would have provided a valuable precedent for a youthful lady venturing into print for the first time.

The presentation of Roper's *A Devout Treatise* captures some of the cultural ambivalence regarding how female voices were perceived. The woodcut, which is displayed underneath the title on the first edition of Roper's treatise, seems to have originated from the image in Stephen Hawes' *Example of Vertu*, printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1504, depicting the female figure teaching some young boys as an emblem of decorum and eloquence (B2v, Fig. 1.2). It is illustrating the section in which the allegorical Dame Sapience appears. The fact that "Sapientia" is a feminine noun makes the association that "Wisdom" is conventionally female in the allegory. The same woodcut then reappears in de Worde's 1510 edition of H. W., almost certainly de Worde's apprentice, Henry Watson, *Les Evangiles des quenouilles* (*The Gospelles of dystaves*, see Fig. 1.3). *Les Evangiles* is a work written originally by Fouquart de Cambray, Antoine Duval and Jean d'Arras and first printed in 1480. The book ironically recounts the conversations of a group of women, discussing subjects as diverse as illnesses, remedies and proverbs, and offering advice. Paradoxically, the woodcut in this collection only serves to ridicule the female gender because, in actual fact, these women are anything but studious. Being illiterate, they generally deliver superstitions or false knowledge. For example, they profess that the gender of an unborn child is determined by having salt sprinkled on the mother's head whilst sleeping:

Whan a woman bereth a chylde & yf they wyl knowe yf it be a sone or a daughter ye must lye salte vpon her heed so softly that she knowe not of it and after in deuysynge wt her yf that she name a man knowe that it shal be a sone / & yf that she name a woman it shall be a daughter.

(*Les Evangiles [The Gospelles]*, 1510, A7r)

The protagonists of this work continue to highlight the “unnaturalness” of dominant females, as when they “steal” food from their households to have a drunken party and try to press unwanted sexual favours on the man who records their superstitions and old wives’ tales in writing. The woodcut in *Les Evangiles* serves to ironise its original use in Hawes, a reminder that women who step outside their God-given role are going against their natural disposition.



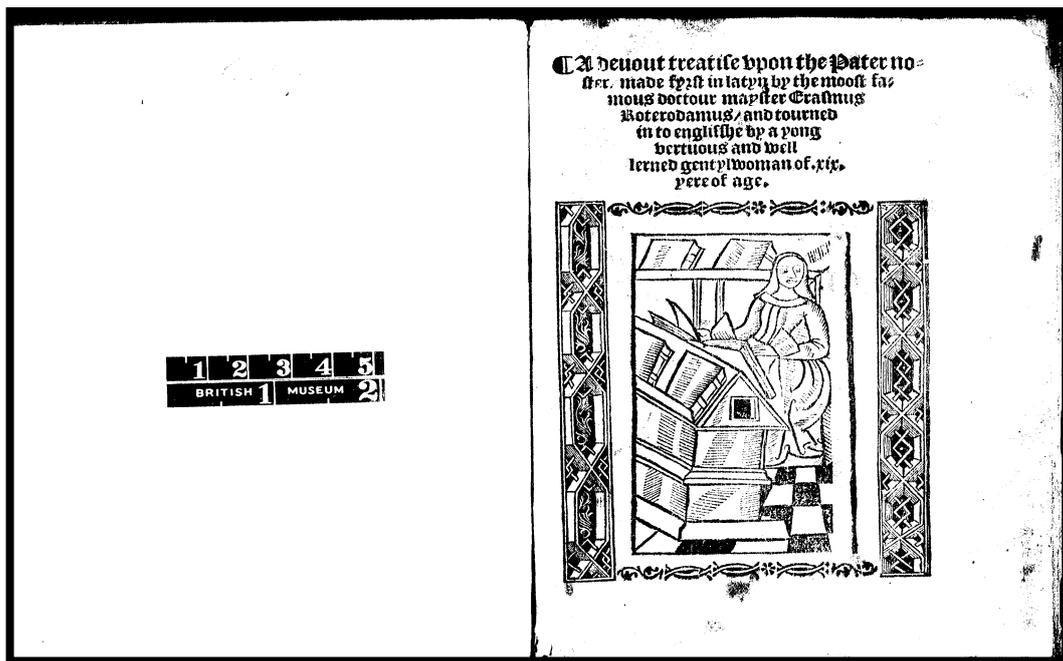
Stephen Hawes', *Example of Vertu*, 1504, B2v (Fig. 1.2)



Les Evangiles des Quenouilles [The Gospels of dystaues], 1510, D2r (Fig. 1.3)

In *A Devout Treatise* the printer, Thomas Berthelet, crops the image to exclude completely the audience of boys, leaving the young female sitting at a lectern accompanied only by heavy books while turning the pages of one of them (Fig. 1.4). The attention seems to be drawn onto the young female dressed in conservative attire who appears secluded from the rest of the world as she pensively turns the pages in an act of “solo contemplation” (Goodrich, 2008, p. 1031). However, the over-sized folios also seem to take centre-stage as they share half the space with the female figure. It appears that the printer wanted to emphasise both the importance of learning and the woman’s sense of decorum surrounded by the interlaced, ornamental border evocative of a

confined, walled space. The removal of the audience of boys from the woodcut changes how we see the female figure, particularly as, rather than focusing her eyes on the book, the veiled woman is portrayed in a classic pose of modesty. According to art historian Mary Ann Sullivan (2002), an early modern woman, especially during the sixteenth century, who was depicted with an averted gaze or downcast eyes was a symbol of virtue (Fig. 1.5). Even her plain clothes, devoid of jewelry, emphasise her modesty while her head-cover continues to portray her in a pose of humility. This sense of respect and piety had to be accentuated in the female figure since she is not accompanied by any male figures and thus, she gives the impression that she is not under the supervision of her father or husband. In addition, the books that the woman in the portrait is seen holding were important as a sign that she was not an artisan but cultured and elite. Most probably when the printer opted for this image to include in *A Devout Treatise*, he wanted the female figure to be a rendition of Roper which would reflect her different aspects: morality, learning, and youthful demeanor.



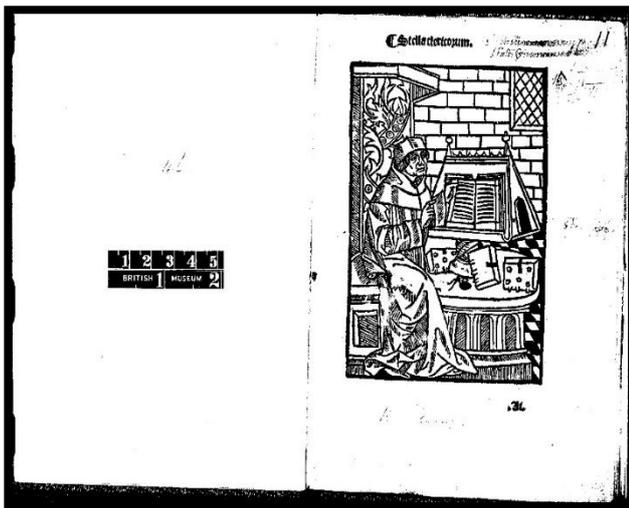
*A Devout Treatise*, Title-page, 1526 (Fig. 1.4)

Another important element regarding this woodcut and somewhat unconventional is the fact that the female figure is shown in a different ambience from her domestic setting, a very common location in which to be represented for sixteenth-century women. The household was another way of claiming a woman's sense of virtue, in this case her chastity as a private figure enclosed within her home. In addition, the rendering of a solitary figure with their books corresponds better to the one that often used to characterise male authors while working in their studies and looking away as they seek inspiration, an image motivated by the tradition of St Jerome (Figs. 1.6, 1.7). The woodcut consequently conforms to representations of the modest woman, but by

depicting her outside a female domestic environment, in a library or study, it also links her to this other “masculine,” scholarly tradition.



16<sup>th</sup>-century portrait of a lady reading, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan (Fig. 1.5)

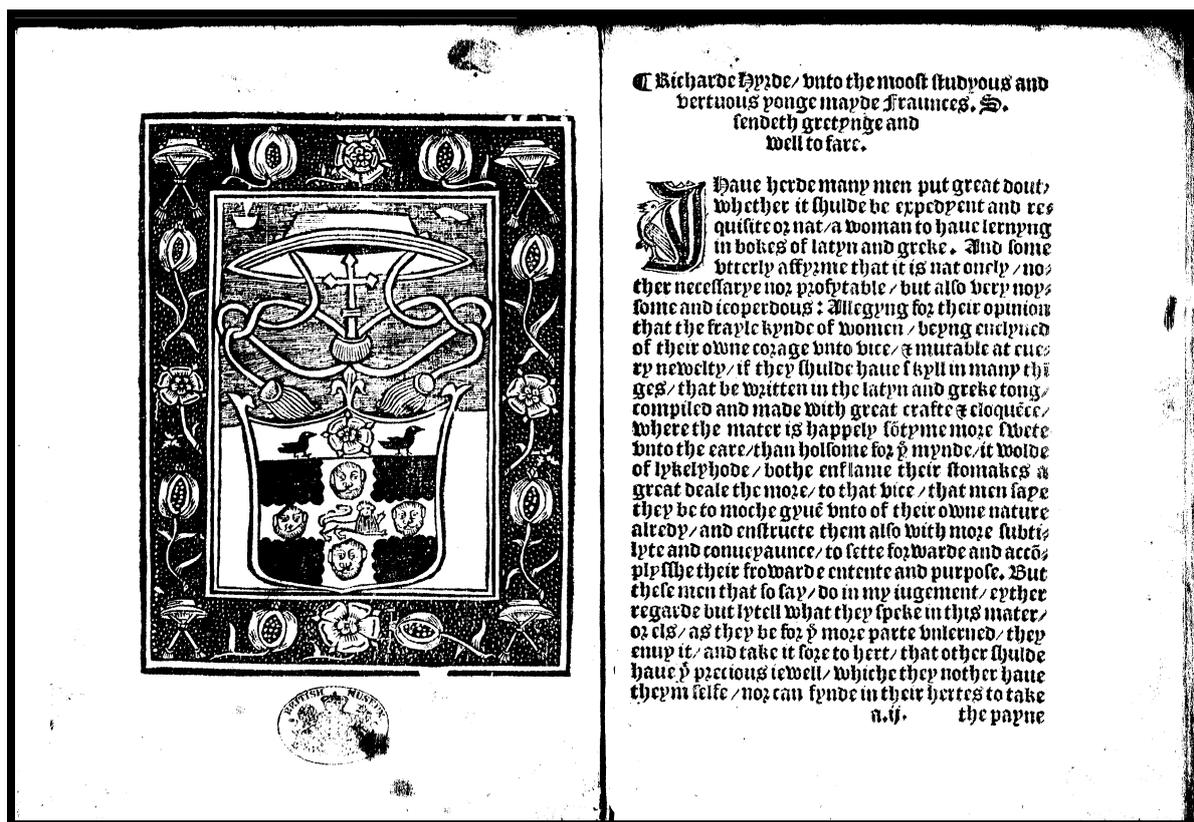


Anon, *Stella clericorum*, 1503 (Fig. 1.6)



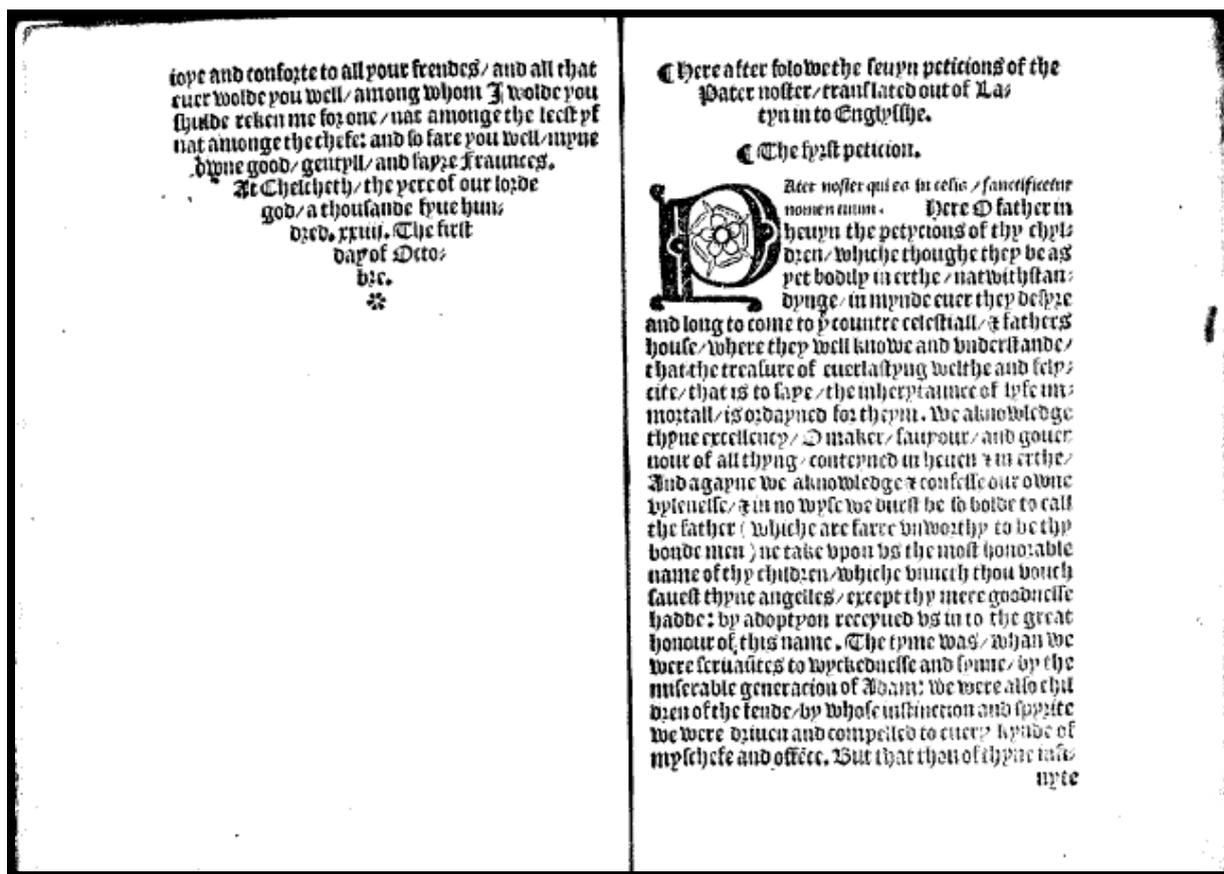
St. Jerome, Harvard Art Museum (Fig. 1.7)

Cardinal Wolsey's coat-of-arms presented on the second page of Roper's first publication is also significant (Fig. 1.8). Its presence may be justified by Berthelet's need to assert that this publication has been authorised by the Cardinal: Berthelet was summoned before Wolsey in March 1526 for printing *A Devout Treatise* and other works without having first submitted them for license (ODNB). However, Wolsey's emblem displayed on a full page, bearing the formal design of the cardinal's hat and the cross, has prominence and projects the attributes of a good Christian onto Roper as a chaste and virtuous woman of the orthodox church, rather than envisaging her as a learned woman. Interestingly, between Cardinal Wolsey's rise (c.1515) and downfall (1529), his coat-of-arms was only used once more in John Colet's book, *Rudimento grammatices* (1529). This book was, in fact, dedicated to him which makes Wolsey's mark even more understandable. Hence, the fact that the Cardinal's mark is not found frequently in works of literature continues to confirm the necessity of depicting the first edition of *A Devout Treatise* as a prudent book to read, although it was the work of a woman. By its second publication (1531), Cardinal Wolsey's coat-of-arms disappears. The reason for the removal of the Cardinal's emblem in the second edition is the Cardinal's fall from grace after 1528.



Cardinal Wolsey's Coat of Arms, 1526, A1v (Fig. 1.8)

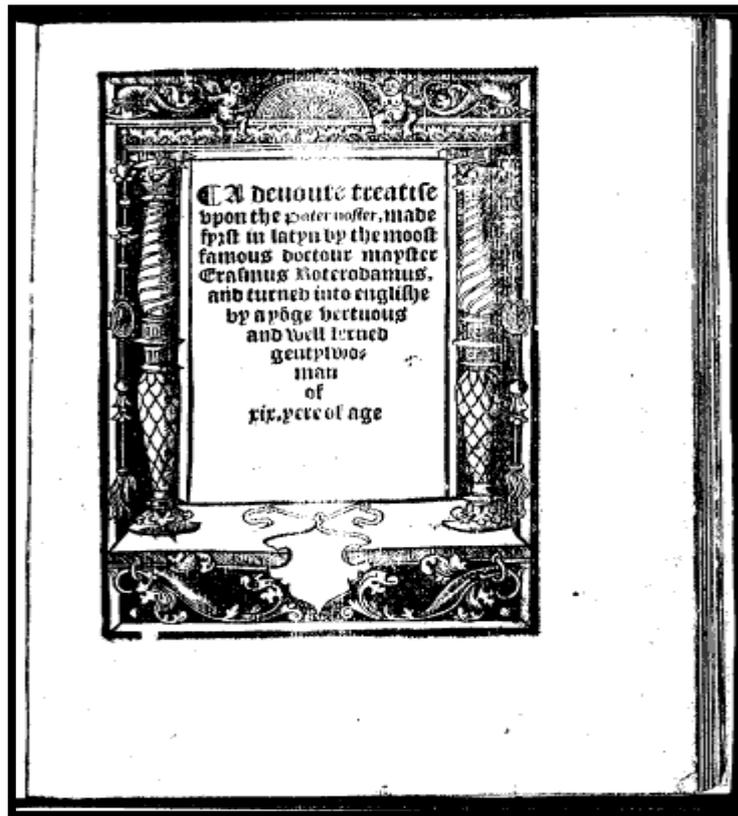
The Tudor rose found in the border of Wolsey's arms features again in the decorative "P" at the start of Roper's rendition of the first edition (Fig. 1.9). This is not a neutral symbol that Berthelet is using. It is one very much tied to Tudor image making, as in the case of Beaufort's treatise in *The Mirroure*. It is an indication to the reader of royal authority associating, thus, the treatise with a sense of royal approval. At the same time, this image might also be a subtle reflection of religious orthodoxy with its insinuation of the rosary.



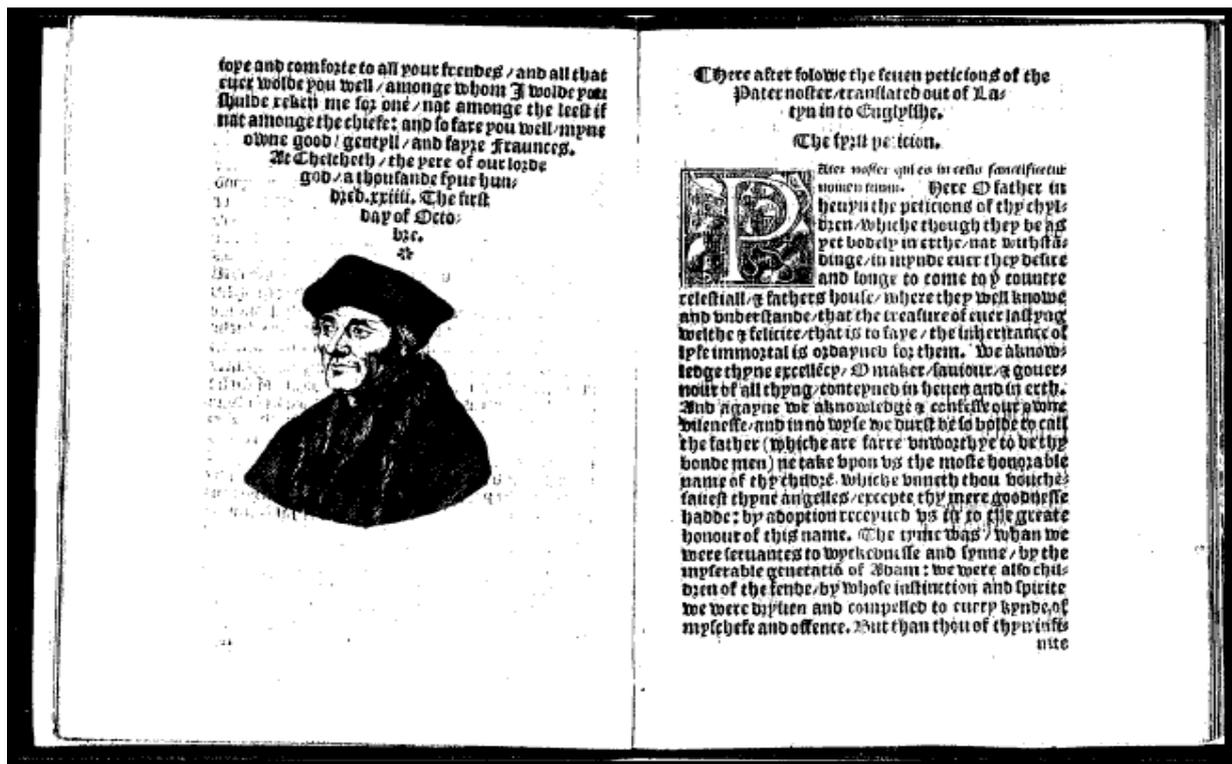
A Devout Treatise, 1526, B4r (Fig. 1.9)

In contrast, changes were made in the presentation of the second edition (1531) which seem to make it consistent with a more humanist edition. The architectural nature of the title-page borders, with its two Greek angels and prominent Corinthian pedestals together with the Roman capital “P” on the first page of the translation are reminiscent of the classical world. They exemplify a humanist endeavour coherent “with the style used for Latin texts and then, in time, vernacular ones” (Johnston, 2008, p. 4, Figs. 1.10, 1.11). Moreover, the woodcut of the studious woman featured in the first edition has been removed and, instead, an image of the well-known humanist Erasmus is

included. Collectively, these changes which have been made to Roper's 1531 edition seek to diminish the importance of the female writer, while at the same time portraying this edition as a more international, humanist work, lessening the distinctly "Tudor" aura of the first edition.



*A Devout Treatise*, Title-Page, 1531 (Fig. 1.10)



A Devout Treatise, 1531, B3v (Fig. 1.11)

The evidence in this section has shown that the visual material presented in sixteenth-century works are laden with subtle messages. In the case of Roper's work, those in the first edition frame her as being humble and virtuous as well as scholarly; in the second, they efface her entirely. The next sections move to consider, first, how the textual paratext presents Margaret More Roper, before moving on to evaluate her use of rhetoric, style, and voice by comparing her translation with the original Latin.

## Margaret More Roper's *A Devout Treatise*: Textual Paratext

To further understand the role which humanism played in Roper's *A Devout Treatise*, this section starts with a discussion of Richard Hyrde, a humanist scholar, translator and tutor at More's household and the man who introduces Roper's work in both the 1526 and 1531 editions. He writes a prefatory letter addressed to one of his pupils "Fraunces S" who, like Roper, is also a "moost studyous and vertuous yonge mayde" (1526, A2r). This must have been Roper's cousin, Fraunces Staverton, as later Hyrde refers to Roper as being "kynswoman" to Fraunces (1526, B2r). Therefore, although Hyrde does not mention Roper as being the translator, he does hint at her identity through her family connection. At the same time, however, addressing the letter to Roper's kinswoman is another way of keeping Roper's work rhetorically contained within the domestic circle, even as it makes its way into print.

Although Hyrde's exact birth date is unknown, he must not have been much older than Roper, having graduated from Oxford University in 1518. Nonetheless, his voice takes prominence, reinforcing the patriarchal element whilst taking a strong humanistic stand towards women's education. He praises the translator for her eloquence and elegant erudition:

I referre and leaue it to the jugementes of those that shall rede it / and unto suche as are lerned / the onely name of the maker putteth out of

question / the goodnesse and perfection of the worke / whiche as to  
myne owne opinyon and fantasye / cannot be amended in any poynte.

(Richard Hyrde, 1526, B2v)

Praising Roper's work for its "goodnesse and perfection," Hyrde proclaims his confidence in Roper's rhetorical ability (1526, B2v). Nevertheless, his admiration does not rest solely on the translator's competences. He accentuates the humanists' chief argument regarding learned women that predominantly education helps them in enhancing their goodness and virtue:

But on the otherside / many by their lernyng taken suche encrease of  
goodnesse / the many may beare then wytnesse of their uirtue / of  
whiche sorte I coulde reherse a great nombre / bothe of olde tyme and  
late.

(Richard Hyrde, 1526, A4v)

Hyrde draws attention to the significance of education in keeping a woman's intellect engaged and far-removed from worldly vices. Literacy was considered by humanists as far less dangerous to the preservation of the soul than if a woman remained idle:

Redyng and studying of bokes so occupieth the mynde / that it can  
have no leyseur to muse or delyue in other fantasies / what in all handy  
werkes / that men saye be more mete for a woman / the body may be  
busy in one place / and the mynde walkyng in another: while they syt  
sowing or spinnyng with their fyngers / maye caste and compasse many  
peuysshe fantasyes in their myndes / whiche must nedes be occupied  
/ outhere with good or bade / so long as they be workyng.

(Richard Hyrde, 1526, A4r)

Noticeably in this preface Hyrde celebrates Roper as a perfect exemplar of humanist principles where female literacy was acclaimed as the pathway to virtue. He goes as far as broadening the exhortation to include other women who should take this “gentlywoman’s” example whose learning has also enhanced her prudence and integrity, essential attributes for an ideal wife:

This gentlywoman / whiche translated this lytell boke herafter folowyng:  
whose uertuous conuersacion / lyuyng / and sadde demeanoure /  
maye be profe euydente ynough / what good lernygne dothe / where  
it surely roted: of whom other women may take example of prudent /  
humble / and wyfely behauour / charitable & very christen virtue / with  
whiche she hath with goddess helpe endeuoured her selfe.

(Richard Hyrde, 1526, A4v)

Moreover, Hyrde also attributes the translator's achievements to "her uertuous worshipfull wyse and well lerned husbände" who "by the occasion of her lernynge" and to "his delyte" made their conjugal life of "suche especiall conforte, pleasure and pastyme" (1526, B1r). He also assumes that the reader who can compare the translation with the original Latin will be male, "he," even in a preface to a Latin-English translation produced by a woman. Thus, despite humanists promoting women's education, these new opportunities for women were marked by a strong patriarchal element:

I dare be bolde to say it / that who so lyst and well can conferre and  
examyne the translatyon wyth the original / he shall nat fayle to fynde  
that she hath shewed herselfe / nat onely erudite and elegant in eyther  
tong / But hath also used suche wysedom / suche dyscrete and  
substancyall iudgement in expressynge lyvely the latyn / as a man maye  
paraventure mysse in many thynges / translated and tourned by them  
that bare the name of right wise and very well lerned men.

(Richard Hyrde, 1526, B2v, emphasis added)

However, the masculine discourse presented in the introduction by Hyrde enabled Margaret to be portrayed as an author within a culture unwelcoming to female writers. The expressiveness and control of syntax demonstrated by Roper in this work made scholars like Hyrde admire the

exceptionality of this young writer. Roper's schooling in double translation between Latin and English ensured that her translation was not "slavishly literal" but instead treated the original "with a felicitous freedom which combines scholarship and art" (Gee, 1937, pp. 161, 165). Rita M. Verbrugge's close reading of Roper's translation praises her "simple, straightforward, and unpretentious" language, as well as her "tendency to double or couple the adjectives or verbs," together with constructing "parallel structures of her own" (Verbrugge, 1985, p. 40). The next section looks more closely at Roper's translation, to demonstrate its skill and scholarship. It will make a comparison with Erasmus' *Precatio Dominica* to investigate in greater detail Roper's use of style, rhetoric and voice when evaluated against the original source.

#### Margaret More Roper's *A Devout Treatise*: Style, Rhetoric and Voice

In direct comparison with Erasmus' *Precatio Dominica* which is sectioned in seven parts, so is Roper's translation, naming them "petitions." These "petitions" or meditations are based upon the verses of the Lord's Prayer. First, Roper gives each verse in Latin and then she does not merely provide a *litteratim* translation but uses diverse rhetorical devices to develop and simplify Erasmus' Christian message, highlighting its didactic points. For example, in the first petition about humankind's unworthiness in front of God's infinite mercy,

she elaborates the source to emphasise the importance of our responsibility before divine greatness:

We acknowledge thyne excellency / O maker / sauour / and gouernor  
of all thing / conteyned in heuen & in erthe / And agayne we  
aknowledge & confesse our owne uyleness / & in no wyse we durst be  
so bolde to call the father (whiche are farre vnworthy to be thy bonde  
men) ne take vpon vs the most honorable name of thy children / whiche  
unneth thou uouch sauest thyne angelles / except thy mere goodnesse  
hadde: by adoption receyued vs in to the great honour of this name.

(Margaret More Roper, 1526, B4r)

*Agnoscimus tuam sublimitatem, conditor, seruator, ac moderator  
omnium quae in coelis sunt, & quae in terris: agnoscimus nostram  
humilitatem. Nec auderemus te patris uocabulo compellare, indigni qui  
serui dicamur tui: nec honorificentissimum nomen filiorum nobis  
uindicare, quo nec angelos tuos dignatuses, nisi tua gratuita bonitas nos  
in huius nominis honorem adoptasset.*

(Desiderius Erasmus, 1523, A3r-v)

Roper's work accentuates the unworthiness of humankind. She expresses divine splendour and makes a human apology. This apology does more than show humility (*humilitatem*): it exposes our "uileness." Nor are we merely "unfit" (*indigni*) to be called God's servants/slaves (*serui dicamur*): we are "farre vnworthy" (emphasis added). In addition, the verb "confesse," a term used to refer to the ecclesiastical sacrament of confession, implies total admission of our sins as opposed to Erasmus' *agnoscimus*, or "recognise." Contrastingly, she beautifies the magnificence of God seen through a filial duty owed to Him by an added explanation of the term *Abba pater* (1523, A3v), clarifying that "in Englysshe is as moche to saye / as O father father" (1526, B4v). The repetition and exclamation also make this more emotive. She embellishes the description of Jesus by adding the words "as mynister" to "this thy sonne taught vs / by whome (as mynister) thou gyuest vs all thyng" (1526, B4v) (*Docuit & hoc nos filius tuus, per que nobis largiris omnia* [1523, A3v]). Hence, Roper is capable of relaying precise information by clarifying didactic ideas while maintaining the same meaning. At the same time as clarifying and embellishing Erasmus' Latin, Roper manages to maintain the elegant balance of his syntactic structure as in the following example:

Thou desyrest rather to be called a father / thane a lorde or maister: Thou woldest we shulde rather loue the as thy children / than feare the as thy seruauntes and bonde men: Thou first louedest vs / and of thy

goodnesse also it cometh / and thy rewarde / that we do loue the  
agayne.

(Margaret More Roper, 1526, C1r)

*Pater audire mauis, qui dominus. Redamari praeoptas a' filiis, quam a'  
seruis timeri. Amasti prior, & hoc ipsum tui muneris est, quod te  
redammus.*

(Desiderius Erasmus, 1523, A4r)

Roper's measured clauses imitate the equilibrium of Erasmus' prose, but not slavishly, as when she transforms and expands that final, three-part sentence into four units.

Occasionally Roper streamlines Erasmus' prose by reducing his lists. In calling for human redemption through God's son, Jesus, Erasmus contemplates our unworthiness to be called Christians, rebuking humankind for being susceptible to "thieve [and] riot, be litigious, belligerent, petulant, deceitful, [and] commit perjury" (*furantur, moechantur, litigant, belligerantur, ambiunt, ulciscuntur, fraudant, peierant* [1523, A5v]). Roper reduces the list to "theues or manquellers" (murderers), making it a strikingly more colloquial phrase than Erasmus' list (1526, C2v). Also, Erasmus' list of food and beasts that pagans allegedly worship such as "*boves, arietes, simias, porrum, caepe*" (bullocks, rams, monkeys, leek, onion [1523, A5r]) is condensed by Roper as "some also

to oxen some to bulles / and other such lyke" (1526, C2r). This has a deliberate effect of muting Erasmus' sarcasm. Worshipping leeks and onions is clearly preposterous, more so than worshipping animals. This would seem to be an intentional muting of tone that is not unrelated to the fact that Roper is a young woman and needs to moderate her tone.

However, more often Roper embellishes and adds to the Latin source to clarify ideas and to make images more vivid. The rendering of "*olim per prophetas*" (by the prophets [1523, A7r]) in the second petition, as "by the *mouthes* of thy prophetes" (1526, D1r, emphasis added), reinforces the scriptural teachings. Very aptly Roper alludes to the Biblical verse by adding the phrase "mouthes of thy prophetes," taken from the following Biblical quote: "And the Lord said: wherewith? And he said: I will go out and will be a false spirit in the *mouths of all Prophets*. And the LORD said, thou shalt deceive him and also prevail, go forth and do even so" (1 Kings 22:22, Tyndale Bible). The Latin translation, which most probably Roper would have used since it is unlikely she would have utilised Tyndale's Bible because of her Catholic background, is as follows: "*Et ille ait: Egrediar, et ero spiritus mendax in ore omnium prophetarum ejus. Et dixit Dominus: Decipies, et praevaleris: egredere, et fac ita.*" Supporting her translation with Biblical references gives her verses more credibility as well as the chance to exhibit her didactic and scholarly skills without being deemed controversial.

Roper's expression achieves more directness and immediacy than Erasmus' commentary, conceivably because her English attains clarity by

highlighting precise words which lead to moral instruction. For instance in the third petition, Erasmus contrasts the perfection and spirituality of Heaven with the frailty and carnal sins of this earth, "*qui carni viuunt, tibi mortui sunt, & iam filii tui non sunt*" (1523, B2r). Roper's translation highlights the didactic intent of this by using doublets for emphasis: "Who so euer lyueth after the *fleshy & carnall* appetite they are deed to the / and than nat as thy children" (1526, E1r, emphasis added). Roper's doublets often pair a higher register, non-Anglophone word ("carnall") with a more colloquial one ("fleshy"). Roper's technique is not repetition but crystallises the catechetical implication of losing one's soul if we do not toil to seek God's loving goodness:

The / and we thy children also / as longe as we are here bodily in erthe  
/ haue among nat a litell businesse and a do / in uenquesshyng the  
flesshly delite: whiche laboreth to preuent thy wyll: but graunt better /  
whether it lyke the we lyue or dye / or to be punished for our correction  
/ or be in prosperite / to the entent we shulde gyue the thankes for thy  
liberall goodnesse.

(Margaret More Roper, 1526, E1r-v)

*Quin et filiis tuis quandiu corpus hoc terrenum circumferimus, subinde  
negocium facessit carnis uoluntas, tuae praeire gestiens. Da ut semper*

*tua uincat uoluntas, sive mori nos uis, sive vivere, sive affligi, ut corrigamur: sive subleuari, ut tuae benignitati gratias agamus.*

(Desiderius Erasmus, 1523, B2r)

In this example, Roper adds certain phrases to Erasmus' original that accentuate the challenges that humans face when endeavouring to follow God. She stresses the fact that it is not "a litell" business to vanquish "the fleshly delite" which "laboreth" to "preuent thy wyll." Erasmus plays this down by writing "*subinde negocium facessit carnis uoluntas, tuae praeire gestiens*" (the will of the flesh continually causes trouble, delighting as it does to lead your will). In this manner, Roper is not only translating what Erasmus meant if the reader estranges him/herself from God, but also contributing to the original source by adding her own phrases. Evidently, she is not simply acting as a translator, an intermediary, from Latin to English, but takes the opportunity to put forward her own voice in public: a rare prospect for female writers.

In the fourth appeal about divine nourishment, Erasmus refers to the spiritual bread from heaven, "*Per hunc panem reuiximus, per hunc alimur ac saginamur, & adulescimus ad perfectum robur spiritus*" (1523, B3v). Roper makes the metaphor more vivid through the doubling of specific lexical terms: "This breed relyued vs: by this breed we are *norysshed and fatted*: and by this we come vp to *the perfite and full* strength of the spirite" (1526, E3r, emphasis added). She is making sure that the resonances of the words "nourished" and "perfect" are captured. For example, OED gives two different meanings to the

adjective “perfect:” being “completely formed, finished or made” (OED, 3a), while in post-classical Latin “*perfectus*” has also the sense of being “spiritually pure or blameless” (OED, 1a). In addition, the warning which Erasmus gives regarding the perils of temptation in the sixth petition is rendered more colourful in Roper’s paraphrase. Not only is the predicate to intoxicate (*inebriati* [1523, B6v]) rendered as “drowned” (1526, f2v), but her translation also incorporates an additional subordinate clause that emphasises the Biblical parable of the prodigal son:

As the sonne that the scripture speketh of / whiche after tyme he hadde spent and reuelled out all his fathers substaunce / by vnthrifty and vngracious rule / was brought to that misery and wretchednesse / that he enuyed the swine their chaffe.

(Margaret More Roper, 1526, F2v–F3r, emphasis added)

*Velut Euangelicus ille filius, qui prodata cum scortis omni paterna substantia, eo' miseriae perductus est, ut porcis etiam suas siliquas inuideret.*

(Desiderius Erasmus, 1523, B6v)

The added phrase in Roper’s translation about the prodigal son above, describing him as exhibiting an “vnthrifty and vngracious” behaviour, captures

more the intent of the dangers of worldly compulsions as it underscores the son's disrespectful attitude towards his own father. Likewise, Roper heightens the meaning of "unclean" in *impuros* (1526, A5r) by describing the pagans who practise these ceremonies as "foule and wycked deuylls" (1526, C2r), giving the phrase a more graphic image. In contrast, the devoutness of believers is further emphasised by expanding *nos* (1523, A4v) (we) to "we thy spirituall children" (1526, B4v). This creates a portrait of divine glory reflected in the sanctity of the faithful as well as accentuating the affectionate, filial relationship between God and his believers as she had done in the previous example of "O father, O father" (1526, B4v). These extensions reveal Roper's strict morality directed at non-conforming Christian attitudes:

Therefore we *thy spirituall children* / moche more feruently thirst *and desire* the glory *and honour* of thy most holy name / & greatly are vexed *and troubled in hert* / if he / to whom alone all glorye is due chance *rebuked* or sclaundred to be / nat that any sclaundre or *rebuke* can *myntishe* or defoule the clerenesse of thy glory.

(Margaret More Roper, 1526, C2r, emphasis added)

*At nos, quo uehementior est pietas diuina, quam affectus humanus, hoc ardentius sitimus tui nominis gloriam, ac discruciamur unice, si, cui soli debetur omnis gloria, ignominia afficiatur. Non, quod ullo probro possit iquinari tuae gloriae splendor.*

Through the above embellishments, Roper provides the perfect Christian example by referring to devotees as “thy spirituall children,” stressing again the filial bond that exists between God and His followers. This interlocutor wastes no time in chastising the non-devotee, claiming that those who do not feel a “desire” to be in the “glory and honour” of God will be “troubled in hert.” By elaborating on the original source, Roper’s translation provides an accurate didactic explanation.

These examples are evidence of Roper’s rhetorical skills as well as the emergence of her own voice in spite of her work being a translation. Although, during the early sixteenth-century England, literary works relied heavily on translations both by men and women writers, the genre of translation was considered more “gendered” than other modes of production and, thus, second-rate since it was specifically thought of as a female activity (Newman & Tylus, 2015, p. 97). This idea is reinforced in John Florio’s Preface to *Montaigne’s Essays*, as he frames translation as a “defective edition” since “all translations are reputed femalls, delivered at second hand” (1603, A2r). However, Roper’s treatise does not transpire to be inferior to the original source as it captures her own, unique style without being a mere reproduction. Although in sixteenth-century patriarchal England, the genre of translation was more permissible for a woman writer since she “was less vulnerable to the accusation of circulating her words inappropriately” because “they were not,

strictly speaking, her words at all" (Lamb, 1990, p. 12), Roper manages to find the right scholarly balance to translate closely and accurately, while departing from the source when necessary for clarity and emphasis. Thus, while Roper's work is faithful to its original author, at the same time it projects the author's talent even if this might not have been Roper's primary intention.

Roper, in other words, is not simply to be admired for her chastity and obedience, but also for the distinctive voice that she cultivates in *A Devout Treatise*. However, her strong filial bond with her father, to whom she owed her education, continues to cast a shadow, hindering her recognition as a translator in her own right. The main issue, therefore, that needs to be addressed in the following section is if her authorial voice is being influenced by her father's prominent, public profile as a lawyer, author, noted humanist, politician and advisor to Henry VIII. To understand this question, the next part will provide a discussion of her own two letters written to her father while he was imprisoned in the Tower between 1534 and 1535 for not signing the Oath of Supremacy imposed by Henry VIII, together with More's letters sent mainly to his daughter and which are included in William Rastell's edition of More's *Workes* (1557). Amongst this collection, one particular letter, known as the "Alington dialogue," remains of special interest mainly due to its disputed authorship as it will be discussed in detail later. The next section will, therefore, try to investigate if Roper is being ventriloquised by More, and if so, to what extent her voice is being shaped by him to fit his ideological agenda.

## Margaret More Roper and the Tower Correspondence

On 12<sup>th</sup> April 1534 Thomas More was asked by Henrician authorities to sign the “Act of Succession,” an oath which acknowledged the king as “Supreme Head of Church” while at the same time rejecting papal jurisdiction. He firmly refused, following his conscience. On disobeying the king's orders, he was imprisoned in the Tower five days later and charged with “obstinacy,” a deliberate refusal to obey the king (ODNB). Indeed, through his letters written during his imprisonment, Thomas More emerges as a man of principles. Alvaro De Silva describes him as “a hero of conscience” who was determined to go against secular power in order to stand by his own beliefs and keep the integrity of his religious faith intact (De Silva, 2000, p. 8). Andrew Hiscock defines him as a man who “remained powerfully influenced by medieval thinking concerning the moral and spiritual integrity of collective experience” (Hiscock, 2017, p. 12). In a letter addressed to the king during his early days in the Tower, he admits that his personal integrity would not stand “any man to take occasion hereafter against the truth to slander me” (More, 1534, in A. De Silva, 2000, p. 47).<sup>3</sup> In the fifteen months of his imprisonment between April 1534 and July 1535, More wrote two books: *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* and *De tristitia*, of which the latter remained unfinished. Together with these literary works, his correspondence addressed to his family and various friends

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<sup>3</sup> All reference to Thomas More’s correspondence written during his imprisonment will be cited from *The Last Letters of Thomas More* by Alvaro De Silva (2000) and will be cited by page numbers.

holds the key “for understanding his heart and mind” (De Silva, 2000, p. 5). These letters were addressed to a diverse audience including Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell, the theologian Nicolas Wilson, the Catholic priest Master Leder, and his dear friend the Italian merchant Antonio Bonvisi, but the highest proportion, eight out of eighteen, were written to his daughter Margaret.

There is another significant letter written while More was imprisoned: “Margaret Roper to Alice Alington” (1534), also known as “The Alington dialogue,” which was published in William Rastell’s edition of *More’s Workes* (1557). This letter, in the form of a dialogue between Margaret and her father, was written in reply to a previous letter to Roper from More’s step-daughter, Alice Alington, which is also included in the *Workes*: “Alice Alington to Margaret Roper” (Rastell, 1557, pp. 1433-1434). Besides other things, in her letter Alington had advised Roper that some of More’s friends, specifically Thomas Audley, Lord Chancellor, did not comprehend the motives behind More’s refusal to sign the oath. Alington writes that Audley had “marveled that my father is so obstinate in his own conceit, as that everybody went forth with all save only the blind Bishop and he” (pp. 69-70). “The Alington dialogue” is particularly revealing in describing some of the conversations held between More and his daughter while disclosing some of the deepest thoughts of More.

The editor of the letter, William Rastell, was a relation of Thomas More as his wife was the daughter of Margaret Giggs Clement, foster daughter of More. Moreover, he was also very close to William Roper, More Roper’s husband, who was his fellow-bencher at Lincoln’s Inn and who supported him on his

promotion as serjeant-at-law while he was working on publishing Thomas More's letters in the mid to late 1550s (ODNB). Rastell's close affiliation with More together with the inside knowledge he had of More's family give weight to the doubts that Rastell raises about the authorship of this letter. Although the "Alington dialogue" carries Margaret More Roper's signature, Rastell was one of the first to suspect that it might not be solely authored by her. He, in fact, stated that "whether thys answere wer writen by Syr Thomas More in his daughter Ropers name, or by her selfe, it is not certaynelye knowen" (Rastell, 1557, p. 1434). Most probably, Rastell observed that the letter's stylistic device closely resembles More's other letters both in rhetoric and concepts, making this letter look more like a joint effort between father and daughter. For instance, the lengthy answers as well as fables found in this letter, such as that of "Company," might have prompted Rastell to believe that such an elaborate and vivid ways of writing pertain more to More than to Roper. Modern critics also believe that this letter was written by More and not Roper: Louis Martz and Richard Sylvester claim that on analysing the eloquence of the words used, "its art seems to be all More's" (Martz & Sylvester, 1976, lxi). In addition, Peter Iver Kaufmann is also convinced that in the Alington dialogue "Roper's share in the composition was negligible" (Kaufman, 1989, p. 443).

Indeed, the style and dialogic structure of this letter give the impression that it does not belong to Roper's writing. If this is the case, the Alington letter serves more to highlight More's integrity and strong will than the formation of Roper's voice. Through this dialogue, More's responsibility for his soul makes

him unyielding and having made up his mind to adhere to his conscience, he tries to portray Margaret's weakness in a bid to appear spiritually strong in comparison. His conscience was the source of his moral strength, the thing which gave him consolation and which he valued above anyone else, including his own family. Perhaps he was afraid that after his death his story might become misrepresented by his enemies in order to undermine his heroic Christian ending. Most likely, More wanted to emerge as a spiritual man, a man who wanted to disseminate an example of supreme Christian fortitude, who would not negate for an earthly king the love he bore for the Church. Had he accepted the oath, he would have been spiritually lost forever, thus he preferred to relinquish "his physical freedom in order to retain a more fundamental freedom," the freedom of his soul (De Silva, 2000, p. 18). In this letter, therefore, he appears to be ventriloquising his daughter in order to bring out his pious strength at the cost of Roper appearing weak. For, if one had to look at the conversation objectively thinking that it is Roper writing, the Alington dialogue would provoke in the reader, on one hand, a sense of admiration for More's strong beliefs but, on the other hand, a sense of compassion for Margaret's futile attempts in trying to overcome her father's "scruple of his conscience," as Roper seems overpowered by More's integrity (p. 72).

In the opening lines of the Alington dialogue, it is written that upon receiving her step-sister's letter, Roper was eager to show it to her father and to try and convince him that if he remained adamant in his decision, "his friends that seem most able to do him good ... shall finally forsake him" (p. 72).

“She” also reminds him about the love he bears to the king that he may find it within himself and “with the pleasure of God” to “content and please” him since he had always found the king “so singularly gracious” unto him (p. 73). However, as she then shifts her argument to the “peril” of his “soul” if he does not comply to the King’s wishes, Roper is represented as the compliant daughter who dares not show her mind when disputing with her father, but adheres to her rigidly defined, submissive role. “She” tells More:

But as for that point, Father, will I not be bold to dispute upon, sith I trust in God and your good mind, that ye will look surely thereto. And your learning I know for such, that I wot well you can.

(Margaret More Roper in De Silva, 2000, p. 73)

Following the theory that Roper is being ventriloquised by More, the reader is able to draw some conclusions. If Roper, despite her informed mind, is exemplified as incapable of disputing with her father on matters of conscience, she is thus being projected as a perfect exemplar of feminine submissiveness. Portraying Roper as capable of challenging More on spiritual matters would have given the impression that she was going beyond the parameters of virtue and modesty, thus venturing more than her gender allows her. As Beilin mentions, it could be that in this manner, Margaret would “epitomize the humanist ideal of the learned and virtuous woman” without questioning the restrictions on women’s roles (Beilin, 1987, p. xxiii). The evident

synergy that existed between More and herself certainly put more pressure on Roper to conform to the humanist educational framework for women. In addition, Goodrich reports that the “More circle repeatedly publicized Margaret Roper as an exemplary wife, mother, and daughter,” especially with the publication of her first work *A Devout Treatise* (Goodrich, 2008, p. 1026). Thus, the need for impeccable moral conduct by Roper was intensified. As Goodrich says, Roper gained a “representative publicity for her father that projected More’s private virtues to an international audience” (Goodrich, 2008, p. 1027).

At this point, Roper is presented in the dialogue as being fully aware that her role is only to report her father’s opinions and not to fashion them. Thus, instead of positing an argument as honest critique regarding her father’s decision, with the risk of emphasising the “unnaturalness” of female power, Roper is shown observing her subservient, traditional position. She concludes her argument with a rather deflated demand as she entreats him to “hope for less harm” which “shall be likely to fall” on him if he does not oblige (p. 73). Her answer takes just over one page, while the rest of the letter, an additional sixteen pages, is taken over by More’s answer which indicates that he does not find Roper a threat to his conscience. More answers his daughter with an amusing smile as he even calls her “mistress Eve” who has come to tempt him. He comments also on his other daughter, Alington. According to him, she has “played the serpent” with Margaret by writing to her with an intent to make her “tempt [her] father again” (p. 73). By this, More is also implicitly suggesting

that Margaret is easily manipulated by “a letter,” just like Eve was by the serpent, thus reconfirming her weakness. Later on in the letter, More is reported by Roper to have again compared her to Eve for trying to convince him to sign the oath, associating her with sinfulness and temptation:

How now daughter Marget? What how mother Eve? Where is your mind now? sit not musing with some serpent in your breast, upon some new persuasion, to offer father Adam the apple yet once again?

(Thomas More, 1934, in A. De Silva, 2000, p. 86)

Nonetheless, in the same letter Roper is reported making a further attempt to convince her father by professing that “so many so good men and so well learned men” have taken the oath “without peril of their soul” (p. 82). In this short speech, “she” manages to construct her argument around spiritual integrity. However, the frequent use of the word “conscience” (she repeats it five times) is reminiscent more of her father’s style of writing. More’s response is immediate and unswerving. Affectionately, he chides Roper for taking yet again the role of temptress: “Mary, Margaret ... for the part that you play, you play it not much amiss” (p. 82). He is quick to disclaim her action, telling her that her frail nature comes as no surprise as “like Eve ... she offered Adam no worse fruit that she had eaten herself” (p. 87). He even reinforces Margaret’s frail nature in his reply soon after, “That you fear your own frailty, Marget, nothing misliketh me” (p. 105). The kind of response given by More would have

certainly influenced Roper's behaviour to act according to what was expected of her, and to present herself as a model of chastity, constancy and obedience. Indeed, towards the end of the Alington dialogue, Roper is made to appear to have succumbed obediently to her father's decision: "sith the sample of so many wise men cannot in this matter move you, I see not what to say more" (p. 86). However, in reality, although More does not seem affected by his daughter's request, neither is she influenced by him as, like the rest of the family, she takes the oath. This decision disconnects her from her father's control and, perhaps for the first time, shows some signs of independence in Roper. However, it is also true that even her husband signs the oath and, thus, she seems to be submitting to a new male influence in addition to saving her own life. In this manner, Roper's struggle for her own representation is seen from the traditional view of her passive acceptance of male superiority, in this case of her husband.

In ventriloquising Roper's voice in the Alington letter, More was setting the parameters of the kind of representation he wanted for Roper and for himself to the outside world: a revelation of his integrity through the humility and obedience of his daughter. Goodrich describes this new role of Roper appropriately as she says that Margaret "actively assisted her father's attempts to construct himself as otherworldly by playing on her previous role as a signifier of his private life" (Goodrich, 2008, p. 1037). She adds that their correspondence "frames More's incarceration as a hermetic retreat from secular matters" as well as Roper serving "as a public avatar of the private

More" (Goodrich, 2008, p. 1037). Kaufmann perceives that what, in fact, Roper was not perhaps aware of is that by assimilating this role of a public mediator of her father's voice, she confirms her place as a member of the humanist circle while her father "had apparently stepped out" (Kaufman, 1989, p. 443).

While it is abundantly true that Roper acted as her father's main confidante and "the most frequent visitor of his cell," this substantial filial relationship might raise questions on the objectivity of Roper's role (Kaufman, 1989, p. 444). While I believe that throughout the Alington dialogue, Roper was being shaped by her father to mirror his strong sense of conscience by conforming to the humanists' ideals of chastity, obedience and humility, I also believe that this is not the only case where she acted – even independently from her father – to appear virtuous and humble. In her own two letters addressed to her father when he was in the Tower, and which are also included in the *Workes*, we can see that Roper tries to find a compromise between a manifestation of modesty and a scholarly impression. For example, in her first letter, written in May 1534 to her father, Roper's focus is solely to bring to light her father's infallible sense of integrity and his spiritual freedom. Her writing is straightforward and simple, devoid of elaborate linguistic terminology which sets a stark contrast with More's ostentatious writing as was discussed previously in the "Alington dialogue." She addresses the letter simply to her "good father" (p. 66). The reader captures a sense of desolation in the author's tone as Roper describes More's absence in basic terms as a "bitter time" (p. 66). There is also

a feeling of emotional dependence on her father in her inability to do anything for him except writing to him and “reading again and again” his most “fruitful and delectable letter” (p. 66). The term “delectable” during the sixteenth century was meant to describe something as “extremely pleasant or appealing ... especially to the senses” (OED, 1a). It is also a rendition of a humanist ideal for writing found in Horace’s *Ars-Poetica* (18 BCE), referring to poetry as “*dulce et utile* [pleasing and useful].” Therefore, this specific expression used by Roper to depict More’s letter continues to commend his eloquent skill as his writing, according to Roper, evokes her emotions dramatically. It also accentuates his lack of physical presence as well as suggesting a humanist idea of a letter – an exchange between faraway friends – found, for example, in Erasmus’ *De conscribendis epistolis*. Roper’s letter is full of humanistic thoughts, but expressed plainly and in the vernacular as if she has accepted them all:

It is to me no little comfort, sith I cannot talk with you by such means as I would, at the least way to delight myself among in this bitter time of your absence.

(Margaret More Roper in A. De Silva, 2000, p. 66)

In this correspondence, Roper seems to cast herself in the shadow of her father’s merits and devotion. She writes of More’s “virtuous and ghostly mind,” which is “rid from all corrupt love of worldly things,” making him a “true

worshipper and a faithful servant of God" (p. 66). Roper draws consolation solely from the remembrance of her father's "godly conversation ... wholesome counsel, and virtuous example" to lessen her uneasiness. In focusing on bringing out her father's "heavenly virtues," she appears to neglect her own academic self except for one subtle attempt made in this first correspondence (p. 67). Amid this short letter Roper inserts a phrase in Latin, "*ut sit mens sana in corpore sano*," which positions Roper in the role of a reader (p. 66). She does not provide a citation for this phrase which is suggestive of a sense of a shared intellectual exchange with her father. This phrase is taken from *Satire X* of the Roman poet Juvenal and is usually translated in English as "a healthy mind in a healthy body." It is noteworthy that in quoting Juvenal, Roper is also giving equal importance to both the intellectual as well as the physical aspect. Hence apart from demonstrating her reading, albeit imperceptibly, Roper tries to show conflicting sentiments to her father's strong conviction that what matters solely is his spiritual devotion, his integrity. Nevertheless, Roper does nothing else to further this point. It is clear that her sense of judgement shown in this letter is not strong enough to challenge male sentiments, especially those of her own father.

Roper's second letter, written also in 1534, is more profound. This time her correspondence attempts to lay out and expose her acceptance of her father's faith, leaving only behind her unadorned words: "For I shall not forget how you told us ... that these things were like enough to chance" (p. 98). In this admission, the reader finds a different Roper: one who seems to have been

persuaded by her father's arguments and is no longer trying to convince him to sign the Oath. Neither does she contradict further her father's decision but finds enough fulfillment in her father's letter to give her a sense of an unchangeable conclusion:

Father, if all the world had been given to me, as I be saved it had been a small pleasure, in comparison of the pleasure I conceived of the treasure of your letter, which though it were written with a coal, is worthy in mine opinion to be written in letters of gold.

(Margaret More Roper in A. De Silva, 2000, p. 97)

The detail of More having to write with a piece of coal because his writing implements have been taken away, remains an important part of his posthumous martyrology. Roper admits that her father's "temperate mind" has kept him away from his own family (p. 97). However, she does not condemn her father for this. In recognising her father's temperament, Roper assumes a potentially new political role which brings her to rehearse and remember his "fashion and words" rather than confronting him (p. 98). In perfect compliance with her father's decision and as a perfect exemplar of a most dutiful daughter, she acquiesces in his wish and concentrates on the afterlife. She prays that with the "wholesome counsel and fruitful example of living" she has had from her father, she "may pass and end in *his* true obedient

service," which could well be an allusion to her father as well as to God (p. 98, emphasis added).

However, although she does not try to dissuade her father, her words reveal that she has not yet fully come to terms with the consequences of his decision. It is very likely that Roper might have assumed that her father's resolution would not lead to his death but rather to an eventual royal pardon since a regal acquittal was believed to hold "absolute power" and was "vested with certain flexibility" (Grupp, 1963, p. 51). Moreover, More's strong conviction that only by dying he would set his soul free, would have affected how Roper thought about death and the loss of loved ones. Hence, her conformity to her father's decision may have stemmed from not fully comprehending the real consequences of her father's actions rather than as an act of submission.

Modern critics have categorically cast the way Roper comes to accept her father's frame of mind in the traditional female role of submissiveness. However, these two letters, particularly the inclusion of the second letter in More's Tower correspondence, demonstrate that Roper's celebration of her piety, obedience and filial devotion should not be considered unquestionably as an act of total acquiescence, but also as a consequence of a patriarchal society – including her father's beliefs – which ultimately helped in shaping her behaviour.

The "Alington dialogue" and Roper's own letters in the *Workes* (1557) are not the only evidence portraying the influence that male relatives, family

friends and humanist values exerted in shaping Roper. Her own husband, William Roper, also attempts to frame Margaret as the most obedient and dutiful of all daughters in his work, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*. Written during the reign of Mary I, almost twenty years after More's death, it was not printed until 1626 and by then, Margaret had been dead more than a decade, having died in 1544. William Roper wrote this book to help Nicholas Harpsfield compile his official biography of More which was meant to supplement the 1557 *Workes*. This gives rise to more evidence as to how Margaret's portrayal was exploited to garnish her father's reputation. Very early in the book, Roper recounts an intimate incident of how More had confided only in his daughter about his self-inflicted punishments – chastising himself with whips and wearing a hair shirt under his clothes – since “he especially trusted her,” and how lovingly Margaret used to “wash the same shirt of hair” with which her father used to punish his body (Roper, 1557, p. 26). The impression given to the reader is that Margaret almost assumes the role of More's wife, an intimate confidante, rather than her appropriate position of daughter. Margaret is the only member of the family to get the dispensation to be able to visit him at the Tower by her “earnest suit” (Rastell, 1557, p. 41), besides the fact that when asking for permission for his family to attend his burial, More only asks about Margaret, not the rest of them, “I beseech you, good M. Pope, be a meanst vnto his Maiesty that my daughter *Margaret* may be at my Buriall” (Roper, 1626, p. 164). Moreover, More's last letter before his death is addressed to his daughter, calling her affectionately as “Dear Megg” and stating how much he enjoyed their last encounter: “I never liked your manner better towards me

than when you kissed me last" (Rastell, 1557, p. 54). This differs from the account in the Latin works, where it is Antonio Buonvisi who receives the final letter: a further shaping by Roper. The chance meeting that More refers to is the catalyst for revealing Margaret as a most loving and devoted daughter:

As Syr Thomas More came neere vnto the Tower, his Daughter Roper desirous to see her Father once more before his death, and receaue his last blessing, gaue attendance about the Tower-wharfe, where he was to passe, & so soone as she saw him, hastning vnto him, without respect or care of herselfe, pressed in among the throng of the Guard, that with halbards round about him, and there openly in the sight of all asking him blessing on her knees imbrac'd him, tooke him about the necke, and kissed him.

(William Roper, 1626, p. 160)

This meeting between father and daughter is central to consolidate the image that Margaret is being used to evoke sympathy for More. Her husband scarcely mentions Margaret's learning in his work. There is only a passing reference to it: his "three daughters, & one Sonne" where "all brought vp in vertue & learning, from their very infancy" (Roper, 1626, pp. 5-6). Margaret's role in the *Life* is to be the obedient daughter and to accentuate the pathos of More's death. She is not being portrayed as a scholar in her own right, and even that passing reference pairs learning with virtue. In contrast, she is being

depicted as a loving daughter and it is only this love for her father, which is all consuming, that is emboldening her.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Margaret More Roper's scholarly works and reputation were shaped by the humanist circle that existed around her father, and how she was used to further the ideology and reputation of her father. Her rendition of Erasmus' *Precatio Dominica*, known as *A Devout Treatise*, resulted from her father's friendship with both Erasmus and Vives, and can be seen as an intervention on behalf of Erasmus at a time when he was involved in a controversy about free will. The publication of that work is also rooted in More's household. *A Devout Treatise* is introduced by Hyrde through a prefatory letter addressed to one of Roper's female cousins, preserving a sense of a private work even as it moves into print, whilst Roper's own identity is kept anonymous. Roper's value as a means of promoting her father's posthumous reputation is further seen in the inclusion of her letters in the *Tower Correspondence* when it was published in 1557, and in her depiction as the loving daughter in *The Life of Thomas More* (1626).

However, despite the difficulties for women writers to gain a public voice, Roper manages to achieve this, partly through the mediation of the men around her who help ensure that she preserves the necessary stance of

humility and obedience. This delicate balance is epitomised by the illustration on the title-page of the first edition of *A Devout Treatise*, which depicts her as both a scholar, surrounded by books, and in the pose of a modest woman. Although critics such as Beilin (1987) and Lamb (1999) suggest that Roper has always been shadowed by her father, she nonetheless emerges as a remarkable example of a writer and a scholar, with the confidence and ability to interpret Erasmus' work, subtly adding to it or clarifying its message. This is also true of her correspondence in the 1530s. Although her voice is potentially less distinctive here, particularly in the Alington Letter where she is ventriloquised by her father, these works nonetheless succeed in reaching an audience outside her private circle. As a published, female author, she thus manages to leave her own legacy, not least in equipping and inspiring her own daughter, Mary Roper Clerke Basset, who translated her grandfather's "De tristitia" which is included in Rastell's *The Works of Sir Thomas More* (1557).

Roper thus appears to have negotiated a position as a woman of learning and was more than just being the "dutiful daughter who privately mirrored her father's interests" as stated by Goodrich (2008, p. 1026). In her own way, she opposed the traditional, patriarchal convention that women should be confined to a restricted domestic position by demonstrating that women could have a voice without compromising their chastity, even if this voice needed to be carefully framed and negotiated by male kin. Thus, classifying Roper in a rigidly defined, subservient role occludes her intellectual side. *A Devout Treatise* is enough proof of her skill as a writer and translator.

This chapter has highlighted tensions between the ability of sixteenth-century women to have a public voice and the preservation of a virtuous reputation. The next chapter discusses Margaret More Roper's near contemporary Anne Askew, who – for those of her religious convictions – became an exemplar of female virtue. This was precisely because Askew acquired a public voice although, as happened with Roper's, one which was mediated by men.

## Chapter 2. The *Examinations* of Anne Askew: A Woman's Voice amidst Religious Controversy

Then he asked me, why I has so fewe words? And I answered. God hath geven me the gyfte of knowledge, but not of utteraunce. And Salomon sayth, that a woman of fewe words, is a gyfte of God, Prover. 19.

(Anne Askew, 1545, cited in Elaine V. Beilin, 1996, p. 51)

As discussed in the previous chapter, Margaret More Roper's work and reputation were mediated by the men around her. The same can be said regarding the publication history of Anne Askew's examinations for heresy. Both its editors, John Bale and John Foxe, shape Askew's interpretation as a result of their respective circumstances and their different goals. The notable difference between Roper and Askew is that Roper was brought up in a strict, Catholic household of the noted humanist and statesman Thomas More and she fitted well the description of the obedient and pious figure who could let her voice be ventriloquised. On the other hand, Askew, a supporter of the "New Faith," challenged conventional doctrine and expected gender roles. Despite such differences, both these women had their works mediated by men, and their images shaped by male writers for ideological purposes.

Elaine V. Beilin describes Bale's *Examinations* of Askew's account as "part spiritual autobiography, part dramatic dialogue" but also as "an extraordinary history of political and religious life in mid-sixteenth century

London, written by a woman with an unflinching and often ironic gaze" (Beilin, 1996, p. xv). Askew's detailed and chronological account of her imprisonments and interrogations for heresy is presented by Beilin as one of the "texts of cultural and literary interest" by women writers in England (Beilin, 1996, p. ix). Askew's persecution, possibly sparked by her affiliations to other Protestant women surrounding Queen Katherine Parr, is recorded in her narrative which is divided into two parts. The *First Examination*, dating to around March of 1545, details the conflict with the civil authorities as she was interrogated for heresy by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Martin Bowes, and by the Bishop of London's Chancellor, Edmund Bonner. She was imprisoned in the City of London on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1545, at the Counter Prison, where she spent twelve days until her cousin, Christopher Brittany, bailed her out. She was arraigned again shortly after, on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1545 in the Guildhall on suspicion of speaking against the rite of the altar (the Eucharist or Mass) along with two others, Joan Sawtre and Robert Lukine. However, when the only witness against them appeared unreliable, they were released. Our understanding of Askew in this first part is confined to witnessing the events which took place during her interrogations. We follow the detailed account at every stage of her detention as she skillfully attempts "to evade being pinned down on her definition of the Eucharist and avoid the charge of heresy" (Pender, 2012, p. 39).

The *Second Examination* records her second arrest in June 1546 when she was confined to the London prison of Newgate. This time her interrogators were members of the clergy who tortured her and sentenced her to be burnt

at the stake, the standard punishment for heretics. Although she pleaded for mercy and justice to both King Henry VIII and Thomas Wriothesley, the Lord Chancellor, she was instead sent to the Tower of London by Sir Richard Rich, the king's councillor. During her interrogations in the Tower, she was put on the rack and tortured even though such "desperate measures" against a gentlewoman were in fact in opposition to "the law and unusual in practice" (Beilin, 1996, p. xxvii). Her determination to be silent during her interrogations, torture, and final death, as well as her strong faith in the reformed religion, made her appear as a heroine in the eyes of her contemporary Protestant culture. Evidence of this is seen in the publications that her martyrdom inspired: besides her own *Examinations*, these include a ballad entitled, *The Balade which Anne Askewe made and sange whan she was in Newgate* (c.1546) and the inclusion of her account in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563), with three other editions following in 1570, 1576 and 1583.

*Askew's First Examination* was first edited and published by the ardent reformer John Bale in 1546 with her *Second Examination* published a year later in 1547.<sup>4</sup> No original manuscript of Askew's testimony survives. Bale claims in the *Second Examination* that the said manuscript was smuggled out of England "by serten duche merchauntes" after Askew was burnt at the stake when he was in exile on the Continent (p. 88). Thus, Bale's record of Askew's testimony was based on this manuscript, supplemented with additional information gathered from unnamed sources, along with Bale's preface, and

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<sup>4</sup> All references to Anne Askew's *Examinations* by John Bale will be taken from *The Examinations of ANNE ASKEW* by Elaine V. Beilin, 1996, Oxford University Press and will be cited by page-numbers.

Bale's own commentary, "elucyda[ting]" Askew's text (p. 1). The *First Examination* was printed in November at Wesel in the Duchy of Cleves in 1546. The location is misleadingly written as "Marpurg in the lande of Hessen," probably to guarantee Bale's protection since his text was deemed "utterly misreported" by Bishop Stephen Gardiner in one of his letters during the 1540s (Muller, 1933, p. 293). The alleged location of its printing is also a signal of ideological allegiance, as it was a version of the false imprint used on a number of early reformist works: William Tyndale's *Obedience of a Christen Man* (Marlborow in the lande of Hesse, 1528); John Frith, *A pistle to the Christen reader* (Marlborow in the lande of Hesse, 1529); Richard Ullerston, *Acompendius olde treatyse, shewynge howe that we oughte to haue the scripture in Englysshe* (Marlborow in the lande of Hessen, 1530); and William Barlow, *A proper dyaloge* (Marborow in the land of Hessen, 1530). In another letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> May 1547, Bishop Gardiner protested about Bale's edition of Askew's text to Edward Seymour, Lord Protector, defining it as "very pernicious, sedicious, and slanderous" (Muller, 1933, p. 277). It was, in fact, seen as a threat to the Catholic authorities. The *Second Examination*, published in January 1547, is also said to originate in "Marpurg." The most obvious difference between the *First* and *Second Examination* is that while in the first Askew appears to endorse the strategy of silence, in the *Second Examination* she is more direct and "her voice becomes more expansive, and it takes on the assertions of faith" (Coles, 2002, p. 520).

However, there is a consensus amongst scholars that the authenticity of Askew's voice has been compromised by Bale, even though both shared the

same religious beliefs. Beilin, for example, states that this discrepancy between author and editor arises mainly because “while Bale uses Askew’s text to attack the Roman Catholic Church and to disseminate Protestant propaganda ... Askew’s resistance consists of the act of bearing witness to her faith and the creation of her own text to record her conflicts with the authorities” (Beilin, 1996, p. xxix). Moreover, while feminist scholars are enthusiastic about having a prototype of an early modern woman who was not only capable of reading and interpreting the Scripture, but of writing about it, this has also provoked feelings of disappointment and regret since her original copy has never been found. This lack of an original source gave way to the belief that her biography has been “tainted” by the interference of her two male editors, Bale and Foxe.

Scholars have even disagreed regarding these two published versions of Askew’s testimony by Bale and Foxe respectively. There is almost universal agreement that Bale distorts Askew’s voice. Indeed, John King states that Bale rather “distorts the victim’s own fashioning of herself” (King, 1996, p. ix). Moreover, Beilin writes that Bale has “worked methodically to shape a text that supported his own agenda in the mid-1540s” (Beilin, 1996, p. xxxiv), and forcefully accuses him of his culpability in the “deauthorization” of Askew’s text (Beilin, 2005, p. 347). Kimberly Anne Coles calls Bale’s *elucydacyon* “invasive annotations” intended to reshape “Askew’s narrative to suit the purposes of Protestant polemic” (Coles, 2002, p. 531). Theresa D. Kemp claims that in focusing on Askew’s “feminine frailty,” Bale has diminished “the strength of her feisty responses” (Kemp, 1999, p. 1030). However, there is less consensus about

Foxe's intrusion into Askew's account amongst critics. While Diane Watt approves of Foxe's "godly testimony of Askew" (Watt, 1997, p. 110), other researchers such as Thomas S. Freeman and Sarah Elizabeth Wall suggest that "Foxe's shaping force in the text was as strong as Bale's, if more subtle" (Freeman & Wall, 2001, p. 1165).

This chapter looks at the distortion of female-authored texts by male authorities. It discusses the impact of Bale's and Foxe's intervention in relation to the presentation of Askew's text and questions the degree to which her testimony has been shaped by these two male editors. While the current debate on Askew's *Examinations* by modern scholars such as Beilin (1996), Watt (1997), Kemp (1999) and Coles (2002) all seem to agree on the idea that Askew's text has been misrepresented by male authors to suit their religious agendas, this chapter takes a more sympathetic view of Askew's sixteenth-century editors, claiming that Askew's voice is not effaced as entirely as Beilin and others suggest. Askew still emerges as a highly articulate, educated sixteenth-century woman writer at the end. To understand the role that these male editors had on Askew's text, this chapter breaks into five sections. The first three examine Bale's treatment of Askew, looking first at the way in which she is fashioned by the visual and prefatory paratexts, before moving on to examine her presentation within the main body of the work, and culminating in a comparison of Bale's treatment of Askew with his treatment of another "martyr" figure: Sir John Oldcastle. The fourth section analyses how Foxe has presented Askew in his work, *Acts and Monuments* (1563). The final section

considers Askew's representation in the ballads written about her, and which claim to come from her pen. Running through the chapter is a concern with the challenges that these male authors and editors faced when making Askew's outspokenness and unconventional lifestyle acceptable to their readers.

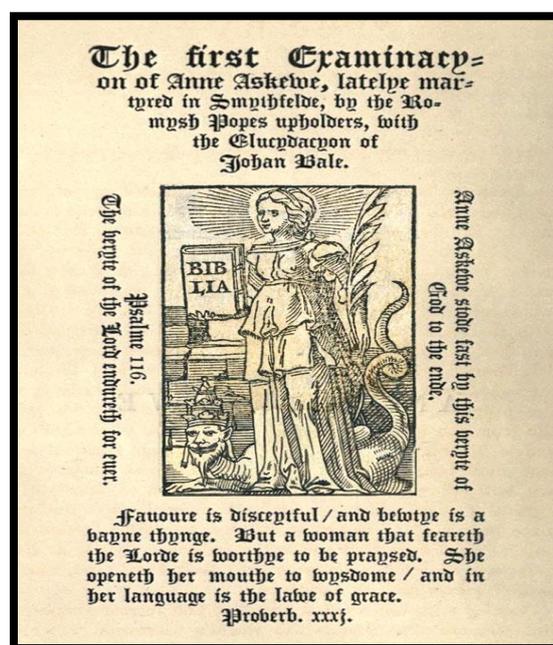
### The Presentation of Anne Askew in the *Examinations*: Visual and Prefatory Paratexts

Askew was not unique in the sixteenth century in having another author act as intermediary. This was usual practice, especially when work was published posthumously, and was a technique that Bale used elsewhere, for example in publishing the story of Sir John Oldcastle, a fifteenth-century Lollard (a work explored in more detail later in this chapter). Bale's role as editor was not influenced by a question of gender – Askew's being deemed weak – but it was more the fact that when the *First Examination* started being circulated Askew was by then dead, as was Oldcastle. She was executed in July 1546, and her first account was published posthumously in November of the same year. Hence, Bale has undoubtedly done important work as a mediator in order to bring out a woman's writing which might have otherwise remained hidden.

Nevertheless, Bale's decision to make Askew's account known publicly inevitably shapes how readers perceive Askew. The title, which is one of the elements in a text which provides a very important link between author and

reader, influences the readers' perception of the book and its author since it anchors the work in a recent cause célèbre: *The first examinacyon of Anne Askewe: lately martyred in Smythfelde, by the Romysh popes vpholders, with the elucydacyon of Iohan Bale*. This same title is again repeated at the start of Askew's *First Examination* after the prefatory material, presenting Askew as a martyr, even though she survives this first examination (p. 19). This title sends a polemic message against the Catholic religion: a woman who has become "martyred" at the hands of the "Romysh" pope. Additionally, a slight variation to the title appears on another later copy (STC 849): *The First Examination of the **worthy seruant of God**, Mystresse Anne Askew **the younger daughter of Syr VVilliam Askew Knight of Lincolne-shire**, lately martyred in Smith-fielde, by the Romish **antichristian broode*** (emphases added). This title does more than the previous title in emphasising the purity, social respectability, and physical vulnerability of Askew as it is not any longer just a text about "Anne Askew" but is about "the worthy seruant of God" and "the younger daughter" of a "knight of Lincolne-shire" who was put to death by the Roman antichrist. The focus that this title places on Askew's gentry status and her death at such a tender age gives the impression of her being a more pitiable sufferer in the eyes of her readers. This alternative title also stresses Askew's status as a dependent – the daughter of a father – so giving her less autonomy than in the other title. Further to that, it strikes a more polemic note, in its more negative portrayal of her Catholic opponents, who are stripped of both claims to be Christian (deemed "antichristian") and even of humanity (described, like animals, as a "broode").

That same controversial drive is found in the woodcuts which help fashion the reception of Bale's Askew. The illustration found on the title-page of the *First Examination* (1546) depicts a woman girdled by a halo keeping a Bible in her right hand and a martyr's palm in her left (Fig. 2.1). The figure could be allegorical, or it could be Askew herself, in her "shift" (dress) ready to be burnt. She is seen towering over a beast wearing the crown of the Roman papacy. The sacrificial woman may be a representation of "truth," "faith" or "martyrdom." However, the fact that the "papish beast" is pictured as being very much alive is a reminder of the world of darkness. The beast is shown continuing to pose a threat towards believers of the New Faith. It thus prompts the readers to remain cautious: the text is not merely celebrating Askew; it is using her as an example that the readers and believers need to follow.



John Bale, 1546, Title-Page, STC (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) 848, British Library (Fig. 2.1)

There are three inscriptions which enclose this woodcut: one at each side of the woodcut and one underneath it. The one standing on the left-hand side, which reads “The veryte of the lorde endureth for euer,” is said to have been taken from Psalm 116 (Psalm 117 in the Geneva translation), indicating that Bale was still following an old-style Vulgate numbering. Directly opposite, on the right-hand side, we have the words: “Anne Askewe stode fast by thys veryte of God to the ende.” By pairing a Biblical quotation with an appraisal of Askew, Bale was helping to establish her saintly status. Just underneath the woodcut, Bale includes an epigraph, again taken from the Bible but swapping the order of the verses, citing Proverbs 31:26 and 31:30 out of numerical order. This leaves the vocal woman triumphant, rather than shifting from the vocal woman to the usual stereotypes about female beauty:

Fauoure is disceyffull / and bewtye is vayne thyng. But a woman that feareth the lorde / is worthye to be prayesd. She openeth her mouthe to wysdome / and in her language is the lawe of grace. Prouerb. XXXI.

The Biblical version is as follows:

She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of grace.

(Tyndale Bible, 31:26)

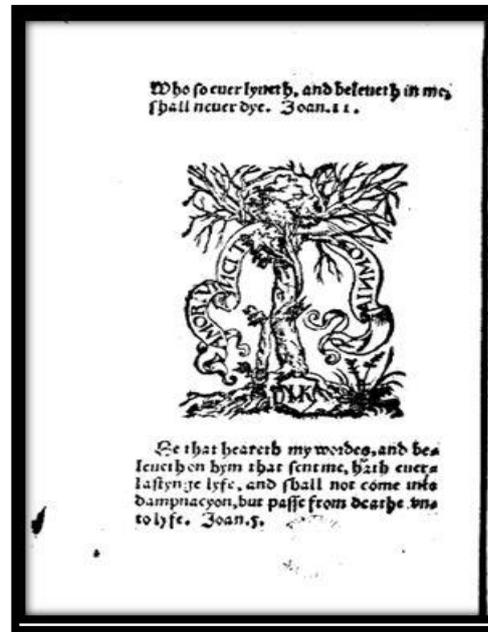
As for favor, it is deceitful, and beauty is vain thing: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she is worthy to be praised.

(Tyndale Bible, 31:30)

Bale is praising the wisdom of women who declare the word of Christ. The connotative function of this proverb goes totally contrary to St Paul's teachings who advocates that women should keep "silence" and to be "under obedience" constantly (1 Corinthians, 14:34, Tyndale Bible). Bale is actually giving credibility to Askew's voice, singling her out as an ideal Christian martyr to follow as an example of faith since the title page is invoking "a justification of women's right to speak that would not have been available to Askew during her inquisition" (Pender, 2012, p. 35). Through these inscriptions, Askew is portrayed as a woman who could eloquently defend herself through her involvement with the Bible: a woman whom we can empathise with for her suffering and who braved death for the sake of her faith. Askew is, thus, shown very humanly: an eloquent woman who experiences pain but is also resilient in the face of death. The fact that Bale supports Askew's account by inscriptions taken from the Psalms offers more Biblical authority not only to her but also to her text.

Bale's use of Biblical imagery and direct quotations to frame the reception of Askew recurs at the end of the volume. On the last leaf of the *First*

*Examination* there is another woodcut portraying the tree of eternal life, the motto “Amor Vincit Omnia:”<sup>5</sup>



This is the printer's mark of Johann van Kempen of Cologne as can be seen by the initial “IVK” at the bottom of the tree. Presumably this could be further misdirection to protect the printer's identity as Beilin affirms that “the printer of the *Examinations* was Dirik van der Straten” (1996, p. xlvi). Beilin's claim comes from the fact that Van der Straten has apparently “printed a series of works for Bale,” all of which may be linked “by their type and woodcut initials” (Beilin, 1996, p. xlvi). Emphatically, supporting Bale's portrayal of Askew as a resilient martyr, there is also an inscription on top taken from John 11 which says: “Who

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<sup>5</sup> This image is not from the *Second Examination*, but is actually the final page of the item that is bound up with it in the British Library copy (BL General Reference Collection C.21.a.4). This is a single leaf, catalogued under the title, “The Voyce of Anne Askewe;” which is in fact the final leaf of the *First Examination*.

forever lyveth, and belevth in me, shall never dye." Underneath the woodcut we then have the message, from John 5, which reads:

He that heareth my wordes, and beleueth in hym that sent me,  
hath euerlastyng lyfe, and shall not come into dampnacyon,  
but passe from deathe unto lyfe.

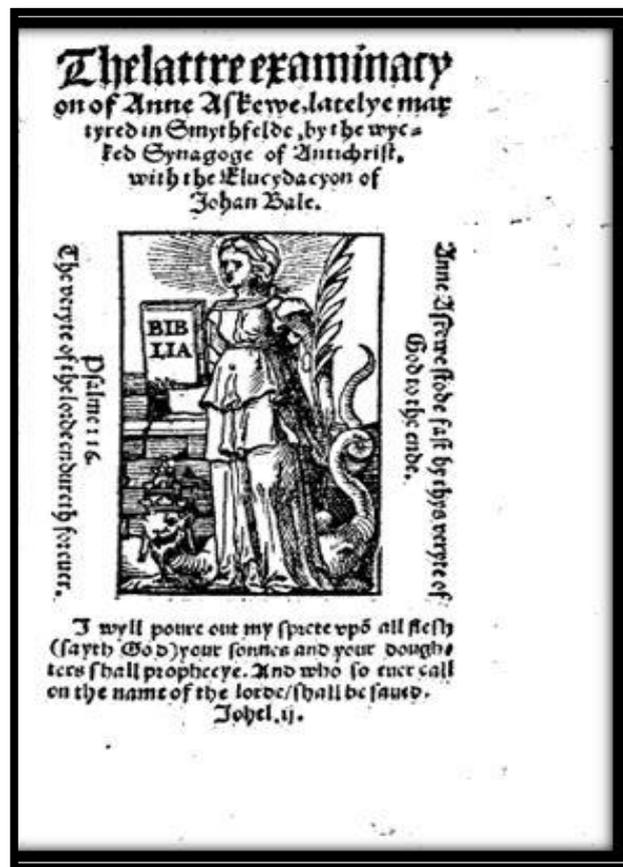
It is clear from the *First Examination* that the message that Bale wanted to deliver of Askew was one where the reader can empathise with her plight, but not solely. Bale also wanted the reader to identify with the cause of the reformation and understand the hardships reformers endured at the hands of the Catholic clergy.

Bale's shaping of Askew continues in the *Second Examination* (1547) by reproducing the same woodcut of the allegorical figure standing over the beast (Fig. 2.2) with a variation in the inscription under the woodcut:

I will poure out my sprete upon all flesh (sayth God) your sonnes and your  
doughters shall prophecye. And who so ever call on the name of the  
lorde / shall be saued. Jobel. ii.

This new inscription underlines not only Bale's support of the Protestant cause, but it also adds importance to the female sex by including the word "daughters." He opts to cite a Biblical verse (Joel 2:28) that acknowledges female voices while also editing Joel 2 so that he combines verse 28 and 32.

This brings the Biblical endorsement of women taking on a specifically religious role of “prophecy[ing]” into closer proximity with a reassurance of the salvation of all those who are vocal, and “call on the name of the lorde.” The choice and editing of the inscription help promote the righteousness of Askew’s actions.



John Bale, 1547, Title-Page (Fig. 2.2)

Ultimately, the implications that these quotations carry are specifically spiritual. Askew is depicted as a saintly figure who has suffered at the hands of the Catholic Church and is venerated as a physical and conceptual figure at the heart of the New Faith’s philosophy. Under this ideological framework, the

representation of Askew as a woman who dared to speak but is punished for her actions paints a clear division between Catholics and Protestants. The Protestant religion is depicted as giving women a new religious role: one where they are not afraid to speak. On the other hand, the Catholic faith is shown remaining wedged in old beliefs, perceiving vocal women as unnatural and threatening, therefore needing to be suppressed.

Possibly, however, Bale might have realised that promoting the voice of a Protestant martyr in this manner would not have been favourable with everybody but with a selective few, mainly those in support of Askew's own faith. Hence, he writes long prefaces to both the *First* and *Second Examinations*, addressed to a specific type of readership: "John Bale to the Christen readers" (p. 3 & p. 75). This marks a clear distinction in the audience of this text: it effectively defines the reformed faith as the Christian faith, denying "Romysh" types the right to call themselves Christian, as he does on one version of the title-page previously discussed, calling them "antichristian" (STC 849). In the preface of the *First Examination*, he emphasises the predicament that Protestant martyrs go through, conceivably with the intention of making them appear as saintly. Bale puts Askew's suffering in a wider context, by citing Bedas (Bede), describing "soche horryble persecucyon" of the "most gloryouse martyrs unto Christ" (p. 3). Bede (c.673) was a monk, historian and theologian at the Northumbrian monastery at Wearmouth-Jarrow. He was considered as the most accomplished scholar of his time, having written significant Biblical and historical books (ODNB). When Bale directs our attention to Askew's plight, it is to make an elaborate,

theological and political discourse about Christian martyrs who, like Askew, had been executed for their belief. Three men were also executed with Askew. These were John Lascelles, who was an ardent Protestant and Sewer in Henry VIII's Privy Chamber, John Hadlam, who was a tailor, and John Hemley, formerly an Observant friar (ODNB). Bale's comparison of Askew and her three companions – Lascelles, Hadlam, and Hemley – to William Tyndale and Robert Barnes, executed in 1536 and 1540 respectively for their reformist beliefs, continues to enforce this idea of human sacrifice due to the "Antichristes vyolence" which "hath sent [martyrs] hens in fyre to heaven" (p. 4). In addition, he presents Askew as still very young, "a gentywoman verye yonge ... about the xxv. yeare of her age," intended to instil in the reader a sensitivity towards her suffering while, at the same time, making her tormentors appear even more ruthless (p. 7). Concluding this preface, Bale asserts that the sacrifice of these Protestant martyrs, who stood firm against "the malygnaunt Synagoge of Sathan," brought them "verye gloryouse" before God (p. 5).

In presenting Askew and her three companions as Protestant martyrs who nevertheless "boldelye objected their bodyes to the deathe for the undefyled Christen beleve" (p. 5), Bale continues to "denigrate by comparison the elaborate, flamboyant saints of Roman Catholicism" (Pender, 2012, p. 37). Cathy Shrank describes this attack on the Catholic Church as epitomising Bale's "virulent brand of anti-papist propaganda" (Shrank, 2015, p. 74). However, Bale's intentions are not constrained solely to an attack on the clergy. Bale is also according Askew a position, in line with other great martyrs, as a humble figure who, through showing great strength and resilience, is able

to defeat her enemies and serve God till the end. He is therefore presenting Askew, central to her story, as an example for everyone to follow and, therefore, not an unreachable glorified, spiritual being. Like “Lydia the purple seller,” who was the first recorded woman who converted to the Christian faith, together with “the holye mayde Celia,” one of the most famous of Roman martyrs, and “lyke faithful yonge woman called Blandina,” also a Christian martyr, Askew is presented as a perfect example of martyrdom (pp. 9-10). Askew’s resilience and sacrifice is made especially evident by the apparent similarities with Blandina. Like Askew, Blandina endured extreme torture when she refused to recant and suffered martyrdom in 177 during the reign of Marcus Aurelius despite seeing the torment of her companions. Blandina was also “yonge and tender” and of “frayle of nature”, but she too was “made most stronge by hys grace”, namely, that of Christ (p. 10). Bale praises Blandina’s, as well as Askew’s, undaunted spirit in front of torture:

Blandina at the stake shewed a vysage unterrified. So ded Anne Askewe a countenance stowte, myghtye and earnest. Infatygable was the sprete of Blandina. So was the sprete of Anne Askewe. The love of Jesus Christ, the gyft of the holye Ghost, and the hope of the crowne of martyrdome, greatlye mytygated the payne in Blandina. So ded these iii. worthye graces, the terrour of all tormentes in Anne Askewe. The stronge sprete of Christ gave stomack to Blandina, both to laugh and

daunce. The same myghtye sprete (and not the popes desperate sprete) made Anne Askewe both to rejoyce and synge in the preson.

(John Bale in E. V. Beilin, 1996, p. 12)

This passage challenges the idea put forward by scholars, such as Kemp (1999), that Bale might be trying to expose Askew's fragility as a woman to advance his reformation ideas. He attributes to Askew the qualities of a warrior whose "stowte, myghtye and ernest" visage together with an "infatygable" spirit make her rejoice and sing while imprisoned. Her battle is a holy one and her rivals appear "desperate" in the face of all this courage. Bale's meaning here is subtle but a powerful one. By ascribing to Askew masculine, almost combatant, qualities and paralleling her with an early Christian saint, Blandina, he is implying that Askew was no ordinary, weak woman but a remarkable one thanks to the strength her faith gave her. Certainly, Bale is doing more than just pushing forward his agenda. He is also showcasing Askew's resilient nature by comparing her with other great women who have undergone similar trials but who, nevertheless, were made saints by the same church which has put Askew to death. As a result, Bale presents Askew as having been exonerated from all worldly sins: "Thus hath not the fyre taken Anne Askewe all whole from the worlde, but left here unto it more pure, perfyght, and precyouse than afore" (p. 13). She has been purified through fire, so the dead Askew is more perfect and precious than the living one. He reaches out in defence of Askew, not just to claim her as an exemplary reformation martyr, but also as a woman

who has remained constant till the end. Hence Bale gives an opinion not solely on the act of martyrdom *per se*, but also on Askew as the spirited and constant woman.

However, there was one impediment that Bale needed to overcome to present Askew as a perfect exemplar: the necessity to negotiate her less than ideal reputation. Askew's infelicitous marriage continued to contribute to her controversial character. She married a Catholic husband, a certain "Mastre Kyme" (p. 92), who was first betrothed to her elder sister who passed away before the marriage took place. Her father offered Askew as a replacement and she "was compelled agaynst her wyll or fre consent to marrye" when she was about fifteen years (p. 92). The couple had two children and Bale writes that she "demeaned her selfe lyke a Christen Wyfe" (p. 93). Bale is using the term "demeaned" to mean "behaved" (OED, 6a), rather than the modern version meaning to lower one's condition (OED, 2a). However, Askew's different faith from that of her husband, where she was often seen "readynge of the sacred Bible," quickly brought her to seek a divorce (p. 93). Asking for a divorce during much of the sixteenth century and beyond was deemed as "unattainable and a mostly unsought phenomenon" (Boulton, 1996, p. 143). Hence, the fact that she wanted a legal separation from her Catholic husband would have hardly received any approval by her conservative compatriots.

In the *Examinations*, Bale takes a direct position disclosing details about Askew's scandalous situation with the risk of casting a shadow over the circulation of the work, as well as endangering his own reputation by

sponsoring the work of a woman of a rebellious nature. However, he willingly chose to discuss openly her marriage and negotiates Askew's potentially problematic reputation by presenting her as an innocent victim of her father's plan whilst also effacing her marital status on the title-page, where she is Askew (not Kyme), and named as a "daughter," not a wife. Moreover, he shifts the responsibility for this separation onto matters of religious conviction, blaming her husband's irascible response to his wife's Protestant beliefs: "she so offended the prestes ...that he [Kyme] at their suggestion, vyolentye drove her oute of hys howse" (p. 93). Bale also insinuates that Kyme had been influenced by the Catholic priests as he "at their suggestion" and through force chooses to drive her out of the house. The image that Bale gives of the Catholic Church is one which encourages hostility instead of defending the weak, a religion which endorses animosity rather than promoting harmony. Moreover, when supporting his argument by quoting from St Paul's doctrine (1 Corinthians, 7:13), Bale rewords it slightly to maintain that it was legitimate for Askew to leave her husband as he writes: "If a faytfull woman have an unbelevynge husbände, whych wyll not tarrye with her, she may leave hym" (p. 93). The actual quote from St Paul states:

And the woman whych hath to her husbände an infidell, if he consent to dwell wyth her, let her not put hym awaye. For the vnbeleuyng husbände is sanctified by the wyfe, and the vnbeleuyng wyfe is sanctified by the husbände. Or els were your chyldren vncleane: but

nowe are they holye. But and yf the vnbeleuyng departe, let him departe. A brother or a syster is not in subieccyon to soche. But God hath called vs in peace.

(1 Corinthians, 7:13-15, Tyndale Bible)

In the Biblical version, it is the unbelieving who are permitted to leave and the believing are told to allow that. However, Bale reinterprets this, granting Askew the agency to separate. Hence, Askew “thought her selfe free from that uncomelye kynde of coacted marryage, by thys doctryne of S. Paule 1. Cor. 7” (p. 93). “She coulde not thinkye hyme [Kyme] worthy of her marryage” when he so “spyghtfullye hated God the chefe autor of marryage,” concludes Bale (p. 93). Askew, continues Bale, was able to renounce her marriage “for a brother or syster is not in subjeccyon ... specyallye where as the marryage afore is unlawfull” (p. 93). Thus, Bale demonstrates his support for Askew’s decision to leave her husband. When he writes that Askew “sought of the law a dyvorcement from hym” (p. 93), Bale is suggesting that Askew’s request for a divorce was lawful and respectful towards the authorities by using the proper channels. Therefore, this inevitably would have impacted negatively on the readers’ perception of the conservative Catholic Church who, according to Bale, ostracised Askew illegitimately. While Kemp asserts that Bale prefers to discuss her turbulent marriage “in order to transform her into a representative of true Protestant saint” (Kemp, 1999, p. 1030), my view is that Bale also wants to portray Askew as a victim of circumstances. By providing the readers with

the contextual facts of Askew's life, he gives her voice more reliability as a woman who suffered and was a victim in the hands of the Catholic clergy. Building on from this idea, the next part of the chapter will demonstrate that through other paratextual techniques found in the *Examinations*, Bale is actually granting agency to Askew's voice.

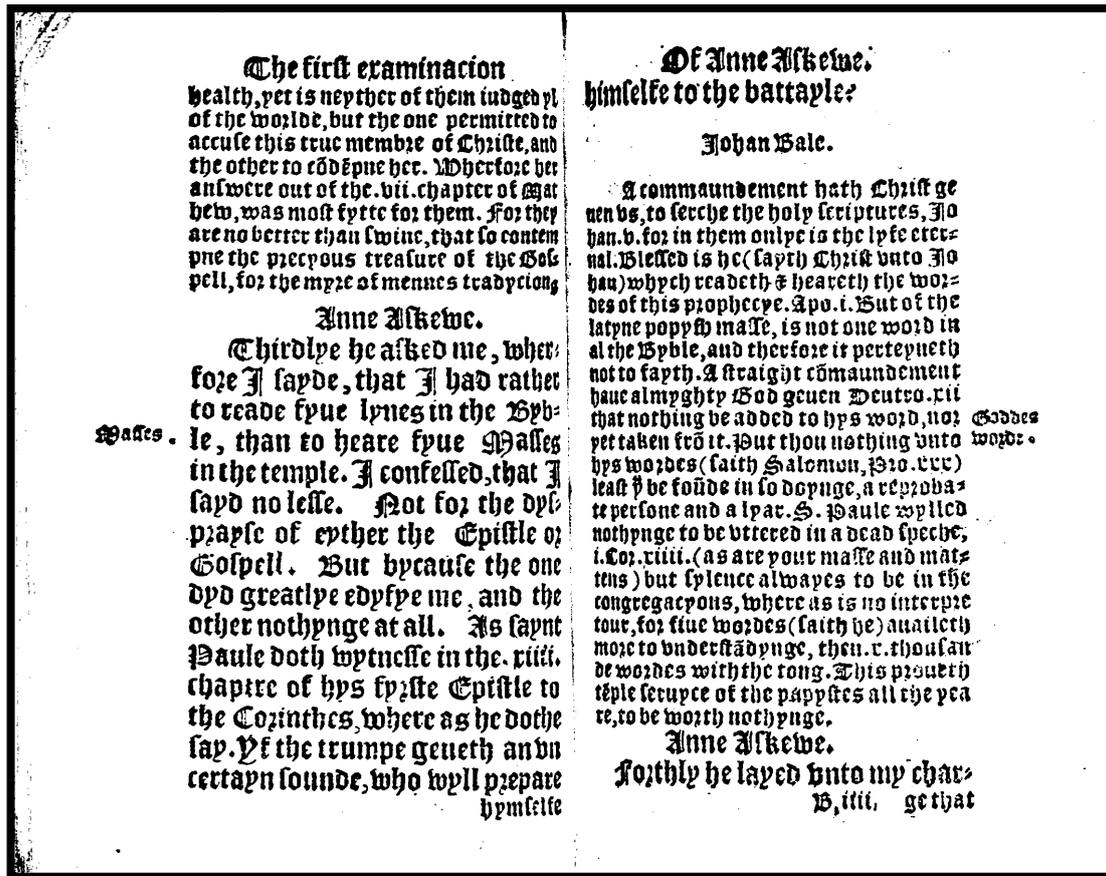
The Presentation of Anne Askew's *Examinations* by John Bale:

Rhetorical Devices

Having established how Bale uses the prefatory and visual paratexts of the *Examinations* not only to promote his own ideological agenda but also to create compassion for Askew's suffering, this next section will consider how Bale's textual format is channeled to promote – not occlude – Askew's voice. By reviewing stylistic devices such as the structural layout of Askew's text as well as Bale's presentation of his and Askew's words, this section will argue that through paratextual techniques Askew's authorial voice does not get suppressed by Bale's interference as some modern critics have assumed.

Firstly, although we cannot be certain if it was Bale's decision or his printer's, the text is presented with Askew's and his words in distinct text paragraphs; his commentary appears in smaller font (Fig. 2.3). This ensures a distinct stylistic division between Askew and Bale and gives prominence to Askew's speeches. Moreover, Askew's words are distinguished from Bale's by their greater simplicity; Bale is much more verbose and resorts to dense,

Scriptural explanations. Pender describes Bale's commentaries as part of a "robust prefatory rhetoric" (Pender, 2012, p. 37). This, however, does not "de-authorise" Askew as Beilin contends (Beilin, 2005, p. 237); rather, Bale's clarifications serve to establish that Askew's words are reinforced by the Scripture. Askew could not perform this on her own due to various edicts which restricted women from public "gospelling." The Act for the Advancement of True Religion in 1543 criminalised "public reading [of Scripture] for all English women, regardless of rank" (Hackel, 2003, p. 102). Therefore, this meant that Askew, as all other women, was not free to discuss Biblical readings in public which positions Bale's intervention as not only appropriate but also necessary. In the *First Examination*, for example, Askew asserts her beliefs as brief but bold statements, while Bale is left to provide an extensive explanation of Askew's replies through elaborate Scriptural examples. Amongst the various saintly figures he mentions, we find those of Christ, St Peter, St Paul and St John, so that the "different voices of authority are the means to prove the truth of his claim" (Coles, 2002, p. 530). This type of strategy is consistent throughout Askew's whole testimony showing that Bale's style does not often change.



John Bale, *First Examination*, 1546 (Fig. 2.3)

Secondly, Bale's systematic and embellished explanation of Askew's replies contrasts with the general view held by some modern critics, such as Beilin (1996) and Coles (2002), that Bale is overpowering Askew's voice. An alternative perspective shows that Bale is only adorning what Askew has said, having full confidence in her replies without manipulating them. He acts as an intermediary to conform her answers to sixteenth-century patriarchal rules which silenced the female voice and, therefore, makes Askew's replies more acceptable to the public. For instance, at the very start of the *First Examination* during Askew's questioning about the spirit of God by Christopher Dare, her

inquisitor, we see how Bale expounds Askew's answer through intricate Biblical references. While Askew's response is twelve words long ("if ... awaye"), Bale's elucidation is ninety-one words long, almost eight times as long:

Seventhly he asked me, if I had the sprete of God in me? I answered if I had not, I was but a reprobate or cast awaye.

(Anne Askew in E. V. Beilin, 1996, p. 24)

Electe are we of God (sayth Peter) through the sanctyfyenge of the sprete. i. Petri i. In everye true Christen belever dwelleth the sprete of God. Jo. 14. Their sowles are the sanctyfyed temples of the holye Ghost. 1. Corin. 3. He that hath not the sprete of Christ (sayth Paule) is non of Christes, Roma. 8. To them is the holye Ghost geven, whych heareth the Gospell and beleveth it, and not unto them whych wyll be justyfyed by their workes. Gala. 2. All these worthye scryptures confirme her saynge.

(John Bale in E. V. Beilin, 1996, p. 24)

In this passage, we only witness Bale confirming what Askew has replied to Dare. He does nothing to contradict her words; he only accentuates them with Biblical references. This signals that Askew's replies are well embedded in the Scripture and therefore her words appear more convincing and reliable. The fact that it takes a male author to unravel a simple answer and to adorn it with religious allusions does nothing to diminish Askew's stance as a writer and speaker. On the other hand, his embellishments of Askew's oral confession

makes it possible to discover a different side of Askew, one which would have remained hidden and which feminist scholars such as Kemp (1999), Beilin (1996) and Coles (2002) have found troubling. They believe that such interruptions on Bale's part seem to control Askew's voice and make her appear as the "stereotypical weak female made strong by God" (Beilin, 1987, p. 79). However, through Bale's recording of her interrogations, Askew comes across as a combative, studious woman who read the Bible "off" (p. 93). She may well have been silent in front of the priests when found reading the Bible in public – at Lincoln Cathedral Askew recalls the priests approached her two at a time "myndynge to have spoken to me, yet went they theyr wayes agayne with out wordes speakynge" (p. 56) – however, the fact that she cites the Scripture to her interrogators with such confidence denotes her ability. A case in point is when she is asked by Dare if she would choose "to reade fyve lynes in the Bible, than to heare fyve masses in the temple." Askew declares "that I sayd no lesse," since "the one ded greatlye edyfye me, and the other nothings at all." She, then, continues by saying that "saynt Paule doth witnesse in the xiiii chapter of hys first Epistle to Corinthes" that "If the trumpe geveth an uncertayne sounde, who wyll prepare hymselfe to the battayle?" (p. 21).

Undeniably, it is also true that even Askew was aware that she could not present herself as too self-assured in front of her examiners. Several of her responses, but also some of the most defiant, are in fact a rendering of silence. In Tudor times, not responding to one's examiners during a trial "was equated with guilt and malice" (Geng, 2012, p. 668). However, according to Penelope Geng, playing the part of the "naïve reader" is beneficial "not only for Askew

but also for the examiners" (2012, p. 673). In a conversation between Bishop Bonner and her cousin Brittainne, Bonner claims that Askew's gender makes it possible to be "nothyng deceyved" by her (p. 62). The conventional assumption of 'weakness' found inherently in women helps not only Bonner to avoid humiliation, but also Askew to be released unscathed, at least for as long as she possibly can. Indeed, when the Lord Mayor questions her about whether a mouse that consumes the host can be supposed to have "receyved God," she gives no answer: "I made them no answer, but smyled" (p. 27). She also manages to frustrate her inquisitors frequently by devaluing the importance of their office by exhibiting a "wordless" attitude. When, for instance, Bishop Bonner inquires "whye [she] had so fewe wordes," she answers gently but emphatically at the same time: "God hath geven me the gyfte of knowlege, but not of utteraunce. And Salomon sayth, that a woman of fewe wordes, is a gyfte of God. Prover. 19" (p. 51). Askew is purposely representing herself as the ideal image of the humble and silent woman even as she cites the Bible. Ironically, by citing the Scripture directly, she is openly defying the imposition set by the authorities to avoid preaching. However, her "silence" is also strategic because it allows her to avoid being trapped by her answers to her inquisitors.

While "silence" was one key strategy for Askew not to appear too self-assured, another of equal importance is the use of replying with a question. Both strategies must be considered as Askew's choice to voice her opinion in a way which was acceptable rather than Bale opting to manipulate Askew's

text. By purposely refraining from exhibiting a “gospelling” behaviour, Askew manages to confuse her oppressors deliberately. In an exchange with Dare, he asks her: “yf [she] ded not beleve that the sacrament hangynge over the aultre was the verye bodye of Christ reallye.” To which Askew counter-questions:

Then I demaunded thys questyon of hym, wherfore S. Steven was stoned to deathe? And he sayd, he coulde not tell. Then I answered, that no more wolde I assoyle hys vayne questyon.

(Anne Askew in E. V. Beilin, 1996, p. 20)

In her reply, Askew was not only avoiding self-implication, but at the same time she was drawing a comparison with St Stephen's martyrdom. She was, thus, arguing a theological case, but in a very tactful way. She makes this Biblical allusion about the stoning of St Stephen without any clarification, hence adhering to Scriptural directives which banned women from teaching the Scripture. In another passage by Bale regarding Askew's diplomatic replies, Bishop Bonner is unable to convince her to sign a statement of guilt. In this case, Askew only repeats to him the same answer which vexes the Bishop so much that she manages to make him lose his temper:

Then he redde it to me, and asked me, if I ded agre to it. And I sayd agayne, I beleve so moche therof, as the holye scripture doth agre to. Wherefor I desyre yow, that ye wyll adde that thereunto.

To this, Bishop Bonner rebukes her that she “shuld not teache hym what he shuld write” and, with that, furiously “he went forth into hys great chamber” (p. 60). Her sharp observations together with her own sense of Biblical knowledge make her somewhat impatient when she understands that her interlocutors cannot keep up with her so much so that she “wolde not throwe pearles amonge swyne, for acornes were good ynough” (p. 21). This is another Biblical citation from St Matthew, “Geue not ye that whych hys holy vnto dogges, nether cast ye youre pearles before swyne, lest they treade them vnder their fete & the other tume against you, & al to rent you” (7:6, The Great Bible). This short but bold interaction with Bishop Bonner shows Askew as a woman who is very much capable of defending herself despite being deemed weak by virtue of her gender. Askew’s ability to challenge and antagonise the authorities transforms her into a sign of power and she becomes, hence, an important figure who is not easily manipulated by men, including Bale.

To further understand the role that Bale had in the *Examinations*, one must look closely at a particular part in the narrative: when judgment is passed in the *Second Examination* (p. 93). It is here, especially, that Bale portrays Askew’s voice explicitly in an unadorned way as she becomes, for the first time, expansive. She offers “a careful, point-by-point explication of the Biblical passages in contrast” to her previously “evasive” replies (Lilly, 2015, p. 82). Askew, thus, makes an informed decision to conform to the reformist way of believing that the Bible should be interpreted and discussed, not only by

ecclesiastical authorities, but by the common people. Subsequently, Bale records exactly this new defiant side of Askew and does nothing to alleviate her challenging tone but displays her voice in full confidence. When Askew is asked by the Lord Chancellor to give her opinion regarding the sacrament of the Eucharist; she answers him without any form of hesitation:

I beleve, that so oft as I in a Christen congregacyon, do receyve the breade in remembraunce of Christes deathe, and with thankes gevyng accordyng to hys holye instytucion.

(Anne Askew in E. V. Beilin, 1996, p. 93)

Here, she is echoing a central tenet of the reformation: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25, Tyndale Bible), where Protestants negated the actual existence of Jesus in the Eucharist during the Consecration but believed in a symbolic presence. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury who held an influential position during the reformation in England, makes a significant remark on the principle of the Eucharist:

Lest any man should mistake my words, and think that I mean, that although Christ be not corporally in the outward visible signs, yet he is corporally in the persons that duly receive them, this is to advertise the reader, that I mean no such thing; but my meaning is, that the force, the grace, the virtue and benefit of Christ's body that was crucified for us,

and of his blood that was shed for us, be really and effectually present with all them that duly receive the sacraments: but all this I understand of his spiritual presence ... Nor no more truly is he corporally or really present in the due ministration of the Lord's supper.

(Thomas Cranmer in G. E. Duffield, 1964, p. 3)

Just as Cranmer and other Protestants believed in a spiritual presence of Jesus, so does Askew. Spurred by her faith, she is granted the agency to voice her opinion as uncommon as it was for sixteenth-century women like her. Notably, when pressed by Master Paget about this same Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, she assertively replies:

I answered, that Christes meanyng was there, as in these other places of the scripture. I am the dore, Joan. 10. I am the vyne, Joan. 15. Beholde the lambe of God, Joan. 1. The rocke stone was Christ. 1 Cor. 10. And soch other lyke. Ye maye not here (sayd I) take Christ for the materyall thyng that he is sygnfyed by. For than ye wyll make hym a verye dore, a vyne, a lambe, and a stone, cleane contrarye to the holye Ghostes meanyng. All these in dede do sygnfy Christ, lyke as the breade doth hys bodye in that place. And though he ded saye there. Take, eate thys in remembraunce of me. Yet ded he not byd them hange up that breade in a boxe, and make it a God, or bowe to it.

(Anne Askew in E. V. Beilin, 1996, p. 99)

There is a strong sense of sarcasm by Askew in refuting the principle of transubstantiation. Uncharacteristically, she chooses to be verbose, compiling a list – rather than giving just one or two descriptions – suggesting a ridiculous view: “For than ye wyll make hym a verye dore, a vyne, a lambe, and a stone, cleane contrarye to the holye Ghostes meanyng.” Until 1547, to deny this controversial Catholic belief was to be indicted for heresy and burnt at the stake (Beilin, 1996, p. xxiv). However, like many reformers, Askew “categorically denied this doctrine, affirming that the sacrament of the altar was either symbolic or a remembrance and that Christ was not really present” (Beilin, 1996, p. xxiv). On the other hand, Bale assumes a less sarcastic tone so as not to appear overly controversial despite concurring with Askew's defiant views towards the Catholic clergy that the blood and wine are just “sygnes” (p. 100). This suggests that while Bale is trying to protect his reputation, he does not misappropriate Askew's responses, at least not in this part of the narrative, but puts forward her real voice. He attempts to explain, as if it were quite straightforward, that the Eucharist consists in the flesh as a “spirytuall meate, hys bloude a spirytuall drynke, and both then to be receyved in faythe, the breade and the wyne remaynyng as sygnes of hys everlastyng covenant” (p. 100). Bale focuses his ire on the Catholic priest calling him a “corruptible creature” who “stande[s] in place of the eternall creator or maker God” and whose only aim is “to bryng thys woman into their corrupted, and false beleve” (p. 100). Supplementing his extensive explanation by quoting theological figures like St Paul, St Luke, St Matthew and St John, he continues

to embellish Askew's text by stating that "ye shall wele perceyve that hys bodylye presence in the breade, is utterlye denied there [the Bible]" (p. 100).

Despite these interventions by Bale, Askew still emerges as an active participant in her own life and not as a passive woman being shaped for the purpose of anti-Catholic propaganda. In this manner, Bale was preserving her reputation which would eventually last for years. As a final demonstration of Askew's compelling voice, Bale reports her last words beseeching the Lord to forgive her condemners. This makes her a classic example of Christian sainthood, but it also exemplifies her forbearance:

And lorde I hartelye desyre of the, that thu wylte of thy most mercyfull goodnesse, forgeve them that vyolence, whych they do and have done unto me. Open also thu their blynde hartes, that they maye herafter do that thyng in thy syght, whych is onlye acceptable before the. And to sett fourth thy veryte aryght, without all vayne fantasyes of synnefull men. So be it. O lorde, so be it.

(Anne Askew in E. V. Beilin, 1996, pp. 147-148)

Askew is, thus, the "perfyght christen martyr" in that she "desyreth God to forgeve her enemyes," but she is also a woman whose torment becomes publicised through the initiative of Bale (p. 148). Although feminist scholarship suggests that Bale usurps Askew's text solely for his own Protestant agenda, this overlooks the many ways Bale's reportage of Askew's words allows her to

emerge as a writer and at the same time, a woman whose courage never fails her. Through her narrative and therefore through chroniclers like Bale, Askew remains a prevailing prototype of a woman who suffered in defence of her faith, but who remains a woman whose eloquence and skill is very hard to contain. The next section will discuss how Bale portrays another Christian martyr – Sir John Oldcastle – to see if Bale's treatment of him presents any notable differences from the interpretation he gives of Askew since he is now dealing with a male's narrative.

#### The Presentation of Lord Cobham, Sir John Oldcastle, by John Bale

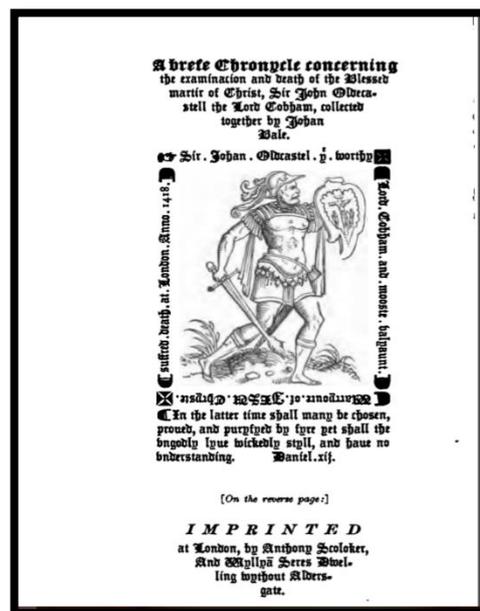
The previous section explored John Bale's role in Anne Askew's *Examinations*. Some scholars, such as Coles (2002) and Beilin (2005), have argued that Bale appropriates Askew's account to make it fit his own agenda. Others, like Kemp (1999), claim that Bale takes advantage of Askew's gender and chooses to portray her weakness instead of her text. On the other hand, I argued that Askew's identity remains partially preserved through Bale's intervention even after her body had perished in the flames. In this section, I examine another martyrology by Bale printed two years before the *First Examination: A brefe chronicle concemyng the examinacyon and death of the blessed martyr of Christ syr Iohn Oldecastell the lorde Cobham, collected togyther by Iohan Bale* (1544). By looking at another of Bale's work, one can understand better the role Bale takes as editor of another's story, especially since the main author is

now male. One needs to recognise if gender is the culprit for the seeming "man-handling" of Askew's text, as many scholars have suggested, or if the religious struggle at the time shaped Bale's editorial practice.

Beilin contends that at every possible occasion, Bale interrupts Askew to demonstrate that "Askew's words, actions, and beliefs are closer to the Scriptures and to the primitive church than anything written or performed by Roman Catholics" (Beilin, 1996, p. xxxiv). It seems therefore that in Askew's *Examinations*, one of Bale's preoccupations seems to have been the portrayal of a new model of sainthood. The need to have brave men and women who defied death in the name of God and who could be compared to saintly figures was an inherent characteristic of the reformation in England. However, further to that, Bale's model of sainthood can be linked to his apocalyptic vision. Christopher Warner describes Bale as a "bilious prophet-polemicist, who looks back and sees a millennium of increasing corruption in the Roman Church, and who looks at his own time and sees the world's last battles fought between the lovers and the haters of the true Church of Christ" (Warner, 2013, p. 39). Heroic figures – like Oldcastle and Askew – needed to be modelled to inspire readers to prepare for the combat ahead, just as the figure on the title-page of the *Examinations* was depicted looming over the still-living papal beast in the woodcut of the *First Examination*.

The idea of religious heroism can be extended further by the illustration at the forefront of the preface of Oldcastle's *Examination*. It shows Oldcastle as a valiant warrior adorned with his shield and sword (Fig. 2.4). His shield, gilded with the depiction of Jesus on the cross, is held high against his head,

symbolising his main defence against all other religions, in particular, that of the Church of Rome. In his right hand, pointing downwards, he holds the sword. He is given the image of a brave knight, due to his noble background, but also as a fearless defender of the New Faith. Oldcastle is presented as remaining constant in his beliefs until the end. The words surrounding the image commemorate his execution: "Sir Johan Oldcastle worthy Lord Cobham and mooste valyaunt suffred death at London Anno 1418."



*The Examination of Sir John Oldcastle, 1544 (Fig. 2.4)*

This combative image may present to the reader a stark contrast to the earlier description of the apparently passive female figure illustrated in the *Examinations*. However, together the woodcuts used on the title-pages of

Oldcastle's and Askew's testimonies can be seen to form a diptych of the legend of St George slaying the dragon (Fig. 2.5): Askew, or the figure representing Askew, appears with the dragon; Oldcastle is a version of St George, who also gets depicted with a cross on his shield. Bale had also used St George as an emblem of fighting or resisting false religion in *Actes of English Votaryes* (1546):

Great honoure wyll yt now be to yow (yea, rather moche greater) to slee the sede of the Serpent by the worde of God, as euer yt was to Saynt George that noble captayne, to slee the great hydre or Dragon at Silena.

(John Bale, 1546, K4v)

Moreover, the woman dressed as an early Christian martyr in the *Examinations* can also be interpreted as representing another form of courage: that of a remarkable female standing firm in the face of death while accepting her faith in silence. It is the portrayal of a different kind of bravery, similar to the depiction of Christ who also endured much of his affliction in silence and willingly accepted his death on the cross. It is also an acceptable image of female heroism where a humble and modest behaviour was a woman's primary requisite during the sixteenth century.



St George "Rufford," Flemish, 1300-1400 or 19<sup>th</sup> century fake (Fig. 2.5)

The woodcut printed in Oldcastle's account is framed by Biblical quotations, as is the woodcut of Askew's title-page. The Bible inscription just underneath it, reads:

In the latter tyme shall manye be chosen / proued / and puryfied by  
the fyre yet shall the / ungodly lyve wyckedly styll, and haue no  
understanding. Daniel. Xii.

This inscription refers to the Day of Judgement when the elect will be purified by fire, whereas the wicked, denoting the followers of papacy, will be

condemned for eternity. Ironically, the same fire which is used by the Roman clerics to engulf the body of 'heretics' in its flames will be the same fire to save the souls of martyrs for eternal glory. This idea is also implied in Askew's *Examinations*, where the physical body may well perish in the flames, but the spirit of these sufferers will never cease to exist but is transformed into a symbol of martyrdom and a reminder of their cause.

This initial comparison of the two texts suggests that Bale's treatment of Askew's text is similar to the account of a male martyr's testimony. If anything, Bale's tone against the Catholic Church is more acerbic in Oldcastle's testimony than in Askew's account, calling them bluntly "members of Sathan" (Bale, 1544, p. 3). As in his edition of Askew's narrative, he shows his disapproval of the Catholic clergy referring to Oldcastle as the "*blessed martyr of Christ*" in the title with a note stating that his work has been collected "out of the bokes and writtynges of those Popyshe Prelates which were present both at his condempnacyon and iudgement." Bale, thus, makes it clear that he has not written the book himself, but "collected [it] togyther," which gives his work documentary credibility.

Bale's attack on the Church of Rome does help distract from the fact that Oldcastle – like Askew because of her marital situation – was a less than ideal martyr, in terms of his earthly life. According to Fairfield, Oldcastle was "a notorious rebel" and considered as a traitor having risen "against Henry V at St Giles' fields" (Fairfield, 1976, p. 126). When his plot was uncovered, he tried to escape but he was captured and condemned as a traitor and heretic. The second stumbling block for Bale was the fact that certain beliefs of Oldcastle,

especially “the existence of purgatory” and the actual – not symbolic – transformation “of Christ in the Eucharist” (Fairfield, 1976, p. 128), were incongruent with Bale’s theology, as opposed to Askew’s views which were similar to his. As with Askew, Bale needs to negotiate some problematic elements in his protagonist’s background. For example, Bale chooses not to elaborate on Oldcastle’s wild days when he was young, saying that this was “for the more part” unknown to him (Bale, 1544, p. 4). Instead Bale excuses his rough youth to a time “before he knew the scripturs” and immediately focuses on Oldcastle’s high birth, as he did with Askew (Bale, 1544, p. 4). Oldcastle’s father, John Froissart, was Lord Regnolde of Cobham and “amongest the most worthy warryours of Englande” (Bale, 1544, pp. 4-5). Bale also makes up for flaws in Oldcastle’s behaviour by praising instead his valour as well as his perseverance during his execution. He writes that Oldcastle had shown “so noble a stomake in defence of Christes verite agaynst those Romyshe supersticyons” and he “perseuered most faythfullye constaunt to the ende” (Bale, 1544, p. 5). It appears, thus, that Bale, as he had done with Askew, wanted to mitigate his subject’s reputation, in this case by portraying him not only as God’s “true disciple” (Bale, 1544, p. 4), “but also as a patriot, a post-figuration of those heroes in Hebrew, Greek and Roman history who had died for their nations” (Fairfield, 1976, p. 126). He makes Oldcastle appear as a victim of the Church of Rome, reproving it for seeking to discredit one of God’s faithful. He describes the “papistical clergye” as “bloud thurstye rauenours” who stop at nothing “to blere the eyes of the vnlermed multitude with one false craft or other” (Bale, 1544, pp. 12-13). He also condemns papal authority for

tainting the impeccable image of Oldcastle in the eyes of the King with “great infamy and blemyshe” (Bale, 1544, p. 13). Bale’s attack comes after Oldcastle was accused by Thomas Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury of unorthodox preaching and for being in possession of a heretical book. Bale accuses the Archbishop of inculpating Oldcastle without “iust profe”:

And to make himselfe [Bishop Arundel] more stronge towardes the perfourmaunce thereof / he compelled the laye power by most terryble menacynges of curses and interdiccyons / to assyst him agaynst that sedycyouses apostata / that scysmatyque / that heretyque / that troubler of the publyque peace / that enemye of the realme / and great aduersarye of all holye churche / for all these hatefull names ded he geue him.

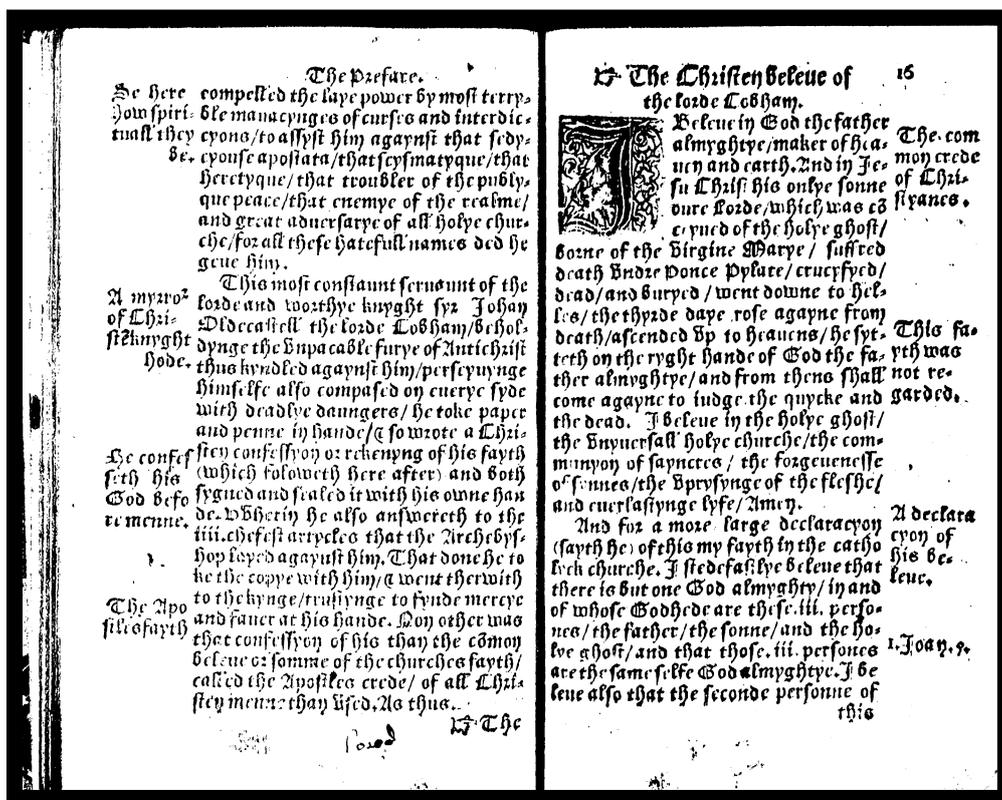
(John Bale, 1544, p. 15)

In both Askew's *Examinations* and Oldcastle's account emerges the apparent comparison between the reformers' trial and that of Christ. Just as Askew is compared by Bale to a “lamb” for her silent suffering, so too is Oldcastle, described as being left as a “lambe amonge wolues” when he is tortured at the end of his “First Examination” (Bale, 1544, p. 25). This shows that Bale's choice of imagery is not necessarily gendered: the weak and innocent lamb in need of protection is not a sign of feminine frailty; rather, it is chosen for its Christ-like resonances. Moreover, the Catholic interrogators are

compared to the Catholic executioners in *Askew's Examinations* with the Bishop of London, Edmund Bonner, being compared to "Cayphas" in "false flatteryng colours" (pp. 46-47). Caiaphas, the Jewish High Priest who plotted to kill Jesus, ties both Askew and Oldcastle to Christ. The same comparison is found in Oldcastle's text where he is summoned before the archbishop who is "syttyng in Cayphas rome" (Bale, 1544, p. 20). Moreover, just as Askew refused to sign a letter for recantation in a manner so polite and so neutral that the Bishop was left speechless and in fury, so does Oldcastle as he answers convincingly: "Naye forsoth, will I not for I neuer yet trespassed agaynst you / & therefore I will not do yt" (Bale, 1544, p. 26).

One of the most significant variations that exists between Askew's and Oldcastle's text is the format in which these books are presented. Bale adopts a different set-up for Oldcastle's account from that of Askew. Whereas in the *Examinations*, Bale chooses to intervene with his embellished elucidations right after each of Askew's responses, with Oldcastle he takes another approach. He just presents Oldcastle's testimony as one long statement, preferring to add only subtle commentaries along the way (Fig. 2.6). His observations are not typographically distinguished as in *Askew's Examinations* and he does not remark directly on Oldcastle's testimony. So, paradoxically, Askew's words are more easily distinguished than Oldcastle's since the reader can see at a glance what she wrote, and what Bale elucidates. Bale uses the format adopted for Askew also for the *Laboryouse Journey of Johan Leyland* (1549, Fig. 2.7). This means that what he does to Askew's words, reproducing them in

blocks, and then elucidating them, has nothing to do with gender. On the contrary, he seems less concerned with the verbal details of Oldcastle's testimony, which contrasts with the close attention he pays to Askew's actual words. In the case of Oldcastle, however, what Bale is attentive to is using Oldcastle's persecution as an emblem of cruelty of the Church of Rome.



The Examination of Sir John Oldcastle, 1544 (Fig. 2.6)



The laborious Journey of Johan Leylande, 1549 (Fig. 2.7)

Apart from the textual format, Bale's handling of Oldcastle's and Askew's accounts of their martyrdom does not present major differences. Both martyrs remain the main protagonists of their story. Historians' criticism such as that of Coles (2002) and Beilin (2005), that Bale tries to shape Askew's interpretation through paratextual techniques to promote his religious agenda is not entirely justified since his anti-papist propaganda was an impetus behind his other publications as well. Moreover, the other scholarly critique that Bale appropriates Askew's text because she belongs to the "weaker" sex does not hold ground either. His use of documentary title-pages, their layout and designs, wording as well Biblical quotations are also present in his other works, including those of male authors as we have seen. Thus, the right approach

regarding both works would be an adequate awareness of the two important purposes they serve: that of advancing the reformed religion as well as, and not least, of preserving for their readers the struggle of these two martyrs, which writers like Bale have helped to bring to light. The next section will look at another male editor, John Foxe, and his mediation of *Askew's Examinations* which he published in his work, *Acts and Monuments* (1563). It will discuss the impact Foxe's interventions had on *Askew's* voice in relation, also, to her previous editor, John Bale.

#### The Presentation of Anne Askew's *Examinations* by John Foxe

John Foxe was a historian who recorded the trials and statements of those who were condemned and executed as heretics in his book, *Acts and Monuments* which was first published in 1563. This work is a collection of narratives about Christian martyrs and, like Bale, Foxe focused on the suffering of Protestant martyrs at the hands of the Catholic Church. It is a massive folio volume, containing about 1800 pages as this work covers much of church history from fourteenth century onwards. The book became highly influential with three other lifetime editions following (1570, 1576 and 1583) and immediately became known as the "Book of Martyrs." Foxe's appointment as prebend of Shipton in Salisbury Cathedral in May 1563, just two months after the publication of the first edition of *Acts* in March of the same year, is indicative that his work was well-received by the authorities. This position provided his

income for the rest of his life and looks like "the first suitably remunerative benefice" that became available after *Acts and Monuments* was first published (ODNB). Amongst these narratives of martyrs, Foxe chose to also include the tragedy of Anne Askew.

As has already been noted, some historians have made a distinction between Bale's level of intervention and that of Foxe in Askew's account. Foxe is mainly considered by scholars as a non-intrusive author – leaves no or minimal impact on Askew's voice – while Bale is regarded as having appropriated Askew's narrative. However, Bale was one of the sources on which Foxe drew when compiling his account of Askew (ODNB). For this reason and together with others, it is my contention that there is not such a stark difference between Foxe's and Bale's treatments of Askew's testimony. Rather, while Foxe's narration might initially seem unobtrusive, on closer examination, his shaping of her voice is stronger than Bale's.

At the beginning, Foxe's entitling of Askew's testimony reveals that its presentation is, in fact, very similar to Bale's. Foxe's first edition (1563) mirrors closely Bale's version with its two elaborated titles describing the two parts of the *Examinations* in detail. The first title gives particular information regarding the parentage of Askew: "The Two Examinations of the worthy servant of God, Maistris An Askew, doughter of sir William Askew knight of Lincolneshire, martred in Smithfield for the Constante and faithfull testimonye of the truthe" (Foxe, 1563, p. 669). The second part is titled by Foxe just as elaborately as the first, but this time highlighting the immoral Catholic Church: "The latter Examination of the worthy seruant of God, mastres Anne Askew, the yonger doughter of sir

William Askew knight of Lincolnshire, lately martired in Smithfeld, by the wicked sinagoge of Antichrist" (Fexe, 1563, p. 682). In Fexe's second edition (1570), the *First Examination* is retitled, becoming merely about "Mistres Anne Askew, before the Inquisitours. an. 1545" (Fexe, 1570, p. 1452). In the *Second Examination* (1570), she is then simply known as "The worthy Martyr of God, Mistres A. Askew. An. 1546" (Fexe, 1570, p. 1455). This shortening in the titles between the first (1563) and second (1570) editions of Fexe parallels what happens to Bale's posthumous title. Due to this apparently similar treatment, Fexe is criticised by Freeman and Wall in that by highlighting Askew's noble parentage and then attacking the Catholic Church through his choice of titles, he appears as "her collaborator, her mediator, her shaper, just as the now critically despised Bale" (Freeman & Wall, 2001, p. 1168).

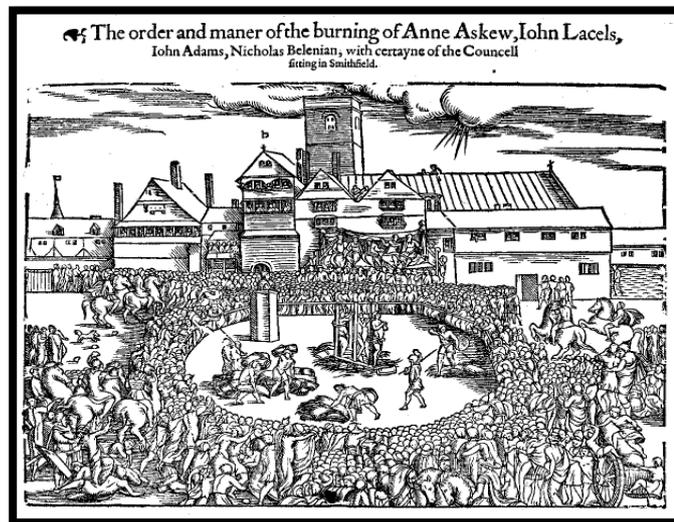
It has also been contested by Freeman and Wall that Fexe's omission of Askew's family roots in the title of his second edition arises from the possible fact that he was particularly troubled by Askew's marital life as this made her "not an appropriate model for the godly to imitate" (Freeman & Wall, 2001, p. 1180). According to Kemp, having no protection from her husband, Askew "becomes a matter for the state which negatively constructs her as 'very obstinate,' 'heddye in reasoning of matiers of religion,' 'of naughty opinion,' and unpersuaded by 'good reasons'" (Kemp, 1999, p. 1024). Her divorce would have worsened the situation. Therefore, Fexe's uneasiness with Askew's separation from her husband is clearly noted in his decision to withhold comments regarding Askew's marriage in both the 1563 and 1570 editions. He just presents one shoulder note, new to the 1570 edition, stating solely

“Concerning that which they here demaunded as touchyng M. Kime” (Foxe, 1570, p. 1456). Freeman and Wall point to this discrepancy between these two authors when dealing with Askew’s controversial background. They write that while Foxe “went to greater lengths to airbrush away what he regarded as her domestic blemish,” Bale “confronted the issue of her marriage with argument and impassioned rhetoric” (Freeman & Wall, 2001, p. 1192). In addition to these claims made by Freeman and Wall, I also believe that in choosing to avoid any discussion about Askew’s personal life, Foxe was indirectly making her appear as a perfect exemplar of Protestant martyr, someone who held no imperfections, unlike Bale who risked making his publication unpopular by disclosing publicly contentious details about Askew’s marital life. In contrast, Foxe chose only the facts which made Askew appear saintly, conforming also to the apocalyptic vision discussed previously. It is my contention, therefore, that by hiding Askew’s troubled personal life, Foxe is more of a shaper of Askew’s reputation than Bale, albeit in a discreet way.

Another line of thought on Foxe’s manipulation of Askew’s voice is that he chooses to include Askew’s testimony in a much larger volume together with many other accounts of martyrs, contrary to Bale who dedicates his account solely to her interrogations. Foxe’s version unsurprisingly makes Askew’s tribulation lose the uniqueness and novelty factor of being the examination and martyrdom of a woman. For Foxe and for his readers, Askew becomes one of many other Protestant martyrs, reserving no special interest in view of the fact that being a woman, of gentle birth, she should have been exempt from being tortured in the Tower (ODNB). The same applies to Foxe’s

choice of woodcut. Whereas Bale's woodcut is abstracted from a historical context and made allegorical by the inclusion of the beast, Foxe chooses to portray Askew as a purely historical figure. He depicts her day of execution from an aerial view together with other martyrs, all of whom are seen only from a distance. Indeed, his illustration offers concrete detail of Askew's martyrdom, but on closer examination, it also contains symbolic elements (Fig. 2.8). The scene includes four figures depicting Askew and other martyrs: namely, John Lascelles, John Hadlam, and John Hemley. Also present at the event are the nobles seated on a special, elevated scaffold above the vast crowd of spectators. The rays coming from a cloud symbolic of God's presence seem aimed to strike directly at these nobles. At the centre, together with Askew and her companions, stands Bishop Shaxton elevated on a platform while officials prepare the fire. This seemingly realistic scene underscores Foxe's textual intention regarding Askew's role in the *Acts and Monuments*: like his subtle shaping of Askew, this woodcut is crafting the representation for polemical purposes whilst purporting to be a documentary record. Foxe wants to bring out the idea that Askew was not just a victim of the church, symbolised by the presence of the church with its cross in the background, but also that of the Henrician state through the representation of the courtiers at the execution. The presence of the monarch's authority is also highlighted by the illustration's title, "with certayne of the Councell sitting in Smithfield." Foxe, therefore, does not seem preoccupied with enabling the emergence of Askew's voice as the protagonist of her narrative. The woodcut does not even

distinguish Askew from the other (male) martyrs, signposting another way in which *Acts and Monuments* is not interested in Askew's individuality.



John Foxe, 1563, p. 666 (Fig. 2.8)

This theory regarding Foxe's control over Askew can be developed further by looking also at the actual presentation of her text. There are, in fact, significant differences in the textual format exhibited by Foxe from that of Bale. While Bale adorns Askew's text by adding his own commentaries as we have seen, Foxe presents Askew's examination as one whole text and uses various paratextual techniques to underscore his own voice. For example, he inserts breaks within paragraphs at specific points within the narrative which alter both rhythm and emphasis. In Foxe's 1563 edition, for instance, the same account depicting Dare interrogating Askew about the spirit of God discussed in Bale's edition is presented as one whole, uninterrupted report with only two paragraph breaks preceding the third and fourth accusations. However, in

the 1570 edition, even though Foxe does not intervene overtly with his own commentaries as Bale does, he breaks the paragraphs at premeditated points to manipulate the narrative and heighten the tension. An interesting example is the pause after the seventh charge where a priest was called for to examine Askew. Here, as in Bale's account of Askew, Foxe breaks after the word "papist":

The Priest asked me what I sayd to the sacrament of the aulter, and required much to know therein my meaning. But I desired him againe, to hold me excused concerning that matter. None other aunswere would I make him, because I perceiued him a Papist.

(Anne Askew in John Foxe, 1570, p. 1453)

During Foxe's time, this anti-papal language was largely deemed as a form of demonstrating one's alliance with England's split with Rome. Thus, by highlighting Askew's refusal to speak with the king's priest and her calling him a papist, Foxe was not only portraying her as an obedient subject to the new Henrician Catholicism and the Act of Supremacy but also spreading conventional teachings as being "papist." It seems that in so doing he is casting Askew's life and work solely within a Protestant context, while outlining the heinousness of the antichrist, the pope, through the persecution and suffering of English Protestants.

Additionally, while Bale is more straightforward in his reportage, Foxe elaborates the passage with marginal commentaries which, although they seem innocuous, deliver a powerful message to the reader. A case in point is when Askew is being interrogated by Bishop Bonner in the "First Examination" (1570). He asks her, amongst other things, about her belief regarding private masses and the reading of the Bible in public. She wisely responds by alluding to the Scripture of St Paul that it was against his preaching "that I beyng a woman, should interprete the Scriptures" (Foxe, 1570, p. 1454). Then, when she is pressed further to confess misconduct for reading the Bible at Lincoln Cathedral and asked if any of the priests had spoken to her, she becomes evasive and does not provide a concrete reply. She explains that there was one priest who spoke to her but "hys wordes were of small effect" and that she "did not remember them" thus made "him none answere unto it" (Foxe, 1570, p. 1454). It is at this point that Foxe intervenes by providing his comments at the side. This is not done in his first edition (1563) where he presents the interaction between the Bishop and Askew as one long text with only one paragraph break. However, in his second edition he takes more control of Askew's words. Foxe intervenes by adding in the margins that the "Priestes of Lincolne" were "agaynste her"; secondly, he proclaims her exemplary conduct as she "standeth vpon her honestie" (Foxe, 1570, p. 1454); and thirdly he presents her as the victim who was unjustly treated in the hands of her interrogators as Foxe's marginal entry declares: "Boners misreport of An. Askewes confession" (Foxe, 1570, p. 1455). Marginalia, whilst peripheral, plays a crucial role in guiding readers to particular passages: passages which the

readers then come to with a pre-determined interpretation. For instance, the allusion to “honesty” in Foxe’s second marginal entry was also a reference to a woman’s chastity, or the complete abstention from any extramarital activities, and thus could be interpreted as Foxe’s underscoring Askew’s moral behaviour despite her problematic conjugal life (OED, 2a). Then, the remaining two marginalia focus on the malpractice of the Church stressing that the Catholic priests were unreasonably “agaynste her,” while the Bishop purposely “misreport[s]” Askew’s confession. These two marginalia strongly suggest the misdeeds and unfairness of the Catholic clergy.

Another aspect of Foxe’s distortion of Askew’s narrative is the fact that he portrays Askew as being less confrontational than in Bale’s testimony. In Bale, when Askew was being interrogated by the Archdeacon of London, Thomas Wynter, regarding John Frith’s book about the reformation in the *First Examination*, he reports Askew’s words succinctly and clearly:

Mastres wherfor are ye accused? I answered. Axe my accusers, for I knowe not as yet. Then toke he my boke out of my hande, and sayd. Soche bokes as thys is, hath brought yow to the trouble ye are in. Be ware (sayth he) be ware, for he that made it, was brent in Smythfelde.

(Anne Askew in E. V. Beilin, 1996, p. 42)

In Foxe, this passage is embellished with added phrases in both his first and second editions, and which serve to render Askew less of a challenge in front

of her accusers. In particular, the phrase "Syr, aske, I pray you," although a seemingly small addition, alters the tone:

Mistres wherefore are you accused and thus troubled heare before the Byshop? To whom I aunswered agayne and sayd: *Syr, aske, I pray you*, my accusers, for I knowe not as yet. Then tooke hee my booke out of my hand, and sayd: Such bookes as this, hath brought you to the trouble ye are in. Beware (sayth he) beware, for he that made this booke and was the author thereof, was an hereticke I warrant you, and burnt in Smithfield.

(Anne Askew in J. Foxe, 1570, p. 1454, emphasis added)

The additional phrase "Syr, aske, I pray you" gives the speaker a compliant attitude, almost submissive. Askew, thus, appears less defiant when disputing her cause and more willing to please her interrogators.

Another addition to Askew's narrative by Foxe is John Lascelles's letter in both his first and second editions which is not included in Bale's *Examinations*. The letter was written when Lascelles was serving his time in prison and was about to be burnt along with Askew in 1546. Foxe places it at the end of Askew's narrative and before the account of her execution. Lascelles presents a complex theological argument about the Eucharist and seems in absolute indifference to the circumstances of Askew. It feels very likely that Foxe used Lascelles's letter as a stepping-stone to the martyrdom of Askew "as a pulpit

from which to denounce Catholic teachings on the Eucharist" (Freeman and Wall, 2001, p. 1183). Hence, while Bale's focus is solely on Askew as he singles her out to tell her story and sets her up as a prototype of the early Christian martyrs, Foxe's project is more about assembling a mass of martyrs.

Moreover, Foxe also adds Bishop's Bonner's letter regarding Askew's alleged recantation which is entirely omitted from Bale's account. In this extract, which is only included in the 1570 edition, Foxe not only introduces this letter affirming Askew's supposed repudiation but also complements it with his own clarification, this time devoting space within the main text for his commentary. He also adds a title to this episode which highlights the lack of evidence for her recantation: "The Purgation or aunswere of Anne Askew agaynst the false surmises of her recantation" (Foxe, 1570, p. 1458):

And for as much as mention here is made of the wrytyng of Boner, which this godly woman sayd before she had not in memory, therefore I thought in this place to inferre the same, both with the whole circumstance of Boner, and with the title therunto prefixed by the Register, and also with her own subscription: to the entent the reader seing the same subscription, neither to agree with the tyme of the title aboue prefixed, nor with the subscription after the wrytyng annexed, might the better vnderstand therby what credit is to be geuen hereafter to such Byshops, and to such Registers. The tenour of Boners wrytyng procedeth thus.

(John Foxe, 1570, p. 1455)

He continues to stress that she did not recant even through his side notes: “Anne Askew answering to the false suspicion of her recanting” and “A. Askew falsely suspected to recant” (Foxe, 1570, p. 1458). His aim is precise and clear. He wants to portray exactly what this “Boner,” stripped of any title, had written about this “godly woman” for the benefit of the reader, who is told – with a degree of sarcasm (“what credit”) – that they should not believe “such Bishops, and [...] such Registers” (Foxe, 1570, p. 1455). His point is enforced even more vehemently after Bonner’s and the Registrar’s words, where he again entreats the reader to recognise the “double sleight of false conueiaunce” in both confessions (Foxe, 1570, p. 1455). He continues:

For although the confession purporteth the woordes of the Bishops writing, whereunto she did set her hand: yet by the title prefixed before, mayest thou see that both she was arraigned and condemned before this was registred, and also that she is falsly reported to haue put to her hande, which in deede by this her own booke appeareth not so to be, but after this maner and condition: I Anne Askew do beleue all maner thinges contayned in the fayth of the Catholicke Church, and not otherwise.

(John Foxe, 1570, p. 1455)

Evidently, there is a fine distinction between Foxe's two appeals to the reader. The first professes a confidence in what readers "might the better understand." Thus, they do not need further guidance because Bonner's falsity – once set up by Foxe – is self-expository. On the other hand, in the second he makes sure that readers have interpreted the evidence in the right way, by informing them of the "double sleight of false conueiaunce" that they should have seen. In both cases, Foxe is underscoring the deceptiveness of the Catholic Church while Askew is used indirectly as a pawn to advance his religious propaganda. Furthermore, Foxe's insertion of Askew's confession that "I Anne Askew do beleue all maner of thynges conteyned in the fayth of the Catholicke Church, and not otherwise," as replicated from Bonner's register, is intended to serve as evidence that Askew at no given time was ever disloyal to her New Faith as her addendum to her signature relieves her of any commitments to ideas which would conflict with her own beliefs. Although here Askew is stating her commitment to the Catholic Church, she is making a distinction between orthodoxy and her own faith. What is left unsaid, but implied, is that the Church of Rome is not the true, Catholic Church. "Catholic" in this case means "universal," and may also signal the "primitive" and uncorrupted church (OED, 5a & 6a). Moreover, the discrepancy Foxe notices between the actual date on which Askew made the confession in 1544 and the date reproduced in Bonner's register, which is 1545, makes him allude to it as a false copy and to claim, "that the Catholics had stooped to fraud to try to maintain that Askew had recanted" (Freeman & Wall, 2001, p. 1182). Hence, Foxe excuses Askew in two ways: it is not an actual repudiation of faith and it is probably a forgery

anyway. Thus, it is very likely that Foxe used this to his advantage by including this apparent confession by Askew to challenge the idea that Askew had renounced her faith. Moreover, the fact that Foxe intervenes and seeks to clarify this episode shows his belief in portraying the traits of constancy in the ideal martyrs.

In order to better understand the role Foxe played in Askew's narrative, one must also consider the fact that this episode is given to us as one whole text with only one subtle paragraph break between "For it was no great matter, they sayd" and "Then with much adoe" (Foxe, 1570, p. 1458). The space comes at the specific point where Askew makes her final declaration as a reformed martyr: "I Anne Askew do beleue this, if Gods woorde do agree to the same, and the true Catholicke Churche" (Foxe, 1570, p. 1458). In this example, Foxe's skill in understanding the text's heightened sense of drama is demonstrated by inserting his division in the most rhetorically effective position. Apart from highlighting the unwillingness of Askew to sign the contract, "with much adoe," he is also underlining Askew's appeal to God and the Church to bear witness to her faith. This lends itself as an important confession of a true reformer and makes Askew appear as a faithful martyr. For Foxe, as for Bale, martyrs should represent the perfect exemplars in their struggle against worldly evil and corruption by authorities of the Catholic Church. These precisely positioned breaks give the impression that Foxe intervenes strategically as a commentator on Askew's account.

This is not the only stratagem, however, that Foxe uses. Freeman and Wall (2001) declare that there are various instances in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* of "eye-skips." They refer to Foxe's omission of "most of Askew's answer to the priest's question of whether she had been shryven" in the *First Examination* (Foxe, 1570, p. 1453). Her answer in Bale's edition is, in fact, the following:

I tolde hym no. Then he sayd, he wolde brynge one to me, for to shryve me. And I told hym, so that I myght have one of these iii. that is to saye, doctor Crome, syr Gyllam, or Huntyngton, I was contented.

(Anne Askew in E. V. Beilin, 1996, pp. 32-33)

In Foxe's first and second versions, however, Askew's answer is cut short, simply: "I told him, so that I might have one of these three, that is to saye, Doctor Crome, Sir Gillam, or Huntington, I was contented" (Foxe, 1570, p. 1453). Freeman and Wall contend that "it seems likely that the compositor's eye could have skipped from one 'told' to another, losing the line in between" (Freeman & Wall, 2001, p. 1172). Freeman and Wall (2001) also refer to another such instance in Askew's answer to Standish. In Bale's *Examination* this reads:

And then doctor Standish desyered my lorde, to byd me saye my mynde, concernynge the same text of S. Paule. I answered that it was

agaynst saynt Paules lernynge, that I beyng a woman, shuld interprete the scriptures, specyallye where so manye wyse lerned men were.

(John Bale in E. V. Beilin, 1996, p. 54)

In Foxe 1563 and 1570 editions, part of this answer by Askew has been omitted and is reproduced as such:

Then Doct. Standishe desired my Lorde to byd me say my mynde concernyng the same text of S. Paules learnyng, that I beyng a woman, should intreprete the Scriptures, specially where so many wise learned men were.

(Anne Askew in John Foxe, 1570, p. 1454)

Here, Foxe also seems to weaken Askew's voice since one gets the question but not her complete answer, contrasting with Bale. Even though this might have been unintentionally done by Foxe, the effect is unmistakably impactful in that Askew's credibility seems to diminish.

What certainly is not a case of "eye-skip," however, is the total omission from both the 1563 and 1570 editions of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* of the relevant conversation between William Paget and Askew about her belief in the miracle of transubstantiation. Freeman and Wall argue that Foxe chose to exclude Paget's discussion mainly for political reasons (Freeman & Wall, 2001,

p. 1171). Paget, secretary to Henry VIII who managed to retain his office even under Edward's reign, was too prominent a person to provoke early in Elizabeth I's reign. Nevertheless, in the 1570 edition, when "Paget was safely dead," Foxe did identify him as the person "who had advised Philip and Mary to execute Elizabeth" (Freeman & Wall, 2001, p. 2294). While Paget's influential political career could have been a deterrent for Foxe from including this conversation in the narrative, Foxe could have had a different motif for omitting the Paget reference. The substantial critique made by Askew to Paget regarding the theory of transubstantiation, ridiculing the fact that if this was true Christ could well also be "a verye dore, a vyne, a lambe, and a stone" (p. 99), may have provoked in Foxe some discomfort with the extent of audacity shown in Askew's character. She was, after all, a woman who was overstepping by a large degree her role in sixteenth-century England. Very likely, therefore, Foxe might have thought that, in some respect, this declaration may not present Askew as "an appropriate model for the godly to imitate" (Freeman & Wall, 2001, p. 1180). He, thus, chooses to omit this conversation deliberately, notably because this cut is exactly the same in the two editions (1563, 1570). Foxe appears to be persistent on emphasising Askew's saintly attitude and, thus, did not want to tarnish her reputation in any way.

Having established that Foxe uses Askew's text to push forward his own religious agenda, next I will consider how he handles a crucial part of her narrative: her torture. It appears that Foxe constructs his own version of Askew's account of her torment through his own explications and subtle embellishments. Notably, he inserts one of his rare personal commentaries into

the order for her racking in the Tower, particularly in his 1570 publication, and retained in the following editions of the *Acts and Monuments*. He actually obtained the supplementary information about Askew's torture from an interview with an unknown source who had told him that "Sir Anthony Kneuet, Lieuetenant" had refused the command to rack Askew "tendering the weakness of the woman" (Fuxe, 1570, p. 1458). Fuxe recounts how Sir Thomas Wriothesley and Sir John Baker, not satisfied, "throwing of theyr gownes," racked her themselves "till her bones and ioyntes almost were pluckt asunder" (Fuxe, 1570, p. 1458). These insertions by Fuxe help to strategically manipulate the primary data in order to juxtapose Knevet's compassion and the mercilessness of Wriothesley and Baker, as well as to highlight Askew's firm resolution as the ideal martyr.

Furthermore, Fuxe's elaboration on Askew's torture is accentuated by his marginal entry notifying the reader about the "cruell handling and racking of Anne Askewe after her condemnation" when she was solicited by Sir Richard Rich of the King's Privy Chamber, Bishop Bonner and later Nicholas Shaxton, former Bishop of Salisbury, to persuade her to recant (Fuxe, 1570, p. 1418). After their failed attempts, she was sent to the Tower. Crucial moments during Askew's ordeal are presented in new paragraph-forms in Fuxe's second publication of *Acts and Monuments* (1570):

Then they did put me on the racke, because I confessed no Ladyes or Gentlewomen to be of my opinion, and thereon they kept me a long

tyme. And because I lay stil and did not cry, my L. Chauncellour and Syr Ioh. Baker, tooke paines to racke me with their own handes, till I was nigh dead.

(Anne Askew in John Foxe, 1570, p. 1457)

This serves to accentuate Askew's outstanding perseverance and fortitude during her torture while counteracting the allegations of inconstancy presented previously by her recantation. Similarly, Askew's silence during her torture continues to give Foxe the opportunity to shape her image of "her as an ideal model for the Reformist cause" as stated by Joan Pong Linton (2006, p. 6). It also helps to stress "the cruelty of her persecutors and the ambivalent role of Henry VIII" (Freeman & Wall, 2001, p. 1186).

Another line of thought on how Foxe shapes the account of Askew is by underscoring certain phrases through repetition. For instance, Askew's confession while going to her execution begins with the following statement in Foxe's 1570s edition:

I Anne Askew of good memory, although my merciful father hath geuen me the bread of aduersitie and the water of trouble: yet not so muche as my sinnes haue deserved.

(Anne Askew in John Foxe, 1570, p. 1458)

These words mark significant moments in Askew's life and are the same words she had reserved to express her belief regarding the Sacrament, a crucial point of contention between the two religions. When Askew claims that she "utterlye abhorre[s] and detest[s] all heresies" in her first confession about the Sacrament (Foxe, 1570, p. 1457), she replicates them with "utterlye abhorre [all euill opinions] to the uttermost of my power" in her second admission (Foxe, 1570, p. 1458). Through such repetition, Foxe draws attention to such phrases and passages by presenting them in close proximity to each other so the reader continues to hear their echoes while, at the same time, highlighting important notions of the New Faith.

After the very last prayer of Askew, Foxe again adds to the information about her torture to accentuate the heart-rendering effect it would leave on the readers. He wanted his narrative to be remembered by "succeeding generations of reformist readers" (Hiscock, 2008, p.72). Therefore, as Andrew Hiscock states, he represented "the resistance to persecution by Catholics and tyrants and the bearing of spiritual witness (most especially that of reformists) in magnificently heroic terms" (Hiscock, 2008, p.72). In the first edition Foxe details how Askew, too crippled to walk to the stake, was brought in a "chayre" and "tied by the middle with a chaine" while she refused any offers of pardon made by the King and Bishop Shaxton if she recanted (Foxe, 1563, pp. 680). She "stoutly resisted" both offers (Foxe, 1563, pp. 680). However, it is in his second edition that the reader learns how Askew interrupted Shaxton's sermon: "where he sayde well, confirmed the same: where he sayd amyssse, there sayd she, he misseth, and speaketh without the booke" (Foxe, 1570, p.

1459). Foxe also adds details about the names of nobles present at the execution and details such as how “the gunpowder was not layde under the fagots ... to ryd them out of their payne” (Foxe, 1570, p. 1459). By stressing the presence of the king’s councillors, Foxe is implicating the Henrician regime, reminding the reader that Askew was a victim of the state as well as of the church. The information about the absence of gunpowder underscores the cruelty of her persecutors who ensure that the deaths are prolonged. Foxe also specifies that when Askew was offered the king’s pardon she had refused “once to looke vpon them” as she answered that “shee came not thither to deny her Lord and Mayster” (Foxe, 1570, p. 1459). Freeman and Wall imply that such new material must have come from eyewitnesses to Askew’s death. They name Francis Russell, second earl of Bedford, as a probable informant, who might have been present with his father, John Russell, at the execution. They suggest that being about twenty years old, he “would certainly have remembered the details of what occurred” (Freeman & Wall, 2001, p. 1185).

In contrast to the views of modern scholars such as Beilin (1996), King (1996), and Watt (1997), who commend Foxe for its lack of editorial interventions in Askew’s text, this section has argued that Foxe is as intrusive and distorting as Bale, if not more so. This chapter has shown that while modern historians criticise Bale for imposing his ideological agenda on Askew, leaving Foxe unscathed, Foxe did the same via various editorial techniques. He fashions Askew as one of many perfect reformation martyrs, which although it is unlike Bale’s explicit commentaries, still meets the demands of religious

indoctrination. Askew's voice is, thus, one amidst the accounts of other martyrs' tragedies, causing Foxe to focus on his personal objectives: his disapproval of the Catholic Church and his criticism of the Henrician court's handling of the situation. In contrast, Bale empowers Askew by isolating her from other martyrs and brings out her voice as a reader and speaker while writing her testimony. This should bring about a re-examination of Bale's role in Askew's account. Bale should be seen as her co-editor who succeeded in animating Askew's female voice: a voice which has shaped the history of early women writers. The final part of this chapter explores how Askew has been presented posthumously through two ballads, one of which was included in Bale's *Examinations*. It considers whether they confine her to the stereotypical role of the weak female, lacking the fortitude of a man, or whether they allow her to voice directly – without male interference – her own personal thoughts and religious beliefs.

### The Presentation of Anne Askew in the Ballads

John Bale decided to add a ballad allegedly composed by Askew at the end of the *Examinations* entitled, "The Balade whych Anne Askewe made and sange whan she was in Newgate," possibly written around 1546 just before her execution. The title presents Askew defiantly composing and singing these words during her imprisonment. This ballad is a powerful example of the way Askew described her sufferings in defence of her faith while epitomising Bale's

portrayal of her in the *Examinations*. His depiction of Askew together with her own sharp responses reveal her to be a powerful woman who challenged her enemies through intelligence and strong determination. The text of this ballad continues to stress Askew's combative nature:

Lyke as the armed knyght  
Appoynted to the fielde  
With thys world wyll I fyght  
And fayth shall be my shielde.

Faythe is that weapon stronge  
Wyhch wyll not fayle at nede  
My foes therfor amonge  
Therwith wyll I procede.

As it is had in strengthe  
And force of Christes waye  
It wyll prevayle at lengthe  
Though all the devyls saye naye

Faythe in the fathers olde  
Obtayned ryghtwysnesse  
Whych make me verye bolde.

To feare no wordles dystresse.

(Anne Askew in E.V. Beilin, 1996, p. 149)

Indeed, the opening simile introduces the idea of a battle centred on “Faythe” which is both her “shielde” and “weapon stronge” (p. 149). “Thys world” encompasses all her “foes” and “devyls” who are the representation of her political as well as her religious enemies (p. 149). Askew’s undaunted courage is clearly felt in the first four stanzas as she almost appears like some “Joan of Arc” figure ready to “fyght” her captors (p. 149). In the fourth stanza, she also evokes her faith in her predecessors who have also died for their reformist convictions, the “fathers olde,” and the courage they inspired perhaps after experiencing the betrayal by her actual father for rushing her into a Catholic marriage (p. 149). If this is the case, then Askew’s own words comply exactly with Bale’s feelings divulged in the *Examinations* regarding her controversial marriage.

Possibly, less of a heroic voice is felt in the fifth and sixth stanzas with the introduction of “Hope”:

I now rejoyce in hart  
And hope byd me do so  
For Christ wyll take my part  
And ease me of my wo.

Thu sayst lorde, who so knocke.  
To them wylt thu attende  
Undo therfor the locke  
And thy stronge power sende.

(Anne Askew in E.V. Beilin, 1996, p. 149)

Askew aspires for Christ to take her "part" and ease her of her "wo" (p. 149). Her personal and physical vulnerability are also apparent in her own words that "More enymes now I have / Than heeres upon my heed" (p. 149). This stanza captures Askew as a defenceless woman who was put to death by merciless authoritative individuals. The analogy of the number of her enemies to hairs on her head is particularly effective since it captures her fear in front of such a great number of enemies, which contrasts drastically with the previous four stanzas depicting her as a warrior. It is a balance which Askew finds in remaining humble in the eyes of her rigorous judges. As was discussed, in certain circumstances both Bale and Askew try to diminish her emphatically scholarly responses due to religious sanctions imposed on women in the sixteenth century. In other words, in order not to antagonise Catholic officials, Askew was prepared to leave her heady obstinacy aside, while Bale portrayed her as a sacrificial figure enduring torture and martyrdom in silence.

However, this emotional tone is soon replaced by a more assertive one in which Askew puts forward an argument about God's justice being usurped by the devil's manipulation. In stanzas eleven, twelve and thirteen starting with

a disclaimer, she evolves her discussion with an intensity of feeling that evokes her literary skill:

Not off use I to wryght  
In prose nor yet in ryme  
Yet wyll I shewe one syght  
That I sawe in my tyme.

I sawe a ryall trone  
Where Justyce should have sytt  
But in her stede was one  
Of modye cruell wytt.  
Absorpt was rygtwysnesse  
As of the ragynge floude  
Sathan in hys excesse  
Sucte up the gyltelesse bloude.

(Anne Askew in E.V. Beilin, 1996, p. 150)

These stanzas highlight Askew's beliefs and strike an apocalyptic note. In this allegory, Justice's throne has been usurped by a blood-devouring Satan. These words portray the hideousness of her circumstances and present the climax of the ballad. When the king is implied to be "Sathan in hys excesse," drinking innocent blood, she becomes confrontational through sharper and

bolder verses, criticising the reign of Henry VIII. Bale has used the adjective “modye” (i.e. arrogant, wrathful, OED, 2 & 3) – which is not very common – to describe the “olde modye tyrauntes” (p. 130). This is the kind of behaviour which is associated with bad kings. Her decisive and dexterous terminology presents Askew as a speaking subject as she refuses to appear a passive subject of inquiry. Her expression is one which leads into a religious polemic in which David Loewenstein finds surely “her own (and not Bale's)” articulation (Loewenstein, 2013, p. 95). In this ballad, Askew is a female-warrior fighting a pro-reformist war and uses the Scripture to campaign against the growing fear of heresy. She is everything but the “naturally frail” woman that Kemp describes her to be (Kemp, 1999, p. 1031).

Nonetheless, there exists another ballad concerning Askew entitled, *A Ballad of Anne Askew, I am a Woman poore and Blinde*. The earliest surviving editions of this poem are from around 1624 with various other editions continuing to be published over a hundred years after. However, it must have been printed earlier since Thomas Nashe refers to it in, *Have with you to Saffron Walden* (1596). He accuses Gabriel Harvey of stealing the opening line: “the first line whereof is stolne out of the Ballet of Anne Askew; for as that begins I am a women poore and blinde, so begins this O Muses, may a woman poore and blinde” (Nashe, 1596, K4r). This ballad, by an unknown author, possibly owes its popularity to the fact that in advancing the reformation, writers saw Askew as an excellent prototype of the Protestant martyr.

Beilin believes that this poem might have been written by Askew herself and only started circulating when “candidates being writers ... recognized the

popular appeal of Askew's conflict with powerful authorities" (Beilin, 1996, p. xxxix). However, apart from the fact that the tone that this poem presents is less refined than the previous ballad included in Bale's *Examinations*, Askew depicts herself as weak and spiritually blind which, as we have seen both in the *Examinations* as well as in the previous ballad, was an uncharacteristic thing for her. The title, for example, describing Askew as a "woman poor and blind" already suggests female frailty. This "blindness" can also metaphorically insinuate spiritual blindness. In this case, Askew is seen demoting her religious insight, which does not sound like the Askew of the *Examinations*. Furthermore, her assertiveness continues to be tempered when the speaker states in the first stanza that she possesses "little knowledge," which again implies that it might not be Askew's writing. The third stanza, then, continues to portray this spiritual and physical struggle which exists within her:

My spirit within me is vexed sore,  
My flesh striveth against the same:  
My sorrows do increase more and more,  
My conscience suffereth most bitter pain.

*(I am a woman poor and blind, 1635)*

In this ballad "Askew" depicts herself almost entirely as a victim of her interrogators depicting them as "bloody Butchers" with "slaughter knives" in their hands ready for carnage as she appears as a victim, a "simple carcass" to "devour and kill." In addition, if this was Askew, she makes an explicit attack

on the Catholic Church and, in particular, on Bishop Gardiner. The author criticises brusquely Bishop Gardiner through the analogy of the gardener:

Then this proud Gardener seeing me so blind,  
he thought on me to work his will,  
And flattered me with words so kind,  
to have me continue in my blindness still.

He fed me then with lies and mocks,  
for venial sins he bid me go  
To give my money to stones and stocks,  
which was stark lies and nothing so.

With stinking meat then was I fed,  
for to keep me from my salvation,  
I had trentals of mass, and bulls of lead,  
not one word spoken of Christ's passion.

*(I am a woman poor and blind, 1635)*

The “gardener” treats her as an easy prey who can be tempted effortlessly. She accuses him of trying to control her by “work[ing] his will” on her upon seeing her “so blind” (weak). The author also condemns the Church's useless and less than spiritual tradition of alimonies (the act of donating money to the Church, with the surety of a place in heaven), calling them “stark lies,” and

denigrates the theory of transubstantiation, labeling it as “stinking meat.” In addition, the poet challenges other Catholic customs amongst which are the “trentals of mass” referring to a series of thirty Requiems celebrated on thirty consecutive days, together with the “bulls of lead” which were official edicts issued by the Pope. The writer names them as “Popish ceremonies” and “juggling deeds” which eradicate completely “God’s spirit.” The writer challenges some of the most significant contentions which created a major rift between reformers and the Catholic Church. For this reason, I believe that this ballad was composed by some ardent reformer who wanted to put forward the Protestants’ cause, and who probably was not a woman. In fact, there is a direct reference to the reformed faith in Bishop Gardiner’s admonition to be careful of the “new learning,” which goes contrary to Askew’s character since she never admitted explicitly her beliefs with her interrogators. It would have been very unlikely for Askew, being a woman, to challenge in an upfront manner such a high, authoritative member of the clergy. It is, therefore, more plausible that this poem was composed posthumously, possibly when even the Bishop Gardiner would have passed away and posed no further threat, although we do know from Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* that scurrilous ballads about “Steuens stockfish” (an indirect reference to the Bishop) did circulate in his own lifetime (Foxe, 1563, p. 791). However, the nature of the ballad’s explicit attacks on some of the main doctrines of Catholic Church emanating from a woman would have presented a much higher risk than a male author’s critique of the clergy.

Rather, the author of this ballad wanted to appropriate Askew's image to portray her as an exemplary reformation martyr. There are mentions of the Scripture but only to highlight Askew's courage and constancy in the face of death. As she pleads for God's mercy, we see a totally different Askew from how she was portrayed in the *Examinations*. This time she is apprehensive and almost timorous of the life she has lived so far, clinging to the Scripture for self-assurance while putting all her trust in God:

My time thus, good Lord, so wickedly spent,  
alas, I shall die the sooner therefore.  
Oh Lord, I find it written in thy Testament,  
that thou hast mercy enough in store

For such sinners, as the scripture sayeth,  
that would gladly repent and follow thy word,  
Which I'll not deny whilst I have breath,  
for Prison, fire, Faggot, nor firce sword.

*(I am a woman poor and blind, 1635)*

As an exemplary follower of the New Faith, Askew is portrayed wanting to live the good life according to God's will on earth. Thus, "her" obstinate desire for repentance which she will not "deny" for "Prison, fire, Faggot nor firce sword" makes her a perfect emblem of a Protestant martyr. In fact, in the last stanza,

Askew is described as being defeated in this world but emerges victorious in finding her restful place in heaven as the ideal martyr:

Although to ashes it be now burned,  
I know thou canst raise it again,  
In the same likeness as thou it formed,  
in heaven with thee evermore to remain.

*(I am a woman poor and blind, 1635)*

In this second ballad, Askew surprisingly emerges as an apologetic figure continually asking the Lord for forgiveness. Her assertiveness as well as her undaunted courage have been tempered in a way which has not been done in the earlier accounts edited by Bale and Foxe. My argument, then, is a simple one: to try to discover Askew's physical voice in this ballad is highly imprudent for, very likely, Askew's voice has been ventriloquised. On the other hand, the ballad, *I am a woman poor and blind*, challenges the contention that female scholarship has made about Bale's ventriloquisation – and silencing – of Askew. It is hard to discern Askew's character and style in this second ballad as we uncover a different side to her: one where her voice is controlled to the point that the reader is confronted with a less combative Askew and more with a woman who shows signs of weakness. Unlike Bale's *Examinations*, Askew becomes less effective as a subject; her bravery and struggle as a woman who suffers is lessened. Nevertheless, she recovers her agency in a different manner

in this anonymous ballad: that of being a promoter of the new religion and defender of her faith.

## Conclusion

The conventional representation by scholars that Bale overpowers Askew's voice through his extensive commentaries is not entirely the truth. For one thing, Askew's style is entirely different from that of Bale. In fact, whereas Askew's approach consists in concentrating her responses almost entirely on the Bible, Bale needs to "incorporate a variety of sources" (Kemp, 1999, p. 1035). Moreover, despite what critics may have stated regarding Bale's apparent ownership of Askew's text, his prefaces and indeed his paratexts mirror the tension that existed at the time between the Catholic and the reformed religion, without misrepresenting Askew's intelligence nor her rhetorical power. On the other hand, the fact that Foxe intervenes, albeit subtly, makes his political agenda even clearer. Foxe needed to represent Askew as an early model for the Protestant martyr and, thus, he highlighted her constancy and fortitude to include her in his *Acts and Monuments* amongst others who, like her, suffered for their faith. He also wanted to make clear the purpose and the role she is to occupy in his account: that of a saintly figure who is to bring about a different spiritual orientation through the reformed faith and so the importance of her personal story is diminished rapidly. Nevertheless, both Foxe's account and Bale's *Examinations* remain two of the earliest

Protestant martyrologies and an early example of writing by a Tudor woman we have access to. If one dismisses one text over the other on the claim of misrepresentation, one risks overlooking a potential candidate for early women writers. Askew remains therefore, through historians like Bale and Foxe, a powerful example of an educated, highly intelligent, progressive woman whose passion for the Bible brought her to become a victim of her own culture, but who will also persist as a remarkable sixteenth-century female writer.

### Chapter 3. Isabella Whitney's Reconsideration of the Female Author

This Haruest tyme, I Haruestlesse,  
and seruicelesse also:  
And subiect vnto sicknesse, that  
abrode I could not go.  
Hath leasure good, (though learning lackt)  
some study to apply:  
To reade such Bookes, whereby I thought  
myself to edyfy.

(Isabella Whitney, *A Sweet Nosegay*, 1573, A5v)

This chapter examines the work of Isabella Whitney and her relationship to her male contemporaries such as Barnabe Googe, Thomas Howell, and George Turberville. Whitney has been considered by modern critics such as Michelle O'Callaghan, as "England's first professional woman writer" having had her texts printed during her lifetime (2019, p. 15). Her work, therefore, offers prolific material to investigate the level of mediation by men, particularly by her printer, in order to have had her texts printed and her role in this process. Moreover, she has also been selected for study because she provides a contrast to the other writers studied in this thesis in three key ways. First, unlike Anne Askew, Margaret More Roper, and Elizabeth Grymeston (the subject of Chapter four), her works – especially her second publication, *A Sweet Nosegay* (1573) – were not mediated into print by men, although, as we will see, relations with men and male discourse shape her writing. Secondly, unlike Askew and

Grymeston, her works were not published posthumously. Thirdly, and most significantly, unlike the other three writers studied in this thesis, Whitney was also writing for print for commercial reasons. She, thus, provides a different perspective on early modern women's writing. Generically, Whitney was also ground-breaking. She published original, secular poetry. Although religion is threaded through her verse, this is not the kind of devotional writing or religious translations that sixteenth-century female authors, such as More Roper, Anne Lock, or Katherine Parr, tended to produce.

Isabella Whitney has received critical attention from scholars for her persistence in achieving vocal agency at a time dominated by male authorship. Wendy Wall claims that women writers encountered various restrictions such as "the stigma of print" where the "female writer could become a 'fallen' woman in a double sense: branded as a harlot or a member of the un-elite" (Wall, 1991, pp. 35-36). Paul A. Marquis (1995, p. 314) contends that Whitney's works are "testimonies to the struggle she endured to make her voice heard in the male domain of published verse in the mid-Tudor period," while Laurie Ellinghausen (2005, p. 2) writes that Whitney, "as a woman in print," places herself in "social danger." Paul Gleed also confirms that Whitney writes from a position of vulnerability as a female writer: her position "creates and carefully calibrates a marginalized and disenfranchised poetic voice in order to reveal the limited agency available to women in early modern London" (Gleed, 2012, p. 2). Moreover, according to Cora Fox, what makes Whitney even more remarkable is not only the fact that she is the first woman in England to have had her secular works printed, but also that this woman writer "is also

writing from a marginal position within the class system" because of her impoverished state (Fox, 2010, p. 132). Furthermore, Maggie Ellen Ray reveals that Whitney's poems challenge the established women's role in that she criticises "both social attitudes towards women and the male-authored literature that creates them" (Ray, 2011, p. 130). In view of these beliefs, this chapter explores how through her works, Whitney manipulates established discourses of gender and patriarchy. By placing Whitney in the context of her male contemporaries rather than treating her in isolation as a woman writer, I examine how her poems reveal the limited agency available to women during this era and how she manages to find her own voice by challenging and subverting misogynist tropes. This chapter also reflects on how Whitney's works can be read differently, not only as autobiographical to better her economic situation as some modern critics have suggested, but as a voice which reflects accurately on the precarious position of many early modern women who struggled against a patriarchal society.

### Isabella Whitney's Reconsideration of the Female Lover in *The Copy of a Letter*

Isabella Whitney's life is not a notorious one. ODNB claims that that she might have been the sister of Geoffrey Whitney, author of *A Choice of Emblemes* (1586, ODNB). A member of the minor gentry, with an extensive family, she was not married and turned to writing as she found herself "weake in Purse," after

being made an unemployed servant (Whitney, 1573, E3r). Her social position, although not part of the very low, was still difficult. Being born into the gentry means that she did not have the privilege nor the protection of being aristocratic. Moreover, her gender and lack of financial stability contributed even more to her vulnerable social position. Therefore, like many children of gentry, both male and female, she had to take on the position of servant, which although – for her – was not a position of intensive labour, it nonetheless meant that she was beholden to, and dependent on, the will of another. Her extant, known work consists of only two collections of poems, both published by Richard Jones, entitled *The Copy of a letter, lately written in meeter, by a yonge Gentilwoman: to her unconstant Louer* (1567) and *A sweet nosgay or pleasant posye. contayning a hundred and ten phylosophicall flowers* (1573).

Whitney's first work, *The Copy* (1567), is a lamentation on the themes of love and abandonment. This collection of four poems offers a progressive view on how women and men should comport themselves in an amorous relationship. Such evaluations serve to highlight the prevalent hypocrisy and injustice in society shown towards the female sex. Through this volume, her poetic persona emerges not as that of the stereotypical woman who has been betrayed by love, but as a woman who has become wiser as a result of her suffering and has found female agency. Initially, the printer, Richard Jones, hints at the idea that Whitney's pamphlet may be partly autobiographical when he writes that "this Treatise is, / both false and also true" in the "Printer to the Reader" section (1567, A1v). This might have fueled the general contention of modern critics such as Pamela Hammons (2005) and Paul Glead

(2012), to view Whitney's work as a personal lamentation of her own emotional and economic situation. That is, these critics assume that the voice in Whitney's works is her very own. Critical writing on the early modern lyric has seen it as a strongly introspective form, which exhibits the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the person writing in a "way that it appears obvious to assume that the speaker is its author" (Furniss & Bath, 2007, p. 212). Despite this, as Tom Furniss and Michael Bath suggest, it is advisable not to assume that speaker and author in a lyric are the same since "there may be an interpretative payoff for suspending our belief and treating the poetic voice as an invented speaker" (Furniss and Bath, 2007, p. 222). However, whereas male poets tend to be granted some sophistication in creating a persona, there is a critical tendency to deny this to Whitney, and to other female writers. In her essay on Sylvia Plath and the "Problem of Biography," Susan R. Van Dyne argues that such an assumption goes contrary to the habits of self-representation of a writer who regards one's own life as a "text" which he or she could "invent and rewrite" (Van Dyne, 2006, p. 55). Hence, Van Dyne proposes the need to grant the artist sufficient "imaginative freedom to invent, misremember, substitute and play" with her text (2006, p. 18) as the readers have done in, for example, Donne's "The Flea" in *Poems* (1633). Indeed, the speaking voice in Donne's poem is assumed to be someone other than the poet himself and strongly dramatised. In trying to seduce his female lover, Donne's speaker exploits an imaginary situation, the flea, to turn his argument to his own advantage:

Marke but this flea, and marke in this,  
How little that which thou deny'st me is;  
It suck'd first, and now sucks thee,  
And in this flea, our two bloods mingled bee;  
Thou know'st that cannot be said  
A sinne, nor shame nor losse of maidenhead,  
Yet this enjoyes before it wooe,  
And pamp'rd swells with one blood made of two,  
And this, alas, is more than wee would doe.

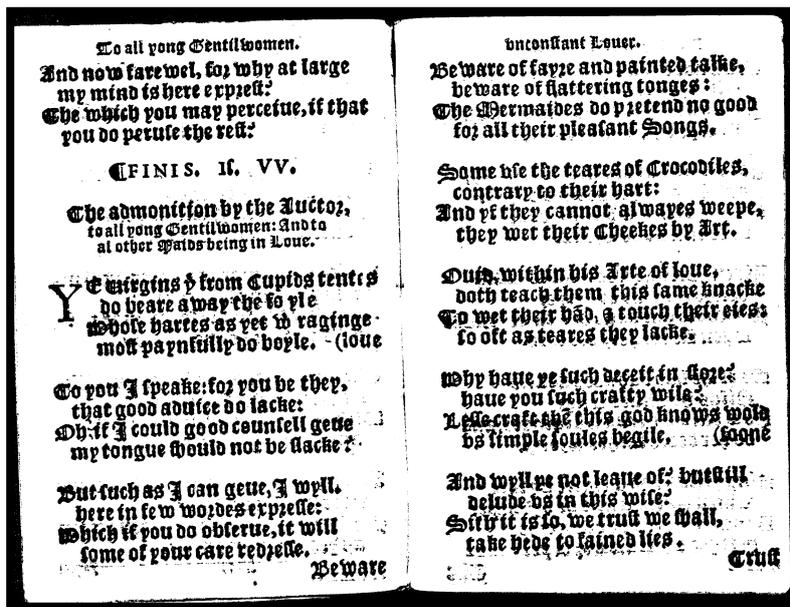
(John Donne, 1633, p. 230)

"This flea is you and I, and this / Our marriage bed," continues the speaker's voice in the second stanza, creating a distance between him as the author and the speaker's convictions. Allen C. Cohen argues that "Donne builds a complex argument about a woman's denial of love's consummation with the poem's persona" (Cohen, 2002, p. 70). Cohen continues by saying that this is a poetic style "known as the *metaphysical conceit*" whereby it "is characterized by the use of some simple or mundane object or act to make a point at some higher level of meaning" (Cohen, 2002, p. 70). In this case, Donne is using a simple flea to define an exalted picture about "the union of two souls, and the sacred institution of marriage" without compromising his reputation (Cohen, 2002, p. 70).

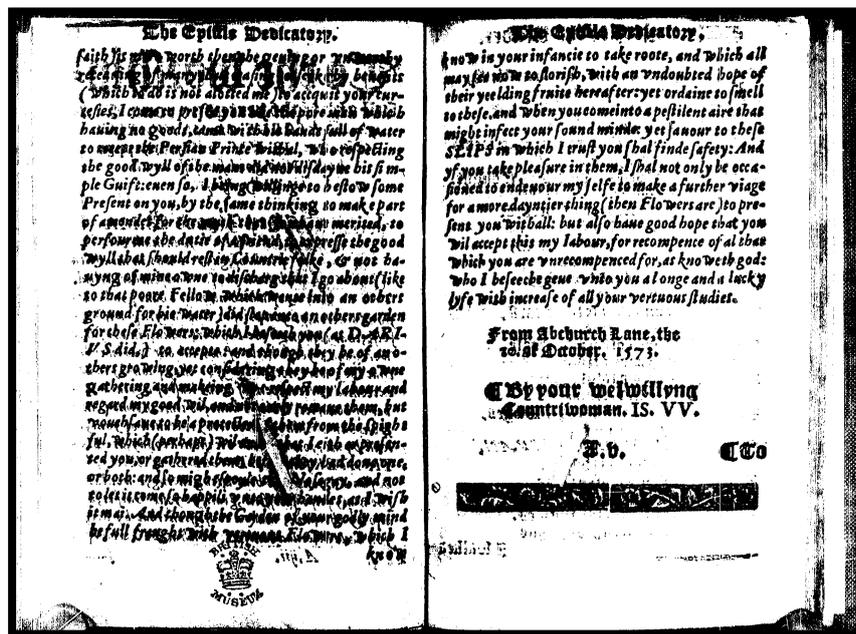
Whitney, however, is understood differently as a writer. She is assumed by many reviewers to be the speaker of her own poems. For example, Pamela

Hammons ascribes Whitney's deprived state as the stimulus to Whitney's own presentation of herself as "impoverished" (Hammons, 2005, p. 140). In addition, Ann Rosaline Jones says that Whitney writes directly "to her unconstant lover not as his victim but as his superior" (Jones, 1990, p. 43). Moreover, Gleed unequivocally assumes that "Whitney's position" in her works is that of the "female speaker" and believes that her sense of self-assurance is coming from an awareness of "her own merits" and a "quiet confidence" that she primarily has in her female constancy (Gleed, 2012, pp. 1-2). In actual fact, Patricia Brace states that "the probable occasion [for Whitney's lamentation in *The Copy*] was the jilting of Whitney by a fiancé because of insufficient dowry" (Brace, 2002, p. 98). Thus, there is this critical tendency to assume that a female poet can only write in her own voice, drawing on her own experiences, whereas critics are often much more willing to credit male writers with adopting personae, or speaking as fictionalised versions of themselves. For instance, the French Queen and writer Marguerite of Navarre is assumed by critics to write autobiographically in the anecdote about the assault on a Flemish princess in Novella 4 of *Heptaméron*, published posthumously in 1528. Indeed, Patricia Frances Cholakian states that, "Marguerite de Navarre narrates her own rape in Novella 4 ... although she takes pains to conceal her own identity" (1991, p.21). Even though Navarre was still married to her first husband when the apparent rape by seigneur de Bonnivisi had taken place, while the princess of Flanders is described as being a "Widdow, and had had two Husbands" (1621, p.22), Cholakian, however, believes "this is fictitious" (1991, p.21). David Fink contests this assertion by Cholakian, stating that "the evidence that such an

assault ever took place [remains] purely circumstantial" (2007, p.216). Yet, Cholakian is not the only one to believe that Navarre was writing in a "fictionalized version" of herself (Cholakian, 1991, p.24). The idea of Navarre's autobiographical writing is also reiterated by Joshua M. Blaylock referring to Novella 70, when he states that, "All the voices that express themselves in the seventieth novella, from characters in Oisille's tale to the *devisants* in the frame story, are a creation of the implied narrative voice of Marguerite herself" (2017, p.1014). In Novella 70, Oisille, the oldest and wisest of the group of story tellers, recounts the clandestine love between the triangular relationship of the Duke of Burgundy, his wife the Duchess, and an unnamed gentleman based on the popular thirteenth-century poem, *La Châtelaine de Vergy*, written anonymously. Although Novella 70 adapts this medieval poem which was "immensely popular throughout the medieval and early modern periods," Blaylock believes that this is autobiographical (Blaylock, 2017, p.1001). The rationale behind this chapter is to discover the possible overlap that is created between how Whitney portrays the speaker's voice in her works and how she has been read by modern critics. It will also make a distinction between the voice/s in *The Copy*, and later in *Nosegay*. The fact, for example, that in *The Copy* "I.W." comes after "Finis" at the end of the first poem, "To her vnconstant Louer" (Fig. 3.1), is a mark of authorship which is not the same as in *Nosegay* where "I.W." is a subscription to a letter (Fig. 3.2). This suggests that *Nosegay* is more probably being presented in the voice of the author.



The Copy of a Letter, 1567, A5v (Fig. 3.1)



A Sweet Nosegay, 1573, A5r (Fig. 3.2)

Such assertions do not preclude the fact, however, that while Whitney's own personal mishaps can naturally influence her work in some way, the work can also attempt to uncover the oppression that her female contemporaries suffered at the hands of male authority and how these have distorted female-authored texts. Indeed, infidelity was presented as a stereotypical part of a woman's conduct, provoking proverbs to be written about her, such as "a woman's mind and winter weather change oft" or "women are as wavering as the wind" (Dent, 1984, pp. 747-749). These proverbs lie behind a play like *A Woman is a Weathercock*, written by the actor and dramatist Nathan Field, first performed in c. 1609/1610. Field's play, however, challenges this conventional view. The female protagonist, Kate, is accused of having sex before marriage, only to be found innocent later, and the play consistently portrays male behaviour in a far worse light than female conduct.

Like Field, Whitney reserves the same judgement regarding the man. The speaker in "To her vnconstant Louer," in fact, puts the blame on the male: "if you had not begonne [to go astray]," the female speaker tells her one-time lover, her love for him would have remained undiminished (1567, A2r). The "speaker's love remained pure until it was spoiled by the male lover's infidelity" explains Ray (2011, p. 131). The "if" also indicates that she is not falling into the stereotype of the abandoned female, who remains loyal to her unfaithful lover even when deserted. Such self-assurance from the speaker is coming from a belief in her own self-worth as she does not waste her time in loyalty that is not repaid. She reminds her lover of her integrity and continued goodwill: "You know I alwayes wisht you wel / so wyll I during lyfe" (1567, A2r). This affirmation

contrasts with the depiction of the male lover's deceitful character in the previous two lines as she reproves him for not telling her the truth: "Which you (yer now) might me haue told / what nede you nay to swere?" (1567, A2r). The female persona, rather tolerantly, is even prepared to face the consequences of meeting his "wyfe" (1567, A2v). The depiction of the female character is one who shows resilience and who is, uncharacteristically, not distorted by male influence. Moreover, in the opening lines of "To her vnconstant Louer" instead of portraying women as inconstant as expected by Tudor society, Whitney's poem unflinchingly accuses the male lover of unfaithfulness:

That once you had as true a Loue,  
as dwelt in any Coast.  
Whose constantnesse had neuer quaild  
if you had not begonne

(Isabella Whitney, 1567, A2r)

It is the male lover who ultimately is portrayed as being fickle. Whitney's contemporary readers were meant, therefore, to reimagine their cultural beliefs about gender, which often implicated women as the inconstant partner. Furthermore, the female voice does not only demonstrate her loyalty through her own virtues but also through a comparison of her lover with unfaithful men. She cites examples of important males from classical mythology who abandoned their lovers such as Theseus, Jason and Aeneas. By relating the promiscuous conduct of these notable figures, the infidelity of

men is intensified, especially as we read that Aeneas's abandonment of queen Dido causes her such distress that she slashes "her hart" with a sword (1567, A2v). Theseus's deceitfulness towards his "faithfull loue" brings out a strong sense of cowardice on his part as he is depicted "Stealyng away within the night, / before she dyd awake" (1567, A3r). His faintheartedness in deserting his lover without confronting her strengthens the sense of cruelty on the part of Theseus, especially as the reader is told that he had a "faithfull" lover (1567, A3r). Jason is also meant to appear callous as he left Medea after he "had of her that time, / al kynd of things he wolde" only to "begile" two ladies (1567, A3r). Neither does he regard "the vowes / That he dyd make so faithfully, / vnto his louing Spowes" (1567, A3r). The female speaker concludes that the fact that these men become famous despite their falseness demonstrates a cultural double standard which directly critiques the paradigms of morality in Tudor society:

For they, for their vnfaithfulness,  
did get perpetuall fame:  
*Fame*? Wherefore dyd I terme it so?  
I should haue cald it shame.

(Isabella Whitney, 1567, A3v)

In a seemingly plain colloquial register, she repeats the word *fame* (an anadiplosis) to draw the reader's attention to it. Then, she promptly redefines

the same term *fame* into *shame* (*correctio*) to highlight the problematic standards of a society which promotes those who mistreat women. The relationship that Whitney seems to be constructing with men through her writing is one which is atypical of the sixteenth century, as we see her speaker resisting male-authored conventions. This direct criticism of males, however, had its repercussions on the book's circulation and was the probable reason for *The Copy's* lack of financial reward. Marquis sums up this:

The weak reception of [*The Copy*] is understandable, perhaps, because of the sheer novelty of the work: poems by a woman at a time when women were meant to be seen and not heard, poems that criticize male exploitation of women as portrayed in the great books of western culture, and poems that advocate longer periods of engagement in which a lover's suitability for marriage could be tested.

(Paul A. Marquis, 2009, p. 123)

Unfortunately, the novelty and audacity of Whitney's writing have been misunderstood by both her contemporary readers and some modern critics alike. Her readers, for instance, may have found it difficult to accept such book since it reflected gender polarity. Additionally, Whitney's lack of popularity amongst Elizabethan readers is also indicated by the fact that she does not get included in the survey of great English poets in Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia* (1598), while her contemporary male writers do. She also does

not get included in the collections of “our modern poets,” such as *Englands Parnassus* (1600) which contains extracts from her exact contemporaries such as George Turberville, George Gascoigne, and Thomas Churchyard. Notwithstanding Whitney was working on the same themes that other contemporary poets were writing about, she gets a different treatment and does not receive the same recognition as these other male poets. She must have known the effect that this book, *The Copy*, would have on her readers, but her motive stretched further than its economic means. Whitney’s objective was one where through her own powerlessness, she achieves the strength needed to shift the blame from the blameless, to give a voice to the voiceless and to grant more control to women by acquiring authorial agency.

This sense of female strength that the narrator achieves is transmitted to other women. The speaker wishes these women all the virtues possible, such as the chastity of Penelope, the beauty of Helen, the loyalty of Lucrece and the “trueth” of Thisbe (1567, A4v). The anecdote of Helen in Ovid’s *Heroides* (XV, XVI) narrates how despite great virtues these women unfortunately all end up mistreated by men. Helen’s beauty was the reason she was abducted. Lucrece’s constancy did not prevent her sexual assault and successive suicide. The “trueth”<sup>6</sup> of this also leads to the termination of her life after she misunderstands the fate of Pyramus (1567, A4v). In Ovid’s *Heroides* (I), Penelope’s chasteness compels her to ward off her suitors in the hope of Odysseus’ return. Therefore, the very virtues that are found in these women

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<sup>6</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) gives the meaning of “truth” as a sense of loyalty and faithfulness (n. 1a)

lead to their unhappiness and even in some cases, to their death. Whitney is, thus, creating a different representation of the female sex where the woman is no longer seen as the perpetrator, the Eve, who seeks to ruin the lives of men, but a victim who has her own life destroyed by malevolent men. Through such exploitation of women, Whitney is also presenting the “weaker” gender with the opportunity to speak, not from a disadvantaged position, but from a new, confident perspective of moral power. She starts off what other women such as Amelia Lanyer explicitly continued with their contribution to the *querelle des femmes*. Lanyer, for instance, applauds the position of women who mourn Jesus on the cross in her *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611). The female virtue exhibited through mourning vindicates the position of women, while men inflicted pain on their saviour.

This model of the confident and faithful woman is what marks the speaker in “To her vnconstant Louer” who is not afraid to insist to her lover that: “Thou knowst by prof what I deserue / I nede not to informe thee” (1567, A4v). The narrator appears most assertive as she states that it is “rare / in on[e] woman to fynd” all the virtues that “Gods haue me assignd” (1567, A4v). The very fact that she says she has “prof” of her virtues means that her qualities are not mere speculation (1567, A4v). In truth, she confesses that she lacks “Helens beauty” (while possessing the chastity of Penelope, constancy of Lucrece, and truth of Thisbe) makes her insistence on her worth all the more believable. She ends the first epistle with no sense of resentment towards her lover but, on the contrary, displaying ‘forgiveness’ as another virtue of hers:

Wherfore I pray God be my guide  
and also thee defend:  
No worsen then I wish my selfe,  
vntill thy lyfe shal end.

(Isabella Whitney, 1567, A5r)

The speaker's apparent forgiveness is potentially double-edged, however, as when she wishes him "King Xerxis wealth / or els King Cressus Gould" (1567, A5r). Not only was their immense and legendary wealth insufficient to protect them, ultimately, from defeat and humiliation and, in Xerxes's case, assassination, the lines that follow have a deliberate ambivalence: "With" these riches, the speaker wishes her former lover "as much rest and quietnesse / as man may haue on Mould [earth]" (1567, A5r). "As much" is a relative, not absolute, quantity, and proverbially, riches are associated with pain and grief, not rest, as in the proverbs "Riches are gotten with pain, kept with care, and lost with grief" and "Riches bring care and fears" (Tilley, 1950, pp. 570-572).

The evidence so far highlights that Whitney made it possible to create voice/s which did not necessarily express the author's inner state but the actions and feelings of different speakers. Where the initials "I.S." only appear in the position of an authorial attribution to the first poem, not as a subscription to the verse letter itself, the second poem in the volume is unambiguously linked to Whitney's voice, entitled: "The admonition by the Auctor, to all yong Gentilwomen: And to al other Maids being in Loue" (1567, A5v). The attribution

of authorship to a woman writer was not at all common during the sixteenth century. For instance, *The Booke of the Cyte of Ladyes* written by Christine de Pisan and translated from French into English by Bryan Anslay in 1521, denotes the hesitation by the printer, Henry Pepwell, in printing such book stating in a poem that, "The kindly entente / of euery gentlyman / is the, furtheraunce / of all gentlynesse" (1521, A4r). *The Booke* was, thus, being advertised as a book by a "gentlyman" for other gentlemen, rather than one written by a woman for other women. Mary Beth Long notes, in fact, that "women were not perceived in England as the primary audience" of De Pisan's work, nor that "Christine's name would ... draw potential buyers" (1992. p. 526).

In "The Admonition," Whitney cautions women "to be the best possible readers of unreliable men" since "men are active and willing agents in the deception of women" (Ray, 2011, pp. 137-138). It is notable, too, that the title addresses two different types of women, as Whitney endeavours to speak to and for women more widely: she addresses "yong Gentilwomen," more elite women whose social reputation risks being ruined by an unfortunate love affair, as well as "al other Maids being in Loue." In contrast to the emphasis in the title on youth and sexual innocence ("Maids"), Whitney's position in the poem is one of experience, as she warns women to:

Beware of fayre and painted talke,  
beware of flattering tonges:  
The Mermaides do pretend no good

for all their pleasant Songs.

Some vse the teares of Crocodiles,

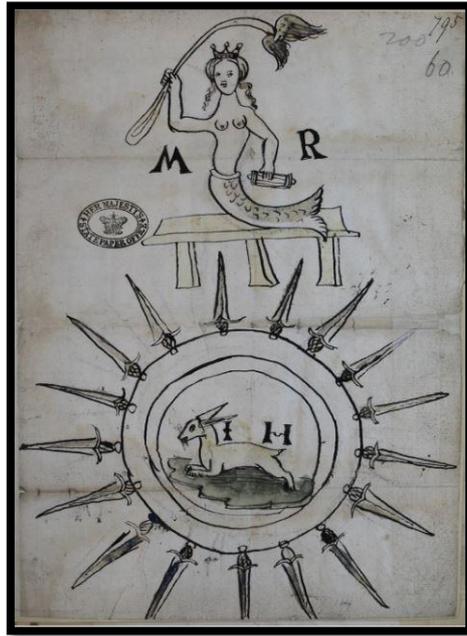
Contrary to their hart:

And yf they cannot alwayes weepe,

they wet their Cheekes by Art.

(Isabella Whitney, 1567, A6r)

Her experience gives her the right to caution abused women and to scold men who exploit them. She compares such men to mermaids who lure their victims into their trap with “their pleasant Songs.” “Mermaid” is a term embedded in a misogynistic discourse. During Whitney’s era such references to women inferred a double meaning – women as seducers and evil – the kind of representation of females which was easily understood and accepted by the everyday reader. In 1567, the same year that Whitney published *The Copy*, Mary Queen of Scots was depicted as a mermaid by her enemies because she was accused of plotting her second husband’s death and wedding his murderer. A placard entitled the “Mermaid and the Hare,” the hare being the heraldic badge of her third husband, James Hepburn, earl of Bothwell, was posted on the streets of Edinburgh in summer 1567 to allude to Mary as a prostitute via her portrayal as a mermaid (Fig. 3.3):



Sketch of Mary Queen of Scots, c. June 1567, National Archives U.K. (Fig. 3.3)

This similarity that is made here between men and mermaids is, thus, placing “the male in a role which has traditionally been attributed to females” (Marquis, 1995, p. 319). This implies that it is the man, through deceit and flattery, who is causing the manipulation and ruin of females. Hence, Whitney makes use of her own voice to engage in a public argument against the injustices suffered by women. Whitney, thus, manages to find a voice for the female perspective and correct misogynistic stereotyping. This suggests that she is not solely writing a work, as has been claimed, “to generate revenue” (Brace, 2002, p. 97). The following lines continue to accentuate this moral power by affirming that women have “lesse craft” and thus are easily exploited by men who “wold soone / vs simple soules begile” (1567, A6r). Whitney’s use

of rhetoric hints at a sense of female victimisation as she pleads with the masculine figure:

Why haue ye such deceit in store?  
haue you such crafty wile?

(Isabella Whitney, 1567, A6r)

This portrayal of the sinister male is strengthened through the appeal to the merciless but shrewd men who continue to take advantage of credulous women:

Any wyll ye not leaue of? but still  
delude vs in this wise?  
Sith it is so, we trust we shall,  
Take hede to fained lies.

(Isabella Whitney, 1567, A6r)

Therefore, the poem's advice is not to have faith in "a man at the fyrst sight, / but trye him well before" (1567, A6v). Whitney achieves authorial agency as she suggests a progressive, nonconforming solution for men's infidelity: to test him before any permanent relationship can take place. The word "try" could have had a sexual connotation during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. In Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* (1616), for example, Dame

Kitely refers to her husband as "My tryed husband," underscoring that "he do's it not for need, but pleasure" (Jonson, 1616, IV, x.23). Also, for instance, Megra in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* (1608-10), speaks for her lover that: "he likes it well / For he hath tried it, and found it worth / His princely liking" (Beaumont & Fletcher, 1628, K3v). Therefore, when the poem points out that only through "trial" one "shal declare his trueth," she is possibly suggesting engaging in sex before actually committing oneself (1567, A6v). The other possible meaning is to "test," that is to get them to make some proof of their fidelity (OED, 2a). This reference to sexual testing is reinforced by the example of Hero, a priestess of Aphrodite who did "trie" her lover, Leander, and found him to be "both constant, true, and iust" (1567, A7v). Their love was stronger after it had been consummated ("she did loue so well" [1567, A7v]), which eventually led to the death of Hero when she found out the ill-fate of Leander who died while swimming across the sea to see her.

This treatment of the male, as someone to try out and reject if not capable of fidelity, gives the concept of patriarchy a whole new dimension where women are now in a position of social control. It is also proof that in this case, Whitney is not letting male influence manipulate her writing. For years, women were depicted as defenceless victims in a society dominated by the influential male. In the final stanzas of "The admonition," this idea of the weak and vulnerable woman is reiterated in the analogy of the fish. The fish is compared to the naive woman who credulously takes the baited hook as "the simple fool doth trust / to much before he trie" (1567, A8r):

O little fish what hap hadst thou?  
to haue such spitefull fate:  
To come into ones cruell hands,  
out of so happy state?

Thou diddst suspect no harme, when thou  
vpon the *bait* didst looke:  
O that thou hadst had Linceus eies  
for to haue seene the hooke

(Isabella Whitney, 1567, A8r, emphasis added)

Whitney rewrites the image of the baited hooks just as she does with the notion of the mermaids and turns a misogynistic discourse against men. Just as the unsuspecting fish is tempted by the food, so is the woman enticed by the male through deceitful means, marked also by his "cruell hands" (1567, A8r). Moreover, the fact that the fish was taken suddenly "out of so happy state" insinuates that the fish was lucky enough and well-contented before being trapped (1567, A8r). It leads to the idea, therefore, that a woman's happiness does not necessarily involve the presence of a male who ultimately is the one who ends up ruining her contentment. This same vision of the tempted fish was also a favourite motif in male-authored miscellanies which were written around the same time as Whitney's. "Thou art the Fish, she beares the byting hookes," writes George Turberville to his friend "T" in his collection of poems, *Epitaphes* (1567, L4r). Additionally, in "Dispraysse of Women that allure and loue not"

(1567), Turberville writes how women through deceit and flattery lure the man in their traps only to take advantage of them:

They spoyle the Fish for friendships sake  
that houer on their Hookes.  
They buye the baite to deare  
That so ther feedome loze

(George Turberville, 1567, l2v)

Turberville also warns men to be vigilant when confronted by women:

Think when thou seest the baite  
whereon is thy delite,  
That hidden Hookes are hard at hande  
to bane thee when thou bite.

(George Turberville, 1567, l4r)

In another exchange between men, Barnabe Googe counsels his friend Alexander Nevell in *Eglogs, epytaphes and sonettes* (1563) not to be hasty in befriending a woman since the "fysshes bayte" which appeared "so swete" at first will ensnare him by its "hydden hooke" (Googe, 1563, F2v). It is far better, continues Googe, to "feade on the bayte," but remain cautious of its "hookes" (Googe, 1563, F3r). This type of exchange between men appeared in very homosocial texts (texts of a hegemonic masculine nature which serve to

describe and define the social bonds between men), while Whitney returns to and rewrites the same discourse from a lone and much more vulnerable position. She is not intimidated by the fact that she writes about a topic which was usually considered part of masculine discourse. Thus, it seems as if this poem is designed to protect women against the inconstancy of men and the cultural belief that claims women are inconstant. Whitney's work, hence, reverses the traditional role of woman as a female temptress and provides an alternative perspective to the traditional image which jocularly views women as men's bait.

This sense of female empowerment and authorial agency in *The Copy* distinguishes Whitney from the coterie of male authors who were not familiar with anything other than a male-oriented view. She writes against the dominant cultural vein, and she is also doing this on her own, rather than as part of a group as her male contemporaries publish within multi-authored miscellanies. At a time when women "often described their powerlessness in the face of husbands or suitors" (Gowing, 1996, p. 252), Whitney's writing empowered women to take some control of their lives, thus asserting some freedom from male oppression. That is, Whitney tries to give a voice to women and consequently move away from the conventional cultural perspective of expecting women in Tudor England to obey, remain silent and subject themselves completely to the dominion of men. Hence, uncommon as it was in early modern England, it is the woman this time who is depicted as the superior gender who can dispose of the male at her pleasing. Through "triall," the woman can avoid some sorrow (1567, A6v). If Scylla "had not trust to much

/ before that she dyd tyre," she would not "haue ben clene forsake" (1567, A6v). Taken from Greek mythology, Scylla was the daughter of Nisos, king of Megara. When Minos, king of Crete, invaded Megara, Scylla fell in love with him and betrayed her father by removing the single lock of purple hair from his head that granted him invincibility. Minos, however, only felt contempt at Scylla's lack of filial love so that she "was cleane reiect, and left behind / when he dyd whom retyre" (1567, A7r). Likewise, if Oenone, wife of Paris of Troy, had known of "such falsehood" about her husband who abandoned her for queen Helen of Sparta, she would have "walkt alone" amongst "the fieldes of Ida wood" (1567, A7r). Neither would have Phillis ended her life, had she been told of "Demophoons deceite" (1567, A7r). Although trying one's love before actual commitment does not always bring happiness, yet it is still better to "alwayes trie before ye trust / so shall you better speede" (1567, A7v). The strength of this argument lies in the fact that "trial" gives to the woman an uncharacteristic sense of empowerment while portraying the futility of male dominance over the woman.

In this case, the voice in *The Copy* belongs to the disadvantaged women in Whitney's era who speak with a sense of self-assurance. Whitney takes mythological male figures as cases of unreliable lovers who act at the expense of the virtuous woman. Whitney, thus, consciously questions the misogynist ideas imposed on female constancy and shifts female literacy to a higher level. As Ray states, Whitney "offers a counter-voice to the male-authored literary texts that created these lovers" while offering "a glimpse of the way women writers can manipulate literacy to respond to cultural

attitudes" (Ray, 2011, p. 137). Nonetheless, the last two poems in *The Copy* seem to complicate this argument. The speaker in both poems is now male and they each complain about the unpredictability of their female lovers which at first glance seems to reconfirm the traditional male hierarchy as will be discussed in the next section. However, stylometric evidence shows that these last two works are probably not Whitney's poems. In addition, although the poetic voices found in these two works put the responsibility on women for their transgressions against the male gender, I will argue that the apparent agency they display still offers a kind of solidarity with women who have suffered the injustice of male hegemony.

#### The Last Two Letters in *The Copy of a Letter*

The four poems in *The Copy* share the same ballad metre, four-line stanzas with irregular lines of eight and six syllables, with only lines two and four rhyming (abcb). Nevertheless, although there is a stylistic consistency to the volume as well as a thematic one, the final two poems are very unlikely to be by Whitney. These last two poems found in *The Copy*, "A Loueletter" and "Wilfull Inconstancie," are voiced by a male speaker presenting a contrast with the two female speakers of the first two works in this collection. In the third poem, the speaker laments the rejection he has experienced at the hands of his lover, while in the fourth one the speaker offers a warning against women. Some critics, like Meredith Anne Skura (2008), believe that Whitney is not the author

of the last two poems since they are very male-orientated. Moreover, R. J. Fehrenbach (1981) believes that the initials "W.G" inscribed at the end of the third letter refer to William Gruffith, a former acquaintance of Whitney, implying that he has contributed to writing a poem to her collection. Another possibility, however, might be that "W.G" refer to the initials of Whitney's brother, Geoffrey Whitney, written in reverse. Fehrenbach's (1981) assumption is based on the fact that he attributes to Isabella Whitney another unsigned work: "The lamentacion of a Gentilwoman vpon the death of her late deceased frend William Gruffith" printed by Richard Jones in Thomas Proctor's *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578). In "The lamentacion," the female speaker pays homage to the death of her friend while also lamenting various social constraints, such as patriarchal silencing, imposed on Elizabethan women. These constraints are very similar to those seen in *The Copy* (1567) and also in Whitney's second work *Nosegay* (1573):

Eche man doth mone, when faythfull freends bee dead,  
And paynt them out, as well as wits doo serue.  
But I, a Mayde, am forst to vse my head,  
To wayle my freend (whose fayth) did prayse deserue:  
Wit wants to will: alas! no skill I haue;  
Yet must I needes deplore my Gruffithes graue.

(The Lamentacion, 1578, P3r)

Whitney's or not, the "oppositional of [the] voices" of these two poems to Whitney's own work reveals that they served a different function – that of making these poems "crucial to the marketing agenda of the pamphlet" (Ray, 2011, p. 141). Perhaps, Richard Jones, as a publisher, was aware that the pamphlet would not sell if for the first time he only included the work of a sixteenth-century woman who boldly criticises the inconstancy of male lovers. Therefore, opting to publish the last two poems which deal with the conventional male grievances about a woman's morality, such as those already discussed by Googe (1563) and Turberville (1567), serves to challenge the championing of female constancy in the previous two poems and is necessary as a marketing strategy. In fact, the printer provides this note at the start of the pamphlet, almost a justification for allowing a woman to make it into print while urging his readers to buy the book:

What lack you Maister mine?  
some trifle that is trew?  
Why? then this same wil serue your turne  
the which is also new.

Or yf you minde to reade,  
some fables that be fained:  
Buy this same Booke, and ye shall finde,  
such in the same contained.

Perchance my wordes be thought,  
vncredible to you:  
Because I say this Treatise is,  
both false and also true.

The matter of it selfe,  
is true as many know:  
And in the same, some fained tales,  
the Auctor doth bestow.

Therefore, bye this same Booke,  
of him that haere doth dwell:  
And you (I know) wyll say you haue  
bestowed your mony well.

(Richard Jones, 1567, A1v)

The printer's address "What lack you," which is a trader's cry, does not disguise the pamphlet's commercial ambition. Jones makes a deliberate defence of the book being the work of a female author, describing it as both "fained" and "false," in the hope that male readers will see the female-voiced complaints as untrue so that it may translate into economic profit, and it is notable that the customer is assumed male ("Maister") (1567, A1v). However, the fact that the printer is not explicit about which accusations are false, if those of the female or male speakers, means he gets to keep a neutral opinion which might

have a better selling effect on the book. In other words, by downplaying Whitney's unconcealed allegations about men but also about women, the printer hopes that the readers of both genders will accept it and circulate the work more widely. In addition, the printer points out that it is he who will eventually receive any financial gain from selling this book by urging the reader to buy it "of him that haere doth dwell" (1567, A1v). This printer's confession potentially distracts from the idea that "IW" was writing purposely for economic profit. While it may appear that it is another male voice which is negotiating a woman's work into print as happened with Margaret More Roper's and Anne Askew's works, his voice is limited to this occasion only as opposed to Roper's and Askew's texts. It is also striking that Jones' brief poem stresses the work's commercial aspect, and – unlike the paratextual of Roper and Askew – does not attempt to shape the representation and reputation of the female writer herself. Also as a printer, Jones had a vested interest in seeing the work generate economic revenue and thus his need to promote Whitney's book is quite understandable.

With this in mind, the third poem seems to soften the critique of male dominancy whilst complementing Whitney's first two poems, in particular her first poem in various instances. The male persona is, in fact, as critical of his mistress as the female speaker in the first poem was of her lover, implying that one cannot attach faithfulness or faithlessness to one gender. The title clearly indicates the element of frustration in the speaker of the third poem besides influencing how the readers approach the text in that the maiden is condemned in the readers' eyes before they even get to the poem: "A

Loueletter, or an earnest perswasion of a Louer: sent of late to a yonge Mayden, to whom he was betrothed. Who afterward being ouercome with flattery, she seemd vtterly to swerue from her former promise without occasion, and so to forsake him." The word "flattery" (i.e. "gratifying deception" [OED, 2]) implies that the woman has been persuaded by someone else into deserting him. Her susceptibility to flattery makes her appear morally weak as well as cruel while emphasising the constancy of this man who, despite her desertion of him, still presents himself as her "frend":

As dutie wils, so nature moues,  
thy frend these lines to wright:  
Wherin thy fraude, (O faithlesse thou)  
I minde to bring to light.

Can plighted faith, so firmly plight,  
without desert be moued?  
Or should the man that faithfull is,  
so slenderly be loued?

(A Loueletter, 1567, B2r)

The predicament of the male persona is accentuated by words which give an indication of his sense of morality such as "dutie" and "faithfull." The term "fraude" – contrasted with the alliterating word "frend" – highlights the dishonesty of the woman who has so "slenderly" loved him. The *polyptoton* of

“plighted” and “plight” further conveys his bafflement and his sense of injustice, that a promise made can be undone. He, then, rhetorically evokes the justice of the gods to define the significant offences committed by the woman towards him:

Can they that sit in hauty Heauens  
such couert gilt abyde?  
Or ar they parcial now deemst thou?  
is Justice throwne a syde?

Nay iust are they, and iustice styll,  
as iust, they iustly vse:  
And vnto them, as gittlesse then,  
canst thou thy selfe excuse?

(A Loueletter, 1567, B2v)

This idea of justice and retribution is repeated often throughout the whole letter. The word “justice,” and variations of it, are mentioned eight times throughout this poem. Here, the male speaks of “guilt,” “conscience,” “fraud” and “purity,” evoking the existence of a divine justice against his inconstant lover:

To see thy *conscience*, *gylty* is,  
thy faithles *frawde* they see:

And thinkste thou then, this *gilt* of thine,  
can vnrewarded bee?

O Faith, think not so far to wish,  
from reasons lymyts *pure*:  
But *iudg* thy selfe, what *iustice* they  
to sinfull ones inure.

(Isabella Whitney, 1567, B3r, emphasis added)

The poetic speaker believes that his mistress deserves God's punishment since she has broken the rules of social behaviour. However, the rhetorical strategy involved in this should not be overlooked. Since the reader would have already become accustomed with the first two poems implicating the male in the mistreatment of the woman, this third poem serves as a reminder for the reader that if the female should be punished, the male deserves the same treatment. It is this kind of perspective which offers an indirect solidarity and compassion with women who might have felt marginalised in a society that favours men. In addition, the male voice's declaration of love and integrity which charges the woman with infidelity reflects upon what the female speaker has also accused her lover of in the first poem:

Which sire yeares long, as pacionate  
to carpyng yoake of care:

I bod for thee, as thou thy selfe,

I know canst wel declare

(A Loueletter, 1567, B3v)

The male speaker admonishes his lover by warning her that whoever “offend[s]” the will of the gods, their “powre” will be inflicted on them and this is “playnly knowne” (1567, B3r). He restricts his accusations to the behaviour of one woman but does not blame women in general as did, for example, Turberville in “Disprays of Women that allure and loue not” and “To his Friend T: having bene lone studied and well experienced, and now at length louing a Gentlewoman that forced him naught at all” in his work *Epitaphs* (1567). Whilst Whitney’s male contemporaries tended to criticise the whole female sex for their weaknesses, this male speaker is careful not to do the same. This suggests that while Whitney’s female speakers assimilate the masculine persona who instructs, the male speaker takes the role of “a more conventionally feminized realm of lamentation” (Ray, 2011, p. 144), apart from not making his reproached lover emblematic of her gender. These unconventional roles ascribed to the masculine and female gender reflect how Whitney would have represented her relationship with male contemporaries. In fact, the frequent use of interrogatives marks the male speaker as being overly emotional and in disbelief, all that Whitney’s female speaker refuses to be, especially in “To her vnconstant Louer.” He asks incredulously which woman was it that has managed to turn his mistress against him:

But now what helysh hagge? (alas)  
hath tournde thy loue to hate:  
Or els what whelpe of HYDRAS kind  
In thee hath wrought debate

(A Loueletter, 1567, B3v)

The male voice appears weaker and less resolute than the female speakers in the first two poems. He ends still pleading for her love and saying that he is still her true love, and wants her to reply to him: "Consider these my letters well, / and answer them agenne" (1567, B4v). In contrast, the female speaker in the first letter, for instance, ends casting off her faithless lover, vouching to never send him any more letters: "For she that sent you same, hath sworn / as yet to send no more" (1567, A5r). She appears strong and unyielding as opposed to the male voice who is weak and emotionally fragile. It is clear that whoever wrote this letter, s/he had Whitney's first two letters in mind and wrote it in such a way as not to upset the conventional rules of patriarchy. This is further confirmed by witnessing the male speaker's doubts about his lover's disloyalty and the constant demands he makes:

Who would a thought (alas)  
such fraude to rest in thee?  
Who wold haue deemd withou desere  
thy hart should change from mee?

(A Loueletter, 1567, B4r)

The speaker tries, at all costs, to find an answer to his abandonment by his mistress, asking if this time it was “a pratlyng Parasite” who has “egge[d] / thee with disdayne” (1567, B4r). Therefore, while for example the female speaker in the first poem appears to possess a good extent of self-control, the male speaker in this third poem staggers: he appears both anxious and self-entitled. He struggles to believe that the woman could have changed her mind independently, without the influence of a third party, and thinks that to love someone is enough to merit their love in return: “Oh should the man that faithfull is, / so slenderly be loued?” he asks (1567, B2r). In this sense, this dynamic dichotomy between the female voice of the first two poems and the male speaker of the third poem incites a reevaluation of Whitney's female speaker's agency. The female voice in both poems is more aware of her own abilities to expose ironically the limited social power available to women in early modern England. Whitney, thus, creates a carefully calibrated picture by establishing a direct parallelism, which is at the same time an exact reversal of the male voice. This move is made yet more effective as the masculine speaker emerges as indecisive and unsteady, while the female speakers appear more emotionally stable. This brings the reader to consider the fact that even though the third letter is written in the voice of a male speaker and almost certainly by a male writer, it does not occlude the female agency established in the first two poems.

To understand further the role of female agency in this volume, the next part will discuss the fourth and last poem. It explores the idea that this fourth poem supplements Whitney's second poem to perfection. Attributed to “R.

WITC" (1567, C3v [missigned B]), it is titled "Against the wilfull Inconstancie of his deare Foe E. T. Whiche Example may iustly be a sufficient warnyng for all yongmen to beware the fained Fidelytie of vnconstant Maydens" (1567, C1r [missigned B]). This last poem revolves around the male speaker warning all "youthful Wights at lyberty" to be cautious of deceitful maidens' love, just as Whitney's second poem was an admonition for all young women to be aware of unfaithful men.

In the opening lines the male speaker of this poem appears more resolute than the male speaker of the third poem in his attack against disloyal women. He makes it clear that he wants his unfortunate experience to serve as an example for all young men to take heed of unfaithful women: "I wish that my decay may bee, / a warnyng to you all" (1567, C1r [missigned B]). He has tried his luck with love for "two yeares and somewhat more" but he only ended with a "hart ... so sore" and "can no longer serue" (1567, C1r [missigned B]). The concept of female tyranny is accentuated by the word "thrall," a figurative image from Petrarchan love poetry, which is repeated twice and has connotations of slavery, captivity and deprivation of liberty (OED, 1a). The speaker is therefore promoting the idea of a woman who through cunning means has beguiled and enslaved him only to abandon him:

For lo my carefull choyce doth choose  
to keepe mee styll in thrall,  
And doth regard my loue no more  
then Stone that lyes in wall

(Wilfull Inconstancie, 1567, C1v, missigned B)

This idea of female charm and trickery provides an analogy to the mermaids who lure their subjects with their songs in Whitney's second poem. There, the female speaker laments of receiving nothing but "crafty wile[s]" and "fained lies" from men after trusting them with their hearts (1567, A6r [missigned B]). In the same manner the male speaker in the fourth poem makes a legitimate complaint against being deceived by his lover:

I payde for loue and that full dears  
yet I receyue right nought,  
I neuer was so much deceyued  
in any thyng I bought.

(Wilfull Inconstancie, 1567, C2v, missigned B)

Unlike the male voice of the third poem who targets the misconduct of one particular woman, this speaker does take a broader view about women. However, as will be discussed, although this male speaker appears to be more decisive in his approach than the male speaker in the third letter, he is counteracted by Whitney's female speaker whose attacks on unfaithful men were sharper and more direct in the second poem. For instance, the speaker of the fourth poem counsels men to be cautious of women's inconstancy as through their charm, it is very likely that they will remain entrapped. The

imagery the speaker sets out is that of a bird which has become entangled and now cannot make it to freedom:

Take heede for you maist come in thrall  
Before that thou beware:  
And when thou art entangled once  
thou canst not flie the snare.

(Wilfull Inconstancie, 1567, C3r, missigned B)

This description of the bird resembles the metaphor of the fish which takes the bait and remains hooked in Whitney's second poem. The female speaker's suggestion was not to trust a man immediately; this male speaker advises to avoid women altogether which is more condemning of the entire gender:

Frequent not Womens company  
but see thou from them swarue  
For thy Rewarde shall be but smal,  
whateuer thou deserue.

(Wilfull Inconstancie, 1567, C3r, missigned B)

However, unlike the fish which becomes cautious in taking the bait the second time, the male speaker is injudicious and thrusts his hands "among the Thornes" (1567, C2r [missigned B]). Evidently, this shows that he is not as convincing in his critique of women as he wants the readers to believe:

I thrust my hand among the Thornes  
in hope the Rose to finde.  
I prickt my hand and eke my hart  
yet left the Rose behynde

(Wilfull Inconstancie, 1567, C2r, missigned B)

Undeniably, this male speaker embodies Whitney's idea of the kind of relationship that she most probably envisaged with her male contemporaries: one which is crowned with men's failure in their misrepresentation of female agency. The male speaker is unable to learn from his experience and continues to dwell "eche day in doubtfull case" (1567, C1v [missigned B]). So, unlike Whitney's narrator, who shows a strong personality without victimising herself, the male persona comes out as a "poore wretch" who repeatedly commits the same mistake despite his affirmation of the many "paynes" that he has suffered (1567, C2v [missigned B]). His failed strength in front of his woman's betrayal is evident in the following lines:

I neuer spent one day in Joye  
my carefull hart doth know,  
Since first I lent my Loue to her  
by whom my grieffe doth growe.

There are no greater paynes assignd  
for dampned Ghostes in hell:

Then I do suffer for her sake,  
that I do loue so well.

(Wilfull Inconstancie, 1567, C2v, missigned B)

The masculine voice emerges lacking that confidence that the previous female speakers have shown in the first two poems. The demoralised poetic speaker, helplessly mired in an unfortunate situation of great “paynes,” laments the cruelties of the beloved. He exposes explicitly his lack of power by admitting that he does “suffer for her sake,” a state which is significant cast in the present tense (1567, C2v, missigned B). The woman, thus, derives authority from the weak position of the male. The lack of strength shown by the male speaker gives the woman power, at least rhetorically, which in reality she does not have.

This sense of cowardice is even more amplified when the male speaker makes no attempt to demonstrate any will to improve his situation, while the earlier female speaker advises making a “trial” of the would-be lover before any actual romantic commitment. This paradoxically goes against the poem’s promise to provide “sufficient warnyng” due to his lack of action. As Ray comments, the male speaker “lacks the skills of ‘trying’ that the maidens of Whitney’s poem do” (Ray, 2011, p.148). Although he had all the good intentions to find the perfect love as he “sowed both pure and perfect seede / on fayre and pleasant groundes,” the experience resulted in being unpleasant since for his “payne and labour past” he received “nought els but Weedes” (1567, C2r [missigned B]). However, the suffering that he goes

through is partially his fault as he did not test the women as Whitney's female speaker advised but, imprudently, he thrust his hands blindly into thorns. He is hurt so much that not even Venus nor Cupid can harm him:

But now let VENVS fire her forge  
let CVPIDS Shafte be sent:  
They can no more encrease my woe  
for all my Loue is spent.

(Wilfull Inconstancie, 1567, C3r, missigned B)

This offers a perfect counterpart to Whitney's second poem which refers to virgins from "Cupids tentes" whose hearts are raging with love and "most painfully do foyle" (1567, A5v). "Tentes" suggests a military tent (OED, 1a), while the "foyle" women are instructed to bear away is a weapon. Definitely, this suggests the maiden speaker's inner strength as opposed to the weakness shown by the male speaker. Moreover, unlike Whitney's maiden in the second poem, the male speaker does not learn from past mistakes and he is left "burning in the flame, / compeld to blow the fyre" (1567, C3r [missigned B]). Although the male persona also speaks of "prooffe," the only proof he can bring is his own failure at romantic love rather than proving his constancy as the first female speaker did (1567, C3v [missigned B]). He suggests that for any real love commitment to happen, it should be set on paper, a sort of contractual love:

Yet if thou chaunce to place thy loue  
take heede what thou doest saie:  
And see thou place thy *talke in Print*  
or els beware a fraie.

(Wilfull Inconstancie, 1567, C3v, missigned B)

This is the only time the male speaker offers some solid advice for his male readers. This “talke” is not only put in writing, but in print: a public declaration, therefore, not a private one.

The final stanza of the poem, however, reveals the real audience and intention of the poem. The second person addressee suddenly shifts from the male reader the speaker is warning about female behaviour to the woman who has betrayed him. He ends with a final warning:

And thus I ende: not doubttyng but  
these wordes may well suffice,  
To warne thy *gredie hart* of harme  
and ease thy *rouing eyes*.

(Wilfull Inconstancie, 1567, C3v, missigned B)

This fourth poem consequently transpires not to be a renunciation of women at all. Rather, it seeks to control the behaviour of the female lover by threatening her to amend her ways and remain faithful. He ends confident that his words will “suffice” to “ease” her “rouing eyes.” This inconsistent

attitude reveals contrasts with the first two poems in the volume, written by Whitney from a female perspective. The final two poems, although written from a male perspective, ironically serve to accentuate the culpabilities of their male speakers, emphasising their weaknesses and lack of resolve.

As this section has shown “A Loueletter” and “Wilfull Inconstancie” – the final two poems in the volume – complement Whitney’s two poems, which begin the volume by offering a contradictory perspective regarding the comportment of women. This brings me to conclude that most probably these last two poems are not Whitney’s works but male authored. In the next part, I will discuss Whitney’s second work, *A Sweet Nosegay* (1573), which discusses the relationship between occluded female agency and how it relates to the potential stigma of writing for financial profit. The purpose is to explore the transformation of Whitney from an author who deflected the glare of publicity in part through the creation a poetic voice in *The Copy*, to one which acknowledges her marginal social position and claims economic revenue for her literary effort in *Nosegay*.

#### Isabella Whitney’s *A Sweet Nosegay*

*A sweet Nosgay, or pleasant posye* is Isabella Whitney’s second collection of poetry and was published in 1573. The subtitle – *Containing a Hundred and Ten Philosophical Flowers* – refers to the first section of this work: an interpretation of Hugh Plat’s *Flowers of Philosophy* (1572). Succeeding this part

are various correspondences addressed to her relatives, friends and the reader as well as the replies she receives, in which each writer laments his/her personal woes and tries to provide comfort. The dedicatory epistle to George Mainwaring and the author's address to the reader, "The Auctor to the Reader," are written in Whitney's own voice although she is only named as "Whitney" in the commendatory poem (1573, B1r). She ends this collection by writing her will and testament in the "Maner of Her Wyll," focusing on her dispirited self for having lost everything and having to leave London – she finds herself in solitude with her writing – but emerging with authorial agency to acknowledge herself as a professional writer.

To understand the role of Whitney in *Nosegay*, this section provides a discussion of how within this volume, Whitney refashions herself from a poor and single woman left without financial means to one who is not intimidated to acknowledge the worth of her writing in the hope of transforming it into economic gain. Whereas in *The Copy* Whitney was not writing about her own self but encompassing the misfortunes of women, in *Nosegay* Whitney emerges as a single woman recounting her own mishaps to the world, hence rewriting her relationship with her male contemporaries. Cora Fox praises Whitney as she claims that she is not "just one of the earliest published women writers in English; she is also writing from a marginal position within the class system while women who wrote were securely members of the highest aristocracy – the social world of the most stable and most learned" (Fox, 2010, p. 132). However, this is not entirely true. Margaret More Roper and Anne Askew were not of the "highest aristocracy" as Fox claims regarding most sixteenth-century women

writers (2010, p. 132). Even though Askew's *Examination* was published posthumously and Roper published anonymously, people who knew Roper's family might have easily realised that she was the author. Whitney is different from Roper and Askew, though, because she publishes in her own name during her lifetime. Nor, like both these women, does Whitney use a male mediator for *Nosegay*. There is no preface by the printer as there was in *The Copy*, although she does use a man's work to introduce her: the first section is her paraphrase of Plat, the English writer, who comes before her original poetry as will be discussed in this chapter. So, although there is still an indirect influence from a male presence, this mediation is much less controlling than it was in Roper's and Askew's texts. Moreover, what also makes this work remarkable is that while her first poems published in *The Copy* offer the conventional lamentation of infidelity and abandonment, *Nosegay* (1573) presents the readers with a less common perspective of a woman claiming female agency through her writing. This section also compares Isabella Whitney's work with Thomas Howell's *The Arbor of Amitie* (1568). By drawing a comparison between Whitney and one of her contemporary male authors, this study seeks to treat Whitney in relation to her male contemporaries, and not in isolation as some modern critics have done such as Brace (2002) and Fox (2010). This approach will demonstrate that although there are similarities between her and Howell – both write for economic profit and share similar techniques – there is also a difference in tone which will help to reassess our perspective on early modern women's writing.

## Isabella Whitney's Refashioning of the Female Character and Herself as Author in *A Sweet Nosegay*

Recognising oneself as a writer and demanding economic profit from one's literary endeavour was not ideal during Whitney's time especially if the author was female. Print publications were synonymous with female disgrace as has been claimed by modern critics as Wall (1991) and Ellinghausen (2005). Walker goes a step further and claims that apart from publication being considered as an immoral activity, "writing for financial gain could be read as a form of prostitution" (Walker, 1996, p. 146). Therefore, Whitney faced two serious social challenges as an author in print. Already without economic resources, she was susceptible to being associated with prostitution. Insisting on financial gain for her work made her position graver. Ellinghausen testifies "that writing for an audience defied codes of modesty" while "the idea of paying a lady for her services suggested the trade of sex" (Ellinghausen, 2005, p. 3). The only ways, therefore, that women authors could usually make it into print was to publish posthumously, to publish anonymously or pseudonymously, or to have a man orchestrate their appearance in print, as with Margaret More Roper.

This uneasy relationship between the female writer and the dynamics of print is reflected in Whitney's prefatory material addressed to her friend George Mainwaring, who might have been the only son of the English politician Sir Arthur Mainwaring and who served as Justice of Peace himself in 1593 (Fuidge, 1981). Whitney tells him that "though they [the work] be of anothers growing,

yet considering they be of my owne gathering and makeing vp: respect my labour and regard my good wil" (1573, A4v). By stating that her work is "of anothers growing," Whitney alludes to the fact that she adapts over one hundred verses from Plat's *Floures of Philosophie*, a collection of moral sayings, many drawn from the Roman philosopher Seneca. This technique – adopting verses from other sources – was used by other female writers such as Elizabeth Grymeston discussed in the fourth chapter. Hence, Whitney recognises that borrowing from another author's work or "gathering" offers a way towards transformative labour (1573, A4v). This reliance on horticultural imagery acts as the basis for engaging with the masculine literary tradition in a careful and coded way while granting her a controlling power to shape herself as author of her text.

Print publication and/or writing for economic profit brought a sense of anxiety for women authors since it risked damaging their social standing. This was not the same for men. Thomas Howell, for instance, was also disempowered due to his financial situation which meant that he could not enjoy the privileges of the social class into which he was born (ODNB). As a way to assert his social status when making it into print, Howell published his first collection of poems, *The Arbor of Amitie*, printed by Henry Denham in 1568, and included the word "gentleman" on the title-page. Then, in 1570, once again he made a reference to his status as "gentleman" on his second publication entitled, *Newe Sonets and Pretie Pamphlets*, printed by Thomas Cowell.

Howell's primary aim was to claim a respectable social status even as he ventures into print with the possibility of transforming this into economic gain. His quick confirmation of his status as "gentleman" in the full title of his two volumes, *The Arbor of Amitie, wherein is comprised pleasant Poems and pretie Poesies, set foorth by Thomas Howell Gentleman* (1568) and *Newe sonets, and pretie pamphlets. Written by Thomas Howell gentleman*" (1570), is clear evidence of him seeking a reputable public status. He dedicates this first collection of poems to Lady Anne Talbot, daughter-in-law of George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, whose household he served in (ODNB). In this dedicatory epistle, Howell justifies his writing by taking on a position of moral earnestness in a bid to appear humble and gentlemanly, ending his dedication to the Lady Talbot hoping that she will accept "these toyes" of his "poore pen" (Howell, 1568, A3v). Whitney also beseeched Mainwaring in her epistle to "accept [her] labour" although "little of [her] labour was in them" (1573, A4r-v), since a section of the work is a poetic paraphrase. She stresses the speaker's powerlessness by underscoring her intellectual poverty and a sense of humility at the same time. Howell admits that it was better for him "to be silent, than in speaking to shewe my nakednesse in wisdom," a trait usually associated with the female gender where women were expected to remain silent (Howell, 1568, A3r-v). Although Howell seems to adopt a modest position, he still assumes authorial agency: persuasively, he writes about being "ouerbold humbly" in presenting his "rude phantasies" to her Ladyship who is of "so noble a nature" (Howell, 1568, A3r). The antithesis found in this phrase, where he is both daring and humble in offering his rough work to someone who

is of such fine nature as Lady Talbot, promotes the idea that he is of good repute, even as he makes money from his writing. The same concept runs through *Nosegay*. Whitney presents herself as materially poor, someone with “no goods.” Despite this, she promises readers that she will “make a further viage” and offer “a more dayntier thing” (1573, A5r). Hence, like Howell, she is not put off from displaying her intellectual skills by her low social status and lack of prestige that being financially poor brings. Rather Whitney fashions herself as a writer by constructing a relationship with an audience, allowing her to achieve female agency and be more in control of her voice.

Howell also draws on exactly this other part of his life – his financial instability. He codes an indirect plea to alleviate his poor financial state through a play on words as he writes to the Lady Talbot that he presents the “worke of a welwiller” proceeding from the “good will of my seruiceable hart, then the riche present of a froward friendly foe” (Howell, 1568, A3r-v). The double meaning rests on the word “serviceable” which evokes the idea of his humble work as a servant in the Shrewsbury household. The lexical term “service” is given as “work done in obedience to and for the benefit or a master, mistress, etc” (OED, 8a) or “reward for service, wages, payment” (OED, 9). Moreover, the punning on the word “riche” makes the reader aware of the importance he gives to material possessions. Finally, he makes a last attempt to convince the Lady Talbot to receive his work since it is “the hart not the hande, the giuer not the gifte, the trustinesse not the toyes, the meaning not the matter, my minde, not my madnesse, my paine not my penne” that she should consider (Howell, 1568, A3v). By the word “paine,” Howell was most

probably referring to both his effort in producing his work and his affliction, that of being poor. The same plea is found in the conclusion of the epistle in *Nosegay*. Whitney stresses the fact that her work accrues value explicitly through her labour while insisting on its status as an economic commodity by telling Mainwaring to “accept [her] labour, for recompence” (1573, A5r). In addition, the same proverb, “the giuer not the gifte,” is found in her work as she tries to convince her readers to acknowledge her work despite her gender, low social status and poor economic means:

But in a bundle as they bee,  
(good Reader them accept:  
*It is the geuer: not the giift,*  
thou oughtest to respect,  
And for thy health, not for thy eye,  
did I this Posye frame

(Isabella Whitney, 1573, A7r, emphasis added)

Although Howell is asking for economic remuneration in a prudently implied manner, the potential of establishing agency was more problematic for women: a rigid sixteenth-century social structure that expected women to be silent, virtuous and obedient created real tensions when women tried to achieve any kind of agency. Whitney is conscious of rejection from her critics so that she appears almost apologetic as she declares that “so little of [her]

labour" was in her works (1573, A4r). Moreover, she almost pleads with her friend, Mainwaring, to accept her "labour" in the epistle (1573, A5r). Undeniably, she embraces a tone of modesty throughout the prefatory poem. Whitney claims, as Pauline strictures do by forbidding women "to teach" (1 Timothy 2:12), that she cannot read nor understand the Scripture without God's intervention "for to resolute [her] in such doubts" (1573, A5v). Allegorically, she writes that as a poet she has been warned by "a friend" to be vigilant about treading into dangerous waters of print:

I walked out: but sodenly  
a friend of mine mee met:  
And sayd, yf you regard your health:  
out of this Lane you get  
And shift you to some better aire,  
for feare to be infect:  
With noysome smell, and sauours yll,  
I wyshe on that respect.

(Isabella Whitney, 1573, A6r)

The evidence highlights that Whitney refashions herself as a female author: she ventures into a male dominated world, even though she has been advised to return to "some better aire," that is the domestic sphere, and leave the public "lane" of print (1573, A6r). Metaphorically the anxiety of publication, "for feare to be infect," makes her appear apologetic for trespassing on someone else's

territory. At least initially, she downplays her role as the author of the work that follows by accrediting Hugh Plat's philosophical prose as her inspiration, disregarding her own self in the process. She admits that she chose Plat's work, because in his garden "fragrant Flowers abound," the smell of which "prevents ech harme" (1573, A6r-v). The posy of flowers, gathered from Plat, is protecting her from the infection of ill-repute.

The reader can sense that her need to provide a justification for her writing indicates that it was rare for a woman in early modern England to publish under her own name while still alive, unlike male authors. Even choosing to name her work "nosegay," suggestive of a modest posy and very much associated with home remedies especially in times of plague, is seen as an attempt on her part to legitimate her work. The same domestic discourse is found, for example, in Anne Vaughan Locke's preface to her work, *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner* (1560). In her dedicatory letter to the duchess of Suffolk, Lady Katharine, she writes about such household cures which were, in fact, very much part of a woman's duties in this period. Hence, both Locke and Whitney justify their work through recourse to discourse of healing, which was a female domestic duty:

He then, that cureth the sicke minde, or preserueth it from disease, cureth or preserueth not onely minde, but bodye also: and deserueth so much more praise and thanke, than the bodies Physicion, as the soule excelleth the bodie, and as the curing, or preseruatiō of them both is to be preferred before the cure of the bodye alone.

(Anne Vaughan Locke, 1560, A2v-A3r)

As well as making use of female domestic duties to justify her writing to a public audience, Whitney half-apologises for having the audacity to publish her work:

And for my part, I may be bolde,  
to come when as I wyll:  
Yea, and to chuse of all his Flowers,  
which may my fancy fill.

(Isabella Whitney, 1573, A7r)

Whitney's sense of humility is exemplified soon after when she stresses that her nosegay is innocuous. Although she gathers her own "Nosegay" from Plat's garden, it will cure no "sicknes" (1573, A8r). However, her own flowers "wyll increase no payne" and she sees no harm in offering them to her readers for their "comfort" so that they will "spring" with "vertues" (1573, A8r). As she invokes humanist practice here by promising that reading her work will increase the readers' "vertues," she makes an explicit exchange of her work for a relationship with her readers despite the fact that her "Nosegay" was gathered from Plat's garden (1573, A8r). She wants to fashion herself as an author without any male intervention.

In her final address to the readers, Whitney's self-effacement again comes to the fore as she acknowledges her limitations while placing herself in a subordinate position to Plat's accomplishments:

My counsell is that thou repayre,  
to Master *Plat* his ground.  
And gather there what I dyd not,  
perhaps thy selfe may light:  
On those which for thee fitter are,  
then them which I resighte.

(Isabella Whitney, 1573, A7r)

Whitney appears to be rather elusive in this passage because although she assumes a humble tone, in her final comment she warns the readers that Plat's plot is after all nothing but a "maze," a labyrinth (1573, A8v). This warning alters the dynamics of the pose of humility so far discussed. In Greek mythology, the maze is associated with the myth of Theseus and Ariadne. To help Theseus in his efforts to kill the monster in the labyrinth, Ariadne gives him a ball of thread so that he can find his way out of the labyrinth, making him promise her to take her with him if he makes it out alive. However, Theseus only keeps part of his promise: he takes Ariadne away only to desert her on Naxos. This myth reworks the image that Whitney has given so far of Plat as it places her in a strong position to protect her readers from the dangers of Plat's disordered state epitomised by the labyrinth. Thus, her insistence on his privileged position as an

author in comparison to her own self is no longer credible since Plat's sententiae are here depicted to reflect chaos and she effectively "warn[s]" readers from turning from her book to Plat's (1573, A8v).

Whitney's appraisal of Plat's work may be partly ironic as she "manipulates her intertextual relationship with this male-authored source" to promote her poetry, reversing the conventional role that female authors have occupied (Fox, 2010, p. 138). She is, thus, making use of a male writer to negotiate her way into the world of print, unlike what Margaret More Roper and Anne Askew do. She is fully aware that she has stepped into someone else's garden but remains hopeful that her readers will "respect" her for having embraced humility (having declared that she is borrowing from a literary source) with a great sense of moral correctness (1573, A7r).

In "A Farewell to the Reader," Whitney impersonates Plat's voice, wanting him to make her acquaintance, and not be angry for having appropriated his work. As she imagines an angry Plat, her gender becomes a source of protection: if she "were a man," Plat is imagined as being more vengeful (1573, C5v). Having been dismissed from service as a maid, she mourns her lack of domestic security, her lack of children and her poor circumstances. However, she finds gratification in her writing profession and makes it "her companion and her property" (Ellinghausen, 2005, p. 1). Whitney states that she "craue[s] none other meede [reward]" other than that the work "may speede" (C4v-C5r). Whitney identifies writing as the first phase towards transforming her labour into economic worth ("I wolde not leaue her worth a rag" [1573, C4v]). It is Whitney's way of refashioning herself as a female writer

by acknowledging the worth of her literary work. She encourages her reader to engage in the gathering of her “flowers” (1573, C4r), and hopes that her readers will not “spoyle” nor “in peeces teareth” her work (1573, C5r-v). Her goal is a conservative one: she hopes that her writing will bring “no harme,” and people will show gratitude to her “that dyd this Nosegay make” (1573, C5v). It is her way of insisting on the value of her writing and her desire to claim authorial agency in the sixteenth-century literary market dominated by men. Her writing accrues value explicitly through her labour when she says that she has “trauayled many houres” and with “payne” (1573, C4r), justifying her position of wanting to be an author in her own right based on transformative labour. What she desires is for her text to circulate without any male intercession.

The next section will discuss the series of thirteen “familier Epistles.” Their strength lies in the fact that they provide further provocation to traditional male-authored texts and bear witness to Whitney’s metamorphosis from a hidden author in *The Copy* to an emergent one in *Nosegay*. In these epistles, Whitney describes her solitary struggles, mainly her economic losses, as she receives some responses from relatives and friends. Although these replies appear to be comforting as some modern critics such as Ellinghausen (2005) have found them, I will offer a different perspective which illustrates that the answers she receives may not be as consoling as one would expect.

Isabella Whitney's "Certain familier Epistles and friendly Letters" in *A Sweet Nosegay*

In the thirteen epistles, Whitney discusses her own sufferings and is met by several replies from male friends: "An answer to comfort her" from "T.B.," another written from "C.B.," and "An other Letter sent to IS.W." from her cousin "G.W." The letters she writes far outnumber the responses she receives, and it is not until the seventh item in this section – after five letters and a "Complaint" from I.W. – that there is a response from one of her network ("T.B.") (1573, D4v), creating the impression that there has been a delay before her letters and pleas for contact are answered, if at all. Of the eight friends and relatives directly addressed in her letters (her brothers "G.W." and "B.W.," two younger sisters, her sister "A.B.," her cousins "F.W.," "T.L.," and "C.B."), only one – "C.B." – ever replies (the letter that signed "G.W." is from a cousin, not a brother). Ellinghausen claims that eventually Whitney becomes "part of a protective coterie" (Ellinghausen, 2005, p. 8). However, whilst Whitney is not totally forsaken, I believe that this coterie does not feel "protective" at all. Even though Whitney gets replies to some of her letters, the format of the volume accentuates her vulnerability and isolation, conflicting with the immediate responses we get in male-authored miscellanies. For instance, when Turberville in *Epitaphes* (1567), writes to his friend Piero, "To Piero of Pride," his poem is immediately followed by Piero's answer, "Piero to Turberuile" (Turberville, 1567, B4v). Similarly, in the same work when Googe writes his sonnet entitled

"Mayster Googe his Sonet," he is immediately answered by Turberville, "Turberuiles aunswere" (Turberville, 1567, C2r). For Whitney, as for any other female author, getting accepted within a group of male writers was quite difficult. Even though Whitney was writing about the same themes that these male coterie were publishing, the fact that she was a woman led to her being treated differently. Hence, the gap between letter and answer – or the total lack of response – that is found in *Nosegay* serves to accentuate Whitney's isolation.

Whitney's sense of segregation is augmented by her alienation from her close relatives who have no time to write back due to their personal commitments. She evidently longs to hear from "G," which might be a reference to her oldest brother, Geoffrey. This "G," however, has no "vacant time" to "ryde" to the city or to write back which would her "hart delight" (1573, C6r-v). Her fondness for this relative leads her to offer "a simple token," that of a "smell of such a Nosgay" (1573, C6v). Ultimately, Whitney however craves for economic stability as she honours the "uertuous Ladye" who the "losse I had of seruice hers / I languish for it styll" (1573, C6v). Here, Whitney merges two of her opposing aspects: the moral side with the materialistic one. By appearing virtuous, she can afford to present her writing as a commodity on which she depends for existence. In other words, while she accentuates her loneliness and precarious social position, she fashions her work "into literary authority" with the desire of generating revenue (Brace, 2002, p. 97).

Whitney's capability to establish economic agency is also sensed in her address to her other brother Brooke. She laments her present "weake"

situation: a weakness derived from her poor economic means coupled with a sense of isolation (1573, C7r). Indeed, Whitney is eager to hear of her brother's "returne" (1573, C7r). Not knowing where her brother is, she hopes that in good time he will write back to her, for on her part "no lucke wyll byde, / nor happye chaunce befall" (1573, C7r). All she can do in her emotional and social deprivation is to commend her brother to "the skyes," wishing him "health" and "welth" in abundance (1573, C7r). The binary implication rests on the word "welth" as she may be alluding to spiritual wealth and physical well-being as well as to economic wealth that she so much desires for stability. It is also mentioned in Whitney's salute to her two younger sisters. Her wish is for them and for their friends to possess "wealth" and to have "quietnesse of mynde" (1573, C7v). It seems for Whitney that owning "wealth" brings serenity and enjoyment. Whitney establishes and rewrites what Stoicism advocated: that peace of mind is set by the rejection of worldly goods. Whitney's argument is precisely the opposite: the rejection of worldly goods is a luxury that only the elites can afford. Whitney, thus, presents a much more pragmatic response of someone who has experienced being in a financially precarious position.

Although Whitney appears unhappy with her situation, she nevertheless remains realistic as she claims that "experience hath me taught: / The rolling stone doth get no mosse" by "fleetyng" (1573, C8v). This proverb first appeared in print in John Heywood's collection of *Proverbs* in 1546. Proverbs provided the moral strength that virtuous characters required to confront worldly temptations which threaten the individual conscience since a "morally weak person is likely to fall, to give in to evil, to perform immoral acts, and thus

to become part of the forces of evil" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 300). The conventional meaning of this proverb associated constant mobility with irresponsibility and unproductivity. Therefore, this has schooled Whitney not to evade the difficulties that life presents but to face these challenges, and one way she does this is through writing. In fact, she states that she "nedes must write" as "[h]encefoorth my lyfe as wel as Pen / shall your examples frame" (1573, D1r). Whitney makes it clear that she has engaged in writing as a necessary means of self-preservation since financial comfort is not even procured from a good marital position. She regretfully looks at her own writing as a "fall," unlike her sister Anne's approved work of "huswyfery" (1573, D2r). For Whitney, however, her pen is the only "business" that provides "profit" (1573, D2r):

Had I a Husband, or a house,  
and all that longes therto  
My selfe could frame about to rouse,  
as other women doo:  
But til some houshold cares mee tye,  
and all that longes therto  
My selfe could frame about to rouse  
My books and Pen I wyll apply.

(Isabella Whitney, 1573, D2r)

Whitney ascribes economic wealth to transformative labour, by altering from the domestic to the commercial structure. Her writing becomes, thus, an instrument not only for spiritual survival but an earthly one in the hope that “Fortune shall amende” her “lucklesse lyfe” which is in “endlesse miserie” (1573, D6r). She stresses that her misfortunes are a “greater cause of grieffe” than queen Dido’s misfortunes (1573, D3r). Economic misery is now seen by Whitney as bringing more pain than any human abandonment experienced by Dido in *The Copy*, perhaps because monetary deprivation brings also physical hardship along with emotional instability. This constrains Whitney to acknowledge that her work needs to offer economic profit for her to survive. In other words, she writes because she has to. “Tis all I haue” she tells her cousin in “IS.W. Beyng Wery of Wrytyng,” pleading with her relation to accept her writing (1573, E1v). Her correspondence also imparts a sense of comradeship and becomes the sole means of consolation for Whitney as she unburdens her internal anguish with the outside world:

The dryrie daye in dole (alas)  
continuallye I spende:  
The noysome nightes, in restlesse Bedde,  
I bring vnto his ende:  
And when the daye appeares agayne,  
Then fresh begyn my plaints amayne.

(Isabella Whitney, 1573, D5v)

Her tone is one of disillusionment and frustration at having been forsaken in life. At one point, she even implores her cousin "G.W." not to write "nor any more replie" for even she might "forsake" her writing till "Fortunes" come her way (1573, E2r). Whitney seems to be physically and spiritually exhausted. She has this moment of self-withdrawal, a sense of inertia towards life. Her writing does not seem to fulfill its initial purpose – that as a companion in her loneliness – until we read her final work, "Maner of Her Wyll." As we will see in the next section, this last piece presents Whitney as a female author who has matured as a result of her experiences and who fearlessly wants to reap the materialistic benefits from her labour. She establishes agency by pointing out her economic weakness and attributes the blame on the institutions, embodied in the city of London.

#### Isabella Whitney's "The Maner of her Wyll"

In "The Maner of her Wyll," Whitney satirises her impoverished self who is forced to leave London while anticipating her own mortality by preparing a versified last will and testament. She bequeaths her possessions to London, making the city "sole executor" because she has "lou'de [it] best" (1573, E7v). Whitney places her last poem in this volume, "Maner," in the context of her earlier published work, *The Copy*, by assuming the romantic role of the deserted lover but as a more confident poetic self. This section will explore how Whitney's metamorphosis of London into the unfaithful male lover stresses the powerful

ideology that masculinity had in sixteenth-century England and contests cultural conventions about female frailties. This section will also demonstrate that contrary to Gleed's argument that many London women were "active but not powerful" (Gleed, 2012, p. 6), Whitney ultimately achieves power by the imperative mood of the will.

Indeed, Whitney's idea of the abandoned female speaker offers a different perspective to the prototypical female suffering because of disloyal men in *The Copy*. For example, this time, the man is now a city, London, as opposed to "the traditional image of the female city" (Gleed, 2012, p. 2), which places the speaker of "Maner" in a position of social power. For many, such as Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, London was specifically female. In his satirical poem "London has thou accused me" (1543), Howard's city is essentially a "woman":

O shameless whore, is dread then gone  
By such thy foes as meant thy weal?

(Henry Howard, 1543, ll. 51-52)

Even after Whitney published her works, male authors continued to associate London with being female. Thomas Middleton's *Cities Love* (1616), describes London as "This Personage, figuring London (with the sixe Tritons sounding before her, Neptune, and two Rivers)" (B1v). Whitney reverses such discourse to personify London as the inconsistent male, and one who is cruel enough not

to execute the speaker's wishes after her death. However, the speaker's sense of resilience and inner strength compels her to change the hardship and frustration she has experienced during life into one of social power although bereft of material wealth.

Undeniably this feeling of social power is achieved as the speaker of "Maner" carefully maps out the streets of London with their intricate beauty and bustling activities of "Braue buildyngs" and "Churches" as well as "Brewers" and "Bakers" (1573, E3v). Through this, she assumes full ownership of the city and becomes emblematically rich. The speaker meticulously details the abundance she wants to bequeath to London which ironically she does not possess but pertains to the city alone. She mentions the "Linnen," "Silke," "Purle of Siluer and of Golde" as well as "Hoods, Bungraces, Hats or Caps" together with "Bootes, Shoes or Pantables," a reminder of her lack of possessions (1573, E4r-v). Whitney's speaker also enumerates the most potentially perilous institutions and the poor in her bid to rectify the situation, thus leaving an orderly city. She includes the prisons, debtors, and lunatics in her will to London. She gives the city goods that she does not possess while making London the "sole executor" of them (1573, E7v). This symbolic act of power serves to strengthen Whitney's writing as it gives her the opportunity to highlight the legal discourse of a society circumscribed by male dominancy. Whitney's narrator leaves to the male London/lover all the things she possesses as she is "constrained to departe" after the very city she is bestowing all her goods to has shown her nothing but misery (1573, E2r). It is very clear that London will not honour the speaker's wishes even posthumously as the goods

already belong to the city – leaving Whitney destitute not only economically but even from her last desires. Therefore, Whitney's legal power is only a simulation to remind her readers of the low status females occupied in sixteenth-century society bereft of any legal authority if not abandoned as well by their male counterparts. Through the exploration of her own moral and literary power, Whitney's poem about London offers to the modern reader a realistic picture of the hardships and frustration that Whitney's female contemporaries experienced.

The strength of such an approach is that through *Nosegay*, Whitney manages to move from a socially marginalised position into one of literary influence. She writes from a stance of “strength as compared with the desperate pleading” found in *The Copy* (Gleed, 2012, p. 4). Here, it is Whitney's speaker who is assertive enough to be the one to leave London. This is also corroborated by Gleed who states that, “while Whitney's departure from the city may indeed be necessitated by economic need – she is too poor to stay – it is nonetheless true that she gets to have the last word” (Gleed, 2012, p.4). Whitney's self-assurance may have blossomed from the very fact of being powerless: she has nothing to lose. Unlike aristocratic women who had to be conscious not only about their standards of morality but also about their economic prosperity, marginalised women were more permitted to be audacious due to being less restricted socially. As Hammons writes, “socially and economically disenfranchised [women] were freer to make bolder, more explicit claims to possession in their verse” (Hammons, 2005, p. 403).

The idea of power attributed to less elite women can be extended further by exploring the fact that the speaker of "Maner" achieves a representative authority, compelling her to blame women's amorous sorrow on their weak selves. She writes that "foolyshly" many women develop a "fyxed fancy / on those which least desaruue," rather than presenting the conventional image of the victimised woman (1573, E2v). The narrator seems to offer a warning that if women who are "lyke me" (having been infatuated with undeserving men) do not do something to rectify the situation, they will continue to suffer (1573, E2v). She, on the other hand, is the exemplary woman who takes on a position of power through writing her own testament which imparts a sense of emotional and economic power. Ironically, it is the same power which the speaker does not have. Nevertheless, the narrator needs to take action, fictitious as it may be, to signal her distress in the volume. Earlier in the volume, her cries for help lands on deaf ears as her relations choose to give more importance to their own business rather than to the speaker's distress. Hence, in "Maner", Whitney is left to take care of her own self without feeling any sense of resentment. She becomes stronger and wiser through her own emotional sufferings:

I wysh good Fortune, be thy guide, least  
thou shouldst run at lardge.  
The happy dayes and quiet times,  
they both her Seruants bee.

(Isabella Whitney, 1573, E8r)

This feeling of empowerment forces the female speaker to desert her undeserving lover, London, as opposed to the traditional male lover who abandons his mistress as Aeneas did with queen Dido in *The Copy*. On the other hand, the narrator in "Maner" is firm and resolute in her decision. She tells London:

The time is come I must departe,  
from thee ah famous Citie:  
I never yet to rue my smart,  
did finde that thou hadst pitie.

(Isabella Whitney, 1573, E2r-v)

The betrayal the female voice felt by the city she loved induces her to take one final control over her life. This gives her a feeling of imaginary supremacy:

No, no, thou neuer didst me good,  
nor euer wilt I know:  
Yet am I in no angry moode,  
but wyll, or ere I goe  
In perfect loue and charytie.

my Testament here write:  
And leaue to thee such Treasurye,  
as I in it recyte.  
Now stand a side and geue me leaue  
to write my latest Wyll:  
And see that none you do deceaue,  
of that I leaue them tyl.

(Isabella Whitney, 1573, E2v-E3r)

Symbolically, Whitney wants to show her disapproval of a society which placed her in a situation of economic poverty. The pun implied by the word "Wyll," the power of choice in regard to action (OED, 1b), suggests that her testament is witness of her own independent consciousness to break away from literary conventions and emerge as a woman writer who has appropriated her miseries and turned them into "treasurye" without actually leaving any wealth behind (1573, E3r). In turn, she desires to restore an appropriate social order by an invocation of the will which permits Whitney to attain a position of authority. This gives her the adequate agency to be able to criticise the discriminating social convention which supports the economically rich and males in general. Although the speaker has nothing substantial to donate, yet she is ready to bestow on London her will, also defined by Wall as "an act of possession by dispossession" (Wall, 1991, p. 50). The speaker of "Maner" makes this clear from the beginning lines of her testament. She confesses that:

I whole in body, and in minde,  
but very weake in Purse:  
Doo make, and write my Testament  
for feare it wyll be wurse.

(Isabella Whitney, 1573, E3r)

In the above extract Whitney echoes and appropriates a legal phrasing, “I whole in body, and in mind.” For the will to be valid, the person had to be sound of mind. Henry Swinburne’s writes in his work, *A brief treatise of testaments and last willes* (1591), that any testator who “knowe not what they do” at the time of composition is not eligible since “in making of testaments, the integrity and perfitnes of minde & not health of the body is requisite” (1591, F3r). Whitney underscores the fact that she has the necessary intellectual lucidity and willpower to have a voice in the public domain in which, as a marginalised woman with no economic means, she had no real standing. For this reason, she reworks her relationship with her male contemporaries by transforming her writing effort into a literary authority “within a culture that denied women public expression” (Wall, 1991, p. 49). Although not part of any male-author coterie, Whitney still manages to make effective use of her voice, clearly imparting her criticism against a prejudiced society.

When Whitney’s speaker understands that it is useless to form any worldly relationships as they “should have sought to mend [her] luck” before (1573, E8r), the only thing that she relies on is her “Paper, pen and Standish” (1573, E8v). Although Fox claims that these professional tools cannot ultimately

“supply the needs of her deliberately and vividly represented female body” (Fox, 2010, p. 142), Whitney’s writing defines her even in her poverty and marginal social position. It is her writing which represents her the most and will continue to represent her even posthumously. For this reason, Whitney makes recommendations for her printer because she wants to ensure that her writing will be read, giving a clear demonstration of who this female author is:

Amongst them all, my Printer must,  
have somewhat to his share:  
I wyll my Friends these Bookes to bye  
of him, with other ware.

(Isabella Whitney, 1573, E6v)

Whitney’s economic motivation for producing her text (“to bye of him”) – although it is the printer who profits here, not Whitney – shows her aim to reorder the social and economic world by deriving agency from a position as author in accordance with the needs of her social position and gender.

This section has shown that throughout *A Sweet Nosegay*, Whitney presents a multifaceted discussion of social class, economic deprivation, and authorial agency. Her economic motivation forces her to produce literary texts which draw attention to her financial situation as well as her social position as a woman in sixteenth-century England. Her inclination is towards generating revenue through her texts, in the hope of achieving social power. In the

process of framing her material practices into one of authorial power, however, she explores ideological norms that she acknowledges herself breaking. She, thus, writes from a lone and vulnerable position and is aware of going against the dominant cultural vein. Ultimately, however, her writing leads her to rework the experience of social injustice and transforms it into one of literary authority. At the same time, this gives Whitney the moral power and position she finally desired by converting her weakness into imaginary agency. By drawing attention to her decaying physical body destitute of economic and familial nourishment, Whitney assumes an internal control, shifting this power from the outside world onto herself. By her admission of powerlessness, she manages to rewrite literary conventions. She moves away from the idea of the sorrowful female who has repeatedly misplaced her trust in the deceitful male into one of pretense of power by writing her own "wyll" (1573, E3r). Whitney, therefore, asserts a physical presence as a writer: she makes the poor females of London, the "many Women ... lyke me" (1573, E2v), heard and not be buried in "obliuyon" (1573, E7v). She, thus, manages to strike a balance between lack of material possessions and literary ownership. Her economic struggles are accentuated by her alienation from her family, but Whitney manages to find consolation by framing her writing through sorrowful experiences while guarding her self-interest in *Nosegay*. Through this process she becomes emotionally stronger and sager and successfully manages to overcome much of her grief and unhappiness and transforms it into a means of empowerment.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ways in which Whitney's writing is both shaped by, and resists, patriarchal and often misogynistic structures of sixteenth-century society. Unlike More Roper, Whitney was not producing a religious translation (an acceptable form of women's writing): she was writing original, secular verse. Unlike Askew's posthumously printed work, Whitney's was printed during her lifetime. As this chapter has shown, Whitney's appearance in print is not as obviously mediated by a man as Roper's *A Devout Treatise*, prefaced by Hyrde, or Askew's *Examinations*, "elucydated" by Bale. However, her authorial autonomy is limited by her position as a woman. Her first volume is mediated into print by its printer, who seeks to mitigate against an outspoken intervention by a woman in the *querelles de femme* proving commercially unsuccessful. In *The Copy*, Whitney's voice is also shaped by the misogynistic discourse which she needs to refute. Nor is the female perspective allowed to stand alone: in that volume, her poems are accompanied by two additional poems giving the male perspective. This chapter also shows how Whitney responds to the challenges and vulnerability of being a woman writer in *Nosegay*. She uses her paraphrase of a male writer, Plat, to negotiate her way into print. Here, however, it is not a man speaking for her, as Hyrde did for Roper, or Bale for Askew after her death: Whitney is speaking through a man.

The chapter has also demonstrated how Whitney's subsequent reputation is circumscribed by gendered expectations. She is overlooked by

her male contemporaries, whilst twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics tend to read her works as uncomplicatedly autobiographical, denying them the sophistication they allow male poets. Critical approaches also treat her in isolation. This study has put her in the context of her male contemporaries Googe, Howell and Turberville. This further highlights her vulnerability and isolation as a female writer. Their miscellanies are homosocial works where friends share similar ideas, for example about women's fickleness, and answer each other's verses. In contrast, Whitney's direct appeals to friends and family mostly go unanswered. Even when Whitney shares techniques used by male writers, such as adopting a humble tone in her prefatory material, this also marks her vulnerability. Where the tone of Howell's dedication to Lady Ann Talbot is playful and full of puns, Whitney's to Mainwaring is more straightforwardly "beseech[ing]".

Nonetheless, despite these limitations, Whitney's work is a landmark of women's writing. Her exposure of male infidelity and male frailty in *The Copy* together with London's metamorphosis into the inconsistent male lover showcased in *Nosegay* highlight the powerful ideology that masculinity had in early modern England and challenge cultural assumptions about female weakness. Further to that, as the first English woman whose original secular poetry was printed in her lifetime and acknowledged at least in some part through her initials "Is. W.," she succeeds in breaking from tradition and the ties of patriarchy by adopting the role of the professional author who claims monetary compensation for their work. The final chapter of this thesis goes on to look at another ground-breaking female writer: Elizabeth Grymeston, whose

work was acknowledged in full on the title-page and which initiated a new genre of women's writing in print, albeit posthumously.

## Chapter 4. Elizabeth Grymeston and the Genre of Maternal Advice

My dearest sonne, there is nothing so strong as the force of loue; there is no loue so forcible as the loue of an affectionate mother to hir natural childe: there is no mother can either more affectionately shew hir nature, or more naturally manifest hir affection, than in aduising hir children out of hir owne experience, to eschue euill, and encline them to do that which is good.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, *Miscelanea*, 1604, A3r)

Elizabeth Grymeston's *Miscelanea. Meditations. Memoratives* was printed in 1604 posthumously since the author died just a year before in 1603. This seems to have been one of the very first maternal advice manual to appear in print. It is dedicated to her son, Bernye, whose exact age at the time of publication remains unknown. Its first publication in 1604 appears to have been a success since it was printed in a further three times in: 1605/6, 1608 and 1618. The emergence of succeeding editions which included supplementary material reveal the popularity and acceptance of this advice book. Apart from Grymeston's rhetorical skill, approval for this work was also "due to the private nature of the written counsel between mother and child" (Lewalski, 2002, p. 621). Unlike Isabella Whitney's apparently unorthodox writing for financial compensation, maternal advice manuals were considered an acceptable medium to offset the social stigma of female publication by calling on the mother's natural responsibility to be able to instruct her own child. Like Margaret More Roper's and Anne Askew's work, however, Grymeston's book

is another example of a woman's writing manipulated into print by male associates: her first edition was published under her own name, but posthumously and must therefore have been steered into print and authorised by a male relative.

The fifth child of Martin Bernye, Esquire, and Margaret Flint, Elizabeth married Christopher Grymeston of Yorkshire in 1584 when she was twenty-one years of age. She had nine children with Christopher but only one child, Bernye, survived "whom God hath onely left for [her] comfort" (1604, A4v). Her childhood was characterised by a lack of affection on her mother's part, which she herself describes as her "mothers vnderdesued wrath," and which she claims escalated after her father bequeathed his estate to her, rather than his wife (1604, A3r). This arrangement also excluded Grymeston's nephew, Thomas, whose father and direct heir to the property had passed away. Another possible reason for her mother's resentment may have stemmed from religious discord. There are some indications that Grymeston's parents conformed with the Church of England since they "held the advowson [patronage] of the church of St Andrew in Gunton" (Hughey & Hereford, 1934, p. 76). This may have caused some disagreements between Margaret and her daughter if Elizabeth held Catholic beliefs before her marriage (her husband was Catholic). It is possible that Christopher was substantially committed to the Catholic church since Grymeston writes, in her letter to Bernye, that he endured during his time the "eight seuerall sinister assaults" (1604, A3r). Further evidence of Elizabeth's husband's Catholic connections are indicated by the fact that a relation of the Grymeston family, Ralph

Grymeston of Nidd in Yorkshire, appears on the roll of Catholic martyrs in 1582 (Gillow, 1970, iii. p. 63), while Elizabeth herself was also fined for recusancy in 1592-93 (her name occurs in the first Recusant Roll [Calthrop, 1916, xviii. p. 65]).

Elizabeth Grymeston remained critically neglected until the 1930s. The earliest publication on Grymeston is in 1934 by Ruth Hughey and Philip Hereford. The thirty-page journal article entitled "Elizabeth Grymeston and her *Miscelanea*" gives a detailed bibliographical and literary account of Grymeston and her book, highlighting Grymeston's reading. Both Hughey and Hereford felt that "to-day the book is forgotten" which triggered their interest in this author (Hughey & Hereford, 1934, p. 61). Following was a one-page article by Robert Krueger in 1961 paying particular attention to the dating of the third edition of Grymeston's book and referring to the previous article by Hughey and Hereford mentioning "the difficulty of dating various editions" of the *Miscelanea* (Krueger, 1961, p. 142). Subsequently, critics have adopted conflicting opinions regarding the main reason why Grymeston has written her advice book. Judith John Gero believes that Grymeston's main concern for writing is the "spiritual salvation and enlightenment of her son" (John Gero, 2005, p. 58). She believes that Grymeston feels a moral obligation towards her son as she is "not writing for the world," but solely for her "son's spiritual salvation" (John Gero, 2005, p. 57). Equally, Kristen Poole argues that Grymeston's manual offers a "loving interaction between mother and child, not as a text offering counsel and religious guidance to a broader readership" (Poole, 1995, p. 79). Nevertheless, Poole claims that often women writers provided justifications which made them "authorities in their own right" (Poole,

1995, p. 83). In any case, I believe that the *Miscelanea* – written by a woman and presented publicly as a personal tract of maternal advice – “could direct public opinion in issues of national allegiance, religious conduct, and public policy making” (Matchinske, 2002, p. 332). In other words, behind the apparent innocuous and intimate façade that Grymeston presents for her advice book rests a wider message of political and religious nature. Matchinske also believes this, and states that the *Miscelanea* is “a political and religious document meant to function outside of the immediate circumstances of a mother’s legacy to her son” (Matchinske, 2002, p. 350). Additionally, Matchinske deems Grymeston’s tract “as a religious polemic” because it advocates “a viable Catholic and gender-specific stance on English loyalism” (Matchinske, 2002, p. 350). While I do not think that the *Miscelanea* is controversial in nature, I do find that this treatise reflects a religious and political message under the pretense of maternal instruction. In effect, Raymond A. Anselment claims that sometimes women writers of the maternal advice books depend upon their children simply as “a matter of convenience” (Anselment, 2004, p. 449). He believes that the main justification presented by Grymeston for writing this manual – that of counselling her son – is, on most occasions, lost and Grymeston becomes more focused on “representing a ‘register’ of the meditative mother than with providing genuine maternal advice” (Anselment, 2004, p. 433).

This chapter will first focus on the first edition of the *Miscelanea* (1604), highlighting the way in which Grymeston’s writing for a son legitimises her

authorial voice. It will argue how, although Grymeston's *Miscelanea* is permeated with religious advice and questions on moral conduct and self-discipline, she takes advantage of the confidential aspect of this genre of writing to acquire a public voice in matters of spiritual and political nature and, in certain instances, expose her Catholic sympathies. Next, it will closely examine if by relying on a male literary culture defined by James Cantano as "the rhetoric of masculinity" (1990, p. 435), Grymeston achieves an authorial voice whilst keeping within the conventional female role of a devoted mother and wife. Finally, it will focus on the second edition of the *Miscelanea* (1605/6) in relation to how her writing is "used" – as Margaret More Roper's was – by the men around her for ideological purposes. This final section will seek to address questions about female agency in the context of Grymeston's writing being framed by relationships with men and consider whether her voice still retains control or is cast aside to make way for men's political ideologies.

## Elizabeth Grymeston's *Miscelanea* and the Genre of Maternal Manuals

The *Miscelanea* offers a collection of meditations, penitential psalms and proverbs mostly collected from the works of male writers – religious and secular – and compiled by Grymeston in her manual. As will be later discussed, most probably Grymeston made use of commonplace books, such as *Englands Parnassus* (1600), when citing male writers. By the early seventeenth century,

“commonplacing” had evolved into a customary routine particularly with students “in such institutions as Oxford” (Burke, 2013, p. 43). This enabled Grymeston to show herself as a reader, however, the strength of the *Miscelanea* lies in the fact that the apparent motivation of writing for a son justified Grymeston’s authorial voice as it will be demonstrated in the next section.

According to Edith Snook, mothers were a formative source of moral instruction especially within the “spiritualized household” (2000, p. 174) – the ideal of the domestic sphere – influenced by earlier humanist writers, such as Juan Luis Vives, that made the family the primary unit of religious education. As a result, women writers such as Grymeston could leave their legacy through writing counsel for their children while still conforming to the conventional roles of the dutiful wife and mother, making this genre attractive to female authors. Subsequent to Grymeston’s *Miscelanea*, the maternal advice book achieved instant acknowledgment with three additional mothers’ manuals ensuing within the succeeding decades: Dorothy Leigh’s *The Mothers Blessing* (1616); Elizabeth Jocelin’s *The Mother Legacie* (1624); and M. R.’s *The Mothers Counsell, or Live within Compasse* (1630). Both Leigh’s and Jocelin’s volumes were published after their death. Poole observes that this genre of writing became widely acceptable since these motherly advice books were deemed to be “neither private nor fully public” and this appears to have “successfully deflect[ed] opposition to women writing” (Poole, 1995, p. 72). Acceptance, therefore, seems to emerge from the intimate relationship between the mother and her child. The obstacle that accompanied the act of publishing such a

book, which automatically revokes the idea of its “private nature,” was nuanced by the perception that the writer only chooses to posit it publicly so that the wider reader “may be drawn back into the private realm of the mother-child relationship” (Poole, 1995, p. 72). Namely, maternal authors gained an acceptable position in the world of print without seeming to violate the boundaries imposed by their gender solely because mothers were believed to have an unquestionable right to teach one’s own children within the domestic sphere. However, although there were other obstacles that these mother writers had to face, such as access to education, expectations about the extent to which women should have a public voice and accessibility to print, female writers of the motherly manuals seem to have the added advantage of being permitted to publish under their own names. Contrastingly, other female authors who took up the role of translating religious material, such as Margaret More Roper and Anne Locke, could not do so under their own names. Roper’s translation of Erasmus’ *A Devout treatise* (1526) was simply acknowledged as having been translated by “a yong uertuous and well lerned gentywoman of. xix. yere of age.” The same happens with Anne Locke’s psalm paraphrase, *A meditation of a penitent sinner* (1560), appended to her translation of some *Sermons of Iohn Calvin* (1560). Her initials, “A. L.,” are not given to the paraphrase but to the translation of Calvin.

The pending possibility of death, especially during childbirth, offered another opportunity to renaissance women of being accepted as authors in the genre of motherly manuals. Although there was no formal prohibition on

women being published in print under their own name, there were cultural conventions which these women had to adhere to. Thus, motherhood served to justify women's writing by calling on their duty to be able to counsel their children even after their death. As Wendy Wall explains, pregnancy imparted "a demarcated and culturally acknowledged moment of peril that made it natural for women to be both the authors and the audience for articulations of wisdom and counsel" (Wall, 1991, p. 38). Hence, these advice books acted as a form of maternal counselling while these women manipulated such precarious situations to obtain a "public voice" (Wall, 1991, p. 38). Grymeston reveals information about herself in the epistle that she was ill and dying when writing her legacy. She discloses that she feels as "a dead woman among the living" (1604, A3r). Hence, with an "aking head and trembling hand," she offers her son her "will" as she cannot "affoord further discourse" (1604, B1r). There is something poignant about the dying mother writing a book for her son to carry with him: it is not just a book of advice; it is a portrait of her mind which she imagines him carrying about after her death. Grymeston herself describes it as a "portable *veni mecum*" [come with me] book in her epistle to her son (1604, A3r). Paradoxically, the authorial agency of these women writers is ultimately achieved from the possibility of their own death.

Unquestionably, mothers also sought to instruct their children even when they were not at risk of dying. This maternal duty was strongly advocated by humanists who equipped mothers with the main responsibility of teaching moral and spiritual values to their children. For instance, Vives maintained that the mother was under the obligation to tutor her children in the prospect of

“mak[ing] them good” (Vives in F. Watson, 1913, p. 123). Grymeston appears to conform with this humanist thought and, in fact, explains that she is writing her manual because of “the loue” she bears for her son:

My dearest sonne, there is nothing so strong as the force of loue; there is no loue so forcible as the loue of an affectionate mother to hir natural childe: there is no mother can either more affectionately shew hir nature, or more naturally manifest hir affection, than aduising hir children out of hir experience, to eschue euill, and encline them to do that which is good.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, A3r)

Other author mothers offered similar justifications for leaving their legacy. Dorothy Leigh admits in *The Mothers Blessing* (1616) that what spurs her to write is the love she bears for her sons:

Know therefore, that it was the motherly affection that I bare vnto you all, which made me now (as it often hath done heretofore) forget my selfe in regard of you.

(Dorothy Leigh, 1616, A11v-A12r)

Furthermore, Leigh confesses in "The Mother to her three Sonnes," that she wished to have her sons "brought up godily" and "to see [them] well instructed and brought vp in knowledge" (Leigh, 1616, A6v). Leigh felt "duty bound" to "fulfill [her husband's] will in all things" (Leigh, 1616, A6v). Therefore, she was accomplishing two important roles ascribed to the early modern woman: to "shew [her] selfe a louing Mother, and dutifull Wife" (Leigh, 1616, A7v). Likewise, Elizabeth Jocelin defends herself for writing "not to the world, but to my owne childe, who it may be, will more profit by a few weake instructions comming from a dead mother ... than by farre better from much more learned" (Jocelin, 1624, C2v). Besides, Jocelin's choice of title for her book, *The Mother's Legacie to her unborne childe* (1624), is an immediate indication of what to expect of its contents: a display of maternal affection and counselling. In her dedication letter, she confines her writing to her domestic setting comprising of "the eies of a most louing Husband, and of a childe exceedingly beloued" (Jocelin, 1624, B9r-v). Her writing is proof of her natural compulsion as a loving mother to provide tender advice to her child on a variety of domestic and practical subjects. For instance, she wrote extensively about the subject of decent clothing, advising her child to be careful of "new fangled fashions" which entrap the soul with haughtiness and vanity and lead to a "mans folly" (Jocelin, 1624, D1r-v).

In the case of Grymeston, however, there is no indication that she is dedicating her writing to her husband, but she reserves her work solely to "her louing sonne" (1604, A3r). Nevertheless, she offers very little practical guidance

to her son Bernye. Comparing her writing to Jocelin's tract which is specifically meant to "instruct" her unborn child (Jocelin, 1624, C2r), Grymeston provides only two lines in her entire treatise where she advises Bernye on the idea of proper clothing, telling him that garments should only serve to "satisfie a curious eye" and "beare witnesse of a sober minde" (1604, B2r). The rest of the "conversation" between Grymeston and Bernye immediately takes on a different direction with her expansive declaration of wanting to show "the true portrature" of her mind (1604, A3v). This contrasts starkly with Jocelin's affirmation that she was "short ... of learning" (Jocelin, 1624, B9r). Undeniably Grymeston's testimony allows her to assume a public position by placing herself as the main speaking subject, erasing that spontaneity that a natural, intimate conversation between mother and child should have. As was usually the case, mothers' advice books were written in haste around their domestic duties and in the fear of a sudden death as are Leigh's and Jocelin's prefaces: letters composed of unembellished writing which truly serve as dedicatory letters to their loved ones with the primary intention of leaving a legacy to their children. On the contrary, Grymeston's statement that she wants to show her "minde" does not reinforce the image of a devoted mother nor a dedicated wife who is leaving some rapid advice to her loved ones (1604, A3v). Rather, she constructs a relationship between religious and cultural politics and the maternal voice as it will be shown in the section that follows.

As has initially been established, Grymeston's first edition of *Miscelanea* (and even its subsequent publications as it will be discussed later) presents a

different tenor and cadence to that of later maternal manuals. The fact that Grymeston's manual was the earliest known publication of the maternal advice book may have contributed to make such difference. For instance, although there is no certainty that Grymeston's title *Miscelanea. Meditations. Memoratives* was chosen by her since the publication is posthumous, the lack of mention of motherhood is nonetheless striking and sets the work rather differently from other maternal advice books with their extensive focus on instructing their children, fashioning them as the sole audience. Whereas Jocelin's and Leigh's volumes, for example, emphasise the maternal aspect – through the word *Mother* – in both their titles, Grymeston's title suggests that it is a collection of “miscellaneous items of literary compositions” which does nothing to allude to any form of maternal guidance (OED, 2). Indeed, Grymeston's manual engages, both directly and indirectly, with spiritual questions of authority and loyalty, exploiting her role as a mother to grant power to her testimonies. Furthermore, her tract is embellished with various allusions to mythological figures, classical philosophers, and secular poetry adapted to a religious context – a characteristic more like the masculine type of education as it will be shown. It appears that Grymeston writes more as a reader which poses a challenge to the idea of motherhood consisting of pious learning and physical care of children. This kind of representation together with the potential Catholic element concealed in her religious counselling will be examined in detail to conclude the real nature of the *Miscelanea*: if it is really an interpretation of genuine counsel from a mother to her son or if it

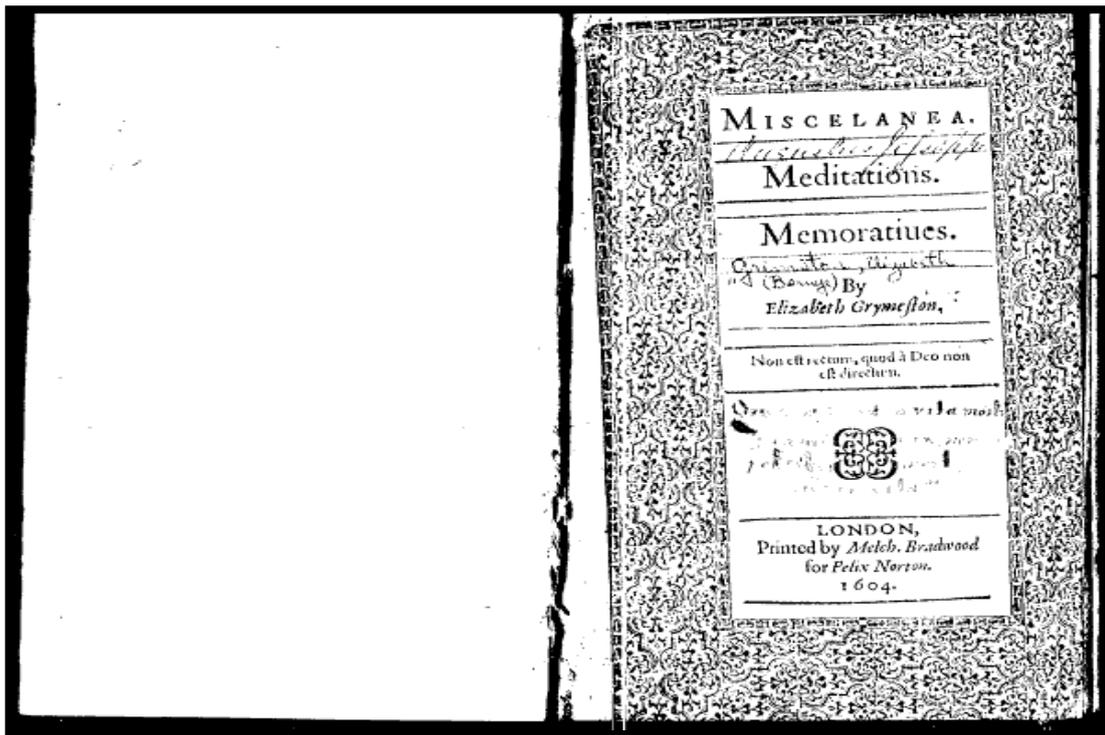
delves in the wider subtleties of social and religious politics of the “masculine” literary world.

### The First Edition of the *Miscelanea* (1604): Format and Justifications for Writing

As has already been discussed regarding other women writers' work in this study such as Roper's translation and Askew's text, the purpose of this section is to see if Grymeston's advice book is being shaped by the men around her. This will be accomplished mainly by looking at the *Miscelanea's* actual presentation and paratextual intentions. It will also analyse in more detail the kind of justifications that Grymeston provides, comparing them with other explanations that other mothers write in maternal manuals and if they are the kind of reasons that one would expect to find when offering advice to children.

The first *Miscelanea* (1604) was printed in quarto format by Melchisdech Bradwood for Felix Norton and comprises of fourteen chapters. Grymeston's authorship is acknowledged on the title page with the words “By Elizabeth Grymeston.” Only few other non-royal women writers have been recognised as authors, by their full name, on the title-page in the surviving English printed material. Mary Sidney, for example, translated from French into English: *A Discourse of Life and Death* by Philippe de Mornay (1592) and *The Tragedie of Antonie* by Robert Garnier (1595). In both translations, she has been acknowledged on the title-page as “Done in English by the Countesse of

Pembroke." However, although Sidney was not royal, she was aristocratic which evidences a difference with both Isabella Whitney and Grymeston who formed part of the gentry. Indeed, Isabella Whitney was simply identified with her initials as "Is W" on the front page of both her works: *The Copy of a Letter* (1567) and *A Sweet Nosegay* (1573). Furthermore, when other non-royal women writers were sometimes mentioned on the title page, they were not recognised so much as authors as participants in events of the account as happens with Anne Askew's title of her account: *The first examinacyon of Anne Askewe lately martyred in Smythfelde, by the Romysh popes vpholders, with the elucydacyon of Iohan Bale* (1546). Grymeston, on the other hand, is granted complete authorship which started a trend for other non-aristocratic women writers who were also accredited as main authors such as Dorothy Leigh (1616) and Elizabeth Jocelin (1624). The title page of the *Miscelanea* bears a simple design with a small ornament at the centre (Fig. 4.1). It also includes the date of publication together with a Latin motto, "Non est rectum, quod a Deo non est directum" (It is not right, what is not guided by God), suggesting that the writing and printing of the work is given divine justification:



*Miscelanea's* Title-page, 1604 (Fig. 4.1)

While Grymeston's work, like that of the other women that followed her, was published under the pretence of containing instructive material serving as a spiritual guidance for her son Bernye "to dictate something for [his] direction" (1604, A3r), her reasons for writing in the introductory epistle delineate another motive. After reminding her son of "the loue of an affectionate mother," she tells him:

I resolved to breake the barren soile of my fruitlesse braine, to dictate something for thy direction, the rather for that as I am now a dead

woman among the living ... I leaue thee this portable *veni mecum* for thy counseller, in which thou maiest see the true portrature of thy mothers minde.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, A3r-v)

Grymeston tells Bernye that she is accomplishing only what comes naturally to her “in aduising hir children out of hir owne experience” (1604, A3r). As a mother, she feels compelled to show him “that which is good” (1604, A3r), which does not necessarily imply a manifestation of maternal affection. It is more likely that for Grymeston that “which is good” is more about exposing her own learning by exhibiting the “true portrature” of her mind (1604, A3v). Her admission that she possesses only a “fruitlesse braine” and that a lot of her lines are borrowed from great “Philosopher[s]” does more, in fact, than project her humility. It grants more agency to Grymeston’s voice as it neutralises any hostility on her readers’ part through her apparent conformity to humanist pedagogues’ strictures about virtue. We have already seen this happening with other female writers such as Isabella Whitney who stated in her epistle that “little of [her] labour” was in her work and most of it was “of an others growing,” referring to Hugh Plat’s work in *Nosegay* (1573, A4v). Despite such shows of meekness, both writers still acquired the kind of agency to make it into the public world.

Likewise, Simon Graham’s introductory verses to the *Miscelanea* accord Grymeston with more authorial power. Graham, a Franciscan priest (ODNB),

explicitly praises Grymeston's learned and eloquent style, setting her up as an articulate reader and author:

Hir pondrous speech, hir passion and hir paine,  
Hir pleasing stile shall be admir'd ilke where.

(Simon Graham, 1604, B1v)

Notwithstanding it is again the role of Graham, a male writer, to convey Grymeston's skills to the world even if it is done posthumously (as happened with Margaret More Roper and Anne Askew before her). Indeed, through Graham's description, she comes to us not solely as a mother but also as a reader and writer whose skills are much "admir'd." In addition, Graham's comment about the "fruitfull flowing of hir loftie braine" (1604, B1v) serves to refute her own previously written words about having a "fruitlesse braine" (1604, A3r).

Her "loftie braine" is revealed in her counsel which reflects an awareness of scholarship which is absent from the usual writing of the meditative mother. She uses Latin phrases in her exchange with her son, hoping that he will find this book "*Quem saepe transit casus aliquando inuenit*" (1604, A3; Disaster may miss a person repeatedly, but it finds him in the end [Loeb trans. John G. Fitch]). This is a phrase from Seneca the Younger's *Hercules* (l. 328), spoken by Hercules's wife Megara. In addition, Grymeston employs Latin expressions

even as she counsels Bernye on quotidian things commonly found in mothers' advice books such as her views on matrimony. She counsels him to use his "Reason to account" and his "conscience" as his "*Censor morum*" (judge of behaviour [1604, A4r]) when choosing the right wife while, at the same time, showing her Latinate learning. This indicates that Grymeston recycles her reading, an established part of a male, humanist education, as well as exhibiting her knowledge.

The format of the *Miscelanea* together with paratextual messages and the justifications Grymeston gives for writing suggest that she wants to make her voice heard in the legacy. From the onset, she appears to be portraying herself as an educated woman, a reader with an authorial voice which is also supported by the approval of her male contemporary, Simon Graham. To further understand the role of Grymeston in the *Miscelanea*, the next section explores the idea of how she engages with the male literary culture by citing both secular and religious male writers, and most notably her use of commonplace books.

#### Elizabeth Grymeston, Male Literary Culture and Commonplace Books

Evidently, it seems that Grymeston was familiar with the notable miscellany of Elizabethan poetry entitled the *Englands Parnassus* (1600), a commonplace book, compiled by Robert Allott. Grymeston makes frequent use of the *Englands Parnassus*, a thick octavo volume, quoting from a diverse range of

poets and taking their writings out of context to adapt them in her own legacy. The *Parnassus* is the likely source of Grymeston since almost every extract of English poetry she cites appears in this volume; in addition, she replicates variants that appear in the *Parnassus* and not in the original sources as it will be seen in the following discussion. Commonplace books were significant in early modern England, promoted by Erasmus in *De Ratione Studii* as “the primary working tool for the school master” (Erasmus in L. Grant, 2019, p. 30). It was considered as a form of “compilation literature” serving schoolboys as “models for their own writing” (Grant, 2019, p. 30), but adults also made use of them. According to Ann Moss, boys were conditioned to memorise and retrieve material for reproduction. From then on, the history of “commonplacing” becomes an “integral part of the history of Renaissance culture” and consequently of “one of the most important factors contributing to their [boys’] intellectual paradigms” (Moss, 1996, p. 94). Customs taught in the schoolroom were then transferred to adult life although this practice was as – if not more – likely to include the recording and citation of vernacular writing, not just the Latin and Greek of the childhood classroom. The transfer of schoolroom habits to adult life, and from composition in Latin and Greek to the vernacular, is evidenced by the popularity of printed commonplace books of English material, such as Allott’s *Englands Parnassus*, from which Grymeston took most of her quotations of English poetry. A case in point is her argument about the fall from Divine grace which is presented through the words of Josuah Sylvester’s translation, from French, of Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas’ “L’Imposture,” from his epic work *La Seconde Semaine* (1584); Sylvester’s

translation was printed in 1598, but Grymeston probably took the quotation from *Englands Parnassus*, where it appears in the section on the “Diuell” (1600, E7v-E8v, at E8v), since there are no differences between her text and the *Parnassus* version:

As a false Louer that thicke snares hath laied,  
T'intrap the honour of a faire yoong maid,  
When she (though little) listning eare affoords  
To his sweet, courting, deepe affected words,  
Feeles some asswaging of his freezing flame,  
And sooths himselfe with hope to gain his game,  
And rapt with ioy, vpon this point persists,  
That parleing citie neuer long resists:  
Euen so the serpent that doth counterfet  
A guilefull call t'allure vs to his net,  
Perceiuing vs his flattering gloze disgest,  
He prosecutes, and iocund doth not rest,  
Till he haue tri'd foot, hand, and head, and all,  
Vpon the breach of this new battered wall.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, A4v)

Grymeston's discourse, based on the disgraced man and the fear of spiritual entrapment, offers a rather pessimistic view, reminiscent of the medieval

traditions that of “the certainty of death and the miseries that precede it” (Matchinske, 2002, p. 332). The imagery that Grymeston sets out of the “false lover” who seeks to trick the young “maid” is also reminiscent of Isabella Whitney’s metaphor of the fish which takes the bait in *The Copy* (1567). Like her, Grymeston is not averse using a topic which was usually associated with the masculine discourse, although unlike Whitney, Grymeston does not seek to challenge or overturn this misogynistic stereotype. However, she exploits her maternal position to acquire authorial agency. For example, the lines she takes from the poet Edmund Spenser about the sacred ox taken from his work *The Faerie Queene* (1590), from one of the sections on “Death” in the *Englands Parnassus* (1600, Gg3r-v), are about the possibility of an unforeseen death and the need to live a good life. Her change in the last line from the original source, replacing “Marinell” with “I,” puts the attention on herself and obliterates Bernye completely from the reader’s thoughts:

Like as the sacred oxe that carelesse stands,  
With gilded hornes, and flowrie garlands crownd,  
Proud of his dying honour and deare bands,  
Whilst theaters fume with frankensence around:  
All suddenly with mortall blow astond,  
Doth groueling fall, and with his steeming gore,  
Distaine the pillars and the holy ground,  
And the faire flowers that decked him afore,

So downe I fell on wordlesse precious shore.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, B4r)

The line composed by Grymeston offers an odd image. The reader would expect the speaker to fall “wordlesse” on the precious shore, but she does not: it is the precious shore which is wordless in this construction. Evidently, the fact that she is not the one who is “wordlesse,” suggests that Grymeston has found her voice to speak through her manual. Death is presented as the wordless shore, where her voice will be lost. It also brings a contrast with the original line in Spenser’s poem in *Englands Parnassus* where “Marinell” is the one falling on the shore, “So fell proud Marinell upon the Precious Shore” (Edmund Spenser, *Englands Parnassus*, G3v). Moreover, further proof that Grymeston was using the *Englands Parnassus* for her writing is that the word “theatres” in *Englands Parnassus* is changed from “alt’ar” in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen* (1590, Book III, canto IV, stanza xvii), indicating that Grymeston was definitely quoting from *Englands Parnassus*. The “unforeseen” death that Grymeston writes about is a reflection about her own impending death. She associates herself with the sacrificed ox who is going to face death with “dying honour” (1604, B4v). The reader can almost sense her desire to extend her life by keeping writing except that the “precious shore” – the context of her work, not Spenser’s heaven – is wordless. Thus, she is aware that she must confine herself “to the limits of the epistle” (1604, A4v). The following lines expose this melancholic feeling about her approaching death, venting her frustration to the outside world:

Our frailties dome, is written in the flowers,  
Which flourish now, but fade yer many howers.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, C2v)

These lines are drawn from the poet Samuel Daniel's *The Complaint of Rosamond* (1592), Grymeston's version here is closer to Daniel's original than that of *Englands Parnassus*. This either suggests that she is reading Daniel's original work, where these words are not extracted from the narrative context, or that she has identified the problem with the metre in the *Parnassus*' version and corrected it. If one relies on the latter option, then it appears that Grymeston is showing some poetic sensibility as well. Daniel's version reads:

Our frailtyes doome is written in the flowers,  
Which florish now, and fade ere many howers.

(Samuel Daniel, *The Complaint of Rosamond*, 1592, 14v)

*Englands Parnassus*, in one of its sections of "Death" (1600, E1r-E3v), has an extra foot in the meter by adding the word "away," thus it ceases from being a pentameter:

Our frailties dome are written in the flowers,  
Which flourish now, and fade away ere many howres

In Daniel's account, these words are spoken by a matron forewarning Rosamond about the decrepitude of old age as part of her strategy to convince Rosamond to embark on an adulterous relationship. Grymeston uses these lines to describe her own self, comparing her almost consumed life with a withered flower. Flowers, which are linked in general with female beauty and their intimate domestic spaces, grant Grymeston the medium by which she moves away from the intimate female sphere to engage with the masculine literary tradition. She is also appropriating words given by a male author to a sinful woman for her own moral purpose, thus acquiring authorial agency without male intervention. On the other hand, Dorothy Leigh's mentioning of flowers in her maternal book is directed specifically to her sons, counselling them not to fall in idleness but, like a bee, "gather hony of each flower" (1618, A6v). Hence, while the evidence presents the view that Leigh was using the maternal advice book strictly to instruct her children, Grymeston succeeds imperceptibly to move away from this maternal responsibility by deriving authority from her delicate position as a dying mother.

The idea of Grymeston attaining female agency in the *Miscelanea* is developed further as Grymeston's projects her voice to reflect on her sense of personal uneasiness and dismay – a mother who is approaching her last days – in her comments regarding childbirth. Unlike the writing of other maternal books, the bond formed in the womb does not impart a sense of fulfilment to

Grymeston as it does, for instance, to Elizabeth Jocelin. Jocelin writes about the immediate connection she feels with her unborn child:

Who would not condemne mee if I should bee carelesse of thy body while it is within me? Sure a farre greater care belongs to thy soule, to both these cares I will endeuour my selfe so long as I liue.

(Elizabeth Jocelin, 1624, C2v)

Similarly, Dorothy Leigh writes about the natural maternal love for her children:

Is it possible, that shee which had carried her child within her, so neere her hart, and brought it forth into this world with so much bitter paine, so many grones and cries, can forget it?

(Dorothy Leigh, 1604, B2r-v)

For Grymeston, however, maternal love is not presented as coming naturally. Rather in a chapter on preparing to die well, the miracle of giving life is reduced to a philosophical concept to meditate upon and links childbirth metaphorically with one's imminent death: "the woman great with childe will often muse of her deliuerie" (1604, C2v). Here, Grymeston is engaging with a major theological thinker, John Chrysostom, whom she cites by name at the start of this sentence ("saith *Chrysostome*," C2v). Chrysostom (347 – 407 CE) was an early Church Father and archbishop of Constantinople. He was also an important Biblical interpreter as well as orator and, most probably,

Grymeston is quoting one of his sermons, "The Blessings of Death." In his sermon, he associates death with a liberation from all worldly troubles: "Death is rest; a deliverance from the exhausting labors and cares of this world" (trans. William Jennings Bryan, v.7, 1906). This theory of Chrysostom about the brevity of life has been developed by Grymeston in a series of metaphors about the transience of life. She feels that life is only like being in the womb, on a threshold of a prison, until we are delivered out of our miseries: "he that knowes his life is but a way to death" (1604, C2v). Building on from this idea, Grymeston cites the lines from John Davies's poem *The Original, Nature and Immortality of the Soule*, better known as *Nosce Teipsum* (1599), from the section on the "Soule" in the *Englands Parnassus* (1600, S8r-T3v, at T2r):

For when the soule findes here no true content,  
And like Noahs Doue can no sure footing take:  
She doth returne from whence she first was sent,  
And flies to him that first hir wings did make.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, B3v)

Her position as a mother is exploited to voice her concerns regarding death, forfeiting maternal counsel for moral advice in the process. She compares life to an inn, a waiting area, before one's soul finds its true happiness when it returns "from whence she first was sent." She cautions the reader about the perils of losing God's grace which is like plummeting in a "deadly gulfe" (1604,

B4v). Her moral warning is reinforced with lines from Thomas Sackville's poem "Induction" in *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1563) probably taken from the section on "Hell" in *Englands Parnassus* (1600, K2r-v, at K2r). The extract details the journey through the infernal regions acknowledging, of course, the inescapable path and moral weight of choosing such a trajectory. However, Grymeston leaves out the second line of the excerpt that appears in the *Parnassus*: "With foule blacke swelth in thickened lumpes that lies." This turns Sackville's rhyme royal (which has got obscured by the way the extract cuts across stanzas in the *Parnassus*) into a simpler poetic form of two rhyming couplets, thus the rhyming lines are adjusted to the same length and help the reader to focus on one thought:

A deadly gulfe where nought but rubbish growes,  
Which vp on th'aire such stinking vapour throwes,  
That ouer there may flie no bird but dies,  
Chok't with the pestilent sauours that arise.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, B4v)

At one point, however, Grymeston does seem to want to claim back her authority as a mother by including her son in her counselling. The verses from Michael Drayton's *Matilda* (1594), which like Daniel's *Rosamond* is a female-voiced complaint, are probably cited from *Englands Parnassus* in the section "Pleasures" (1600, Q3r-v, at Q3v), due to the similarity between Grymeston's quotation and that found in the *Parnassus*. Grymeston changes the pronouns

from “our” to “your,” putting forward her interpretation of a mother advising her son through the voice of a virtuous heroine, Matilda, who resists King John’s attempts to seduce her:

Your fond preferments are but childrens toyes,  
And as a shadow all *your* pleasures passe.  
As yeeres increase, so wauing are *your* ioyes.  
Your blesse is brittle, like a broken glasse,  
Or as a tale of that which neuer was.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, C1r, emphasis added)

The last two lines are different from the source text and from *Matilda*:

And beautie crazed like a broken glasse.  
A prettie tale of that which neuer was.

(Michel Drayton’s *Matilda*, 1594; cf. *Englands Parnassus*, “Pleasures,” 1600, Q3v)

The term “blesse” in Grymeston’s version can be a sixteenth-century variant spelling of “bliss” (OED, 3). If this is the case, it suggests that Grymeston was adapting the source text to make it more appropriate for the general male reader which, then, eliminates the possibility of it being Grymeston’s direct address towards her son. This is even more the case when one considers that when she changes Drayton’s verses and inserts the second person pronoun “your,” she does not choose the familiar “thy” form that one might expect from

a mother talking to her son, and the form that she had used in the prefatory material addressed “To her louing sonne.” “Your” is either the formal or plural form. If she is using “your” to address Bernye, it emphasises her position and authority as a mother, reminding readers that she had the right, as a mother, to instruct her son. However, as the plural form, it also suggests that she is addressing a wider audience other than her son. Either way, the use of “your” epitomises the way in which Grymeston’s acquisition of female agency (by exhibiting her rhetorical skills) comes at the expense of displaying affectionate maternal counsel. This idea will be extended further in the next section.

#### Elizabeth Grymeston and Rhetorical Ventriloquism

Having established that through the citing of male authors mainly from the *Englands Parnassus* – a commonplace book – Grymeston acquires female agency, this section will next consider how she manages to acquire more authorial voice by imitating, rather successfully, a common schoolroom exercise in *prosopopoeia*, speaking in the voice of another. *Prosopopoeia* or rhetorical ventriloquism is designed “to stirre and moove affection” (Anon., *Riddles of Heraclitus and Democritus*, 1598). Richard Bernard’s *Faithfull Shepheard* (1607), teaching clergy how to preach, includes *prosopopoeia* amongst a list of eight rhetorical figures which should “chiefly [...] be used” (1607, K1v). He also conveys that sense of *prosopopoeia* being “patheticall and mouing” (1607, K2r). Grymeston makes use of this figure in “A patheticall speech of the person of Diues in the torments of hell” (1604, B4r) in which she

imagines the posthumous experience of the rich man who features in one of Jesus's parables, "Dives and Lazarus," from Luke (16:19-31). Grymeston's embellishment of the Biblical story is analogous to Thomas Lupton's last work: *A Dream about the Divell and Dives* (1589). Lupton's work describes Eumenides' dream about the devil and Dives, which discloses God's revelation about an England tainted with corruption, bribery, and murder. His dream is told through a discussion between him and another speaker, Theophilus, which means "Lover of God." Amongst various concepts, Theophilus discusses the consequences of an untimely death on the soul of the person who has no possibility to acknowledge his sin and receive God's forgiveness:

O what a daungerous case were you in? What if you had dyed before you had waked, as many have doone sodenly? You knowe that no man can repent, vnlesse he knowlege his sinne, neither can any be forgiuen, vnlesse he aske mercie, neither can mercie be graunted without firme faith in Christ, without al which (by your owne saying) you fell a sleepe.

(Thomas Lupton, 1589, A7v)

Grymeston similarly exploits this seemingly simple Biblical parable to voice her reflections about the soul, excluding her son completely. Here, Grymeston's *Dives* discusses the notion of mortality which finds the individual spiritually unready to receive God's grace, with nothing to indicate that this advice is

intended for Bernye. Ironically, she asserts herself as an author by the very thing that she fails to give importance to, namely motherhood:

O Death, how sudden was thy arrest vnto me? How vnexpected? While my bodie was strong, while my intrals were full of fat, and my bones were watered with marrow; while I had rest in my substance, and peace in my riches; in one night my soule was taken from me, and all my ioy was turned into mourning.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, B4r)

Both Lupton's *Eumenides* and Grymeston's *Dives* speak of wanting to have a second chance to redeem themselves from their sins. *Eumenides* retells what he has heard *Dives* say that: "if I were but on the earth aliue againe, I would neither prowle for ritches nor wealth, as I did, neither would take care for any thing, but onely for my soule" (Lupton, 1589, E3v). The same thought is replicated by Grymeston. Ventriloquising *Dives*, Grymeston wishes that "with teares of blood and water I might purge my vncleannesse to worke my redemption" (1604, C1v). Grymeston's desire that the reader embraces a loving God leaves no doubt about the moral advice she wants to leave behind to the world. In her effort to recommend such spiritual devotion, she conflates the image of Christ weeping tears of blood with that of Mary Magdalene, the penitent, who washes Christ's feet with her tears in Luke (7:36-50). Lupton and Grymeston, through the voice of *Dives*, describe hell as a horrendous place

waiting for those who lack repentance. She writes that it is a place of “Chaos of confusion,” a “Well of perdition ... in paines euerlasting, during beyond eternitie” (1604, B4v). Lupton’s *Dives* describes it in the same manner:

Where is nothing but crying, yelling, mourning, and weeping, & gnawing, and gnashing of teeth, not for an houre or two, not for a day, nor a weeke: no, nor a moneth, nor a yeare, nor yet a thousand, nor for ten thousand yeares, but euen for euer & euer world without end: which to me damned wretch that I am, is most dolefull and horrible, because I am in endlesse torments, without any mercie to be had: but to them that are yet on earth, that may auoide it by repentance, a godly warning.

(Thomas Lupton, 1589, D1v)

The evidence highlights that Grymeston was claiming agency and asserting her power by focusing on her rhetorical skills. She was also using the maternal genre to justify her authorial voice. The next section considers in more detail Grymeston’s engagement with contemporary theological debates and how the doctrinal voice that Grymeston assumes continues to denote the distinctiveness of her motherly book.

## Elizabeth Grymeston's Scriptural Considerations

Grymeston's rhetorical talents as well as her strong religious commitment make her legacy multifaceted and uncharacteristic of maternal writing. Her spiritual devotion is displayed extensively through various citations from the Bible, emphasising religious duty and loyalty. She exploits Scripture as an occasion not only for demonstrating that she has a "fruitfull brain," but also to reflect upon passages from the Bible, prompting her readers to do the same.

When quoting the Bible, Grymeston had several alternatives, including the Latin Vulgate, the Bishops' Bible (revised in 1572), the official Bible of the English Church; the Geneva Bible, which was still widely used in domestic worship; and – for the New Testament – the Douay Rheims Bible, considered the English translation closest to the Catholic Bible, published in 1582. However, the Douay Rheims Old Testament was not published until 1610 and therefore could not have been used by Grymeston. Strikingly, there are a few terms in Grymeston's *Miscelanea* which potentially stem from Tyndale's translations of the New Testament, which ended up in the Geneva Bible. The word "repentance" and derivatives of it, for example, occur eleven times in the first edition of the *Miscelanea*. Contrastingly, the alternative translation "penance" was only used three times. In the second and subsequent editions, "repentance" features seventeen times while "penance" only four times. A clear example is in her first chapter which starts with a reflection on the necessity of prayer, meditation, and repentance:

Prayer is the wing wherewith thy soule flieth to heauen; and Meditation the eye wherewith we see God; and *Repentance* the *Supersedeas*[s] that dischargeth all bond of sinne.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, B2r, emphasis added)

Grymeston explicitly chooses the reformers' preferred translation of a controversial phrase. Translating the Greek *metanoia* (*poenitentia* in the Vulgate) as "repentance" rather than "penance" was one of Thomas More's objections to Tyndale's translations of the Bible (along with his insistence on the terms "congregation," "senior / elder," "repentance" and "love" over, respectively, "church," "priest," "penance," and "charity" [Ginsberg, 1988, pp. 45-46]).<sup>7</sup> Tyndale's terms were seen by More to undermine the authority of the established Church: they put the power in the "congregation," or the believers, not the institution, "the church." They also put the emphasis on individual feeling ("repentance", "love") rather than words that had become associated with ritual ("penance", "charity"). Moreover, the assertion made by Grymeston about the prerequisite of suffering to triumph in celestial happiness, equating life with a "dolefull pilgrimage" (1604, B3v), is reminiscent of the Catholic practice to journey towards a sacred place as an act of religious devotion. However, it is also in-line with Protestant thinking about pilgrimage.

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<sup>7</sup> David Ginsberg in his article "Ploughboys versus Prelates: Tyndale and More and the Politics of Biblical Translation" (*The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 19, No.1, pp. 45-61, 1988) compares Tyndale's translation of the Old Testament Book of Jonah and More's favoured Douay-Rheims translation of the same with the original Hebrew text to show how these translations reflect the adherents' respective religious and political views.

For instance, Tyndale's translation of Peter (1:1-17) talks of the "tyme of your pilgrimage," that is mortal life. For Grymeston, it is not just a physical journey but also a spiritual one towards salvation:

If this Life be not atchieued but with a **dolefull pilgrimage**; for where doest thou reade that Christ laughed? Then *Woe be to you that laugh, for you shall mourne: and happy are you that lament, for you shall be comforted.*

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, B3v, emphasis added)

Grymeston's use of Protestants' terms suggests that she wanted her writing to appeal to a wider audience which included both Protestants as well as Catholic believers, or it could also be the case that growing up in a Protestant country, she had assimilated these terms herself. This idea of Grymeston projecting an impartial voice in the *Miscelanea* can be extended to include the various citations from the Bible. She relates anecdotes and passages from the Scripture warning the readers about the vices of this world but without exposing too much of her Catholic leanings. For instance, in the first volume of the *Miscelanea*, she makes only one allusion to the Pope when discussing the fear of death without entering into any controversial theological matters. However, this focuses on the Pope as a mortal man who is required to confront his own death, rather than as God's representative on earth:

The *Pope* that day he is chosen, hath one comes to [...] with foure marble stones, as patterns to choose of which his tombe shall be built.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, D2r-v, emphasis added)

Nevertheless, her reference to achieving salvation by “good works” is a clear indication of Catholicism. Unlike Catholics, Protestants believed that salvation is only achieved by faith and through God’s mercy. To assume that they could attain redemption through worthy deeds was regarded as pure presumption. In this case, therefore, the voice in Grymeston’s *Miscelanea* was going contrary to what Protestants believed:

In vaine thou liuest in that estate of life, in which thoue meanest not to die. Make, ô make your saluation sure vnto you by *good works*. Encline your heart to doe good: for the reward thereof is infinite: for he is comming and commeth quickly, and brings his reward with him, to distribute to euerie one as he hath deserued, euen according to his workes.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, C1v, emphasis added)

Grymeston’s Catholic convictions are also reflected in some of Grymeston’s choices of poets who are Catholic. A case in point are the lines from Robert Southwell’s poem “Loss in Delay” (1587), which is not amongst the

poems that Allot chose to include in the *Parnassus* in spite of the fact that Southwell “had made a deserved reputation for [himself] by [his] poetical compositions before Allot commenced to collect his materials” (Crawford, 1913, p. ix). Southwell was a Jesuit martyr and Grymeston’s relative (ODNB) which may suggest why she has chosen to quote his lines directly from his poem:

Crush the serpent in the head,  
Breake ill egges yer they be hatched.  
Kill bad chickens in the tread,  
Fledge they hardly can be catched.  
In the rising stifle ill,  
Lest it grow against thy will.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, A4r)

Southwell’s poem, ostensibly out of place due to its violent language, alters the intimate conversation between mother and son in the epistle. His lines drastically transform a warm, personal mood into one characterised by a sense of hostility implied by the various compelling verbs used: “Crush,” “Breake,” and “Kill” (1604, A4r). From a loving mother advising her son, the voice in the *Miscelanea* becomes more distinct, more authoritative, and more controlling by assuming full control of the monologue as she instructs the wider reader on spiritual matters. Such an assertive tone, almost forceful, is linked to what Anne Sweeney describes as Southwell’s “war of words” or “martial mood” (Sweeney,

2006, p. 222). As Sweeney argues, after the introduction of the Recusancy Acts in 1588, which imposed house arrest or close confinement upon many Catholics, Southwell started to write in plain, rough English, combining “country imagery and dialect” in place of his “otherwise generally elegant” style (Sweeney, 2006, p. 222). Grymeston returns to Southwell in chapter 11, “Morning Meditation [...] which she vsually sung and played on the winde instrument” (1604, D4v). Here the tone is less challenging and less “countrified” (Sweeney, 2006, p. 222). This “Morning Meditation” comprises sixteen verse extracts taken from Southwell's “Peter's Complaint” (c.1595), interspersed with Grymeston's prose. Like other writers who have interjected their voice into another's writing, as John Bale does with Anne Askew's *Examinations* (1545), so does Grymeston:

Let me honour thee as a Creator, loue thee as a Redeemer, expect thee  
as a Sauour: for by thy goodnesse I was created, by thy mercy  
redeemed, by thy power preserued, and by thy grace I shall be glorified.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, E1v)

This prayer is rendered even more personal when Grymeston changes Southwell's pronoun “thy” to “my”:

Giue vent vnto the vapors of *my* brest,  
That thicken in the brims of cloudy eies,

Where sinne was hatch't, let teares now wash the nest,  
Where life was lost, recouer life with cryes;  
My trespasse: foule, let not *my* teares be few,  
Baptise *my* spotted soule in weeping dew.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1605/6, E1r, emphasis added)<sup>8</sup>

The phrases chosen in the above quotation appear more elegant than the previous citation by Southwell, displaying a sense of closeness and tenderness through words like “brest,” “cryes” and “teares,” which fit better in the paradigm of the maternal genre. This prayer also provides the opportunity for a better display of the relationship between mother and son, as the subsequent chapter written by Bernye himself does, “A Madrigall made by *Berny Grymeston* vpon the conceit of his mothers play to the former ditties” (Grymeston, 1604, E8v). However, the expression of affection in Bernye’s extract as he writes of his mother’s “kind eies restor[ing his] life againe” is from son to mother rather than vice versa while, on the other hand, the prayer that Grymeston writes, and which Bernye responds to, reflects purely on herself. However, Grymeston is able to publish such intimate prayer because it is under the guise of maternal advice which is another example of how Grymeston achieves authorial agency.

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<sup>8</sup> Since these lines in the first edition of the *Miscelanea* (1604) are illegible on the copy provided by EEBO, I have resorted to supply the same quotation from the second edition (1605/6) found on EEBO. They follow Southwell’s verses more exactly aside from the change of pronoun.

The invocation of Richard Verstegan's poetry in the *Miscelanea* seems to have a similar intent to her use of Southwell and offers another representation of Grymeston's voice. Verstegan was another Catholic poet and a recusant just like her. Grymeston succeeds in getting a copy of his work *Odes in imitation of the seven penitentiall Psalmes*, published while he was a recusant in Antwerp in 1601. Verstegan addresses his preface to "The Vertvovs Ladies and Gentlewomen Readers" (Verstegan, 1601, A2r). He chooses women as the audience of his text, stating that he "knew no better way than to make dedication of them [his poems] vnto yourselues [women readers], whose sweete voyces or virginalles" are sure "to grace them" (1601, A2r). Thus, Grymeston's citational practice from Verstegan's work was rhetorically astute since it made the construction of her own authority more acceptable through the respect this male poet had for women's opinion. Although Verstegan's volume was considered controversial due to a strong inclination towards Catholicism which restricted its printing in England, Grymeston quotes the "most uncontroversial segments" of his book (Snook, 2000, p. 111). Her aim was not to debate the government or the church nor entrap herself in a discussion about the moral failures of the reformation, but to instruct the true Christian about spiritual matters. She, therefore, quotes Verstegan's "Seven Penitential Psalmes," inverting the sequential order, starting with Psalm 143 and moving on to Psalm 6. Perhaps in the reversal of order, Grymeston wanted to promote Psalm 143 which evokes the importance of prayer for the remission of sins:

Vouchsafe admit thy gracious eares,  
With milde regard for to attend  
The prayers, that a plaining heart  
With sorowing sighs to thee doth send:  
And let thereto, o louing Lord,  
Thy lustice and thy Trueth accord.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, F1r)

Devotional writing, the kind that Grymeston was writing, was not unusual among sixteenth- and seventeenth-century women writers, whose writing tends to be religious in nature. Kenneth Charlton, for instance, argues that mothers were often responsible for the moral education not only of their children but of the entire household and, thus, “took on the responsibility to instruct their children and the children of others” (Charlton, 2014, p. 188). However, Grymeston's image of a penitent sinner “privately” addressing God befits her more as a believer than in her position as a mother:

Haue mercy oh good God on *me*  
in greatnesse of thy grace,  
O let thy mercies manifold  
*my* many faults deface.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, F4v, emphasis added)

In the quotation above, we witness this kind of “private” exchange between Grymeston and God in calling for His mercy, with its emphasis on “me” and “my” (1604, F4v). Although modern critics have argued that mothers have often contributed to the spiritual instruction of their children, maternal affection seems absent throughout Grymeston's legacy. This brings me to conclude that Grymeston's desire “to show the loue of an affectionate mother to hir naturall childe” (1604, A3r) is far more implicit and less typical of traditional mother's advice books. What is unusual in Grymeston's legacy is her own presentation as a reader and as a teacher providing spiritual advice, making her love for her son appear detached and conditional, or that she feels love is best shown by teaching Bernye how to save his soul. Though she can offer advice which is specifically targeted at Bernye, as when she tells Bernye that to preserve his soul he need not “commit rash attempts” (1604, A4v), more often her counsel is carried beyond the fundamental form of nurturing as she tells her son at the start of the epistle: “thou seest my loue hath carried me beyond the list I resolued on” (1604, B1r). Grymeston seeks a different reward than maternal counsel: that of offering spiritual and moral guidance, tinged, however tactfully, with a partisan Catholic view.

To conclude this section on Grymeston, I maintain that unquestionably Grymeston's motherhood incites her to present her view of the world, albeit rather pessimistically, through her reading of Biblical material, devotional poetry, secular prose and poetry. The authorial voice she presents in this first edition is one which is powerful enough to make Grymeston remembered even after her death, not just by her son, but also by her readers. Her

expression of grief at having to leave her son is turned into spiritual profit as her position as a dying mother grants her the possibility to speak publicly. The evidence of her writing suggests that she wanted to be remembered as someone who is learned, that she knows Latin and the Church fathers, but who was above all godly: "Let my memorie be a record to shew thy goodnesse so shall my lips shew forth thy praise," she prays to God (1604, E2r-v). Although her world has reserved a lot of discomfort due to her mother's lack of affection as well as her loss of children and imminent death, she is determined to leave her own legacy. The lines taken from *Englands Parnassus*, one of the sections on "Death," from Spenser's *The Teares of the Muses* (Spenser, 1590, v.5; *Englands Parnassus*, 1600, X8v) convey this sense of anguish on her part:

A wretched world, the den of wretchednesse.  
Deform'd with filth and foule iniquitie,  
A wretched world, the house of heauinesse,  
Fild with the wreacks of mortall miserie.  
O wretched world, and all that is therein,  
The vassals of Gods wrath, and slaues to sinne.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1604, B3r)

This position of spiritual anguish that Grymeston takes gives her strength to voice her inner emotions, thereby emerging out of her "den of

wretchednesse," through her devotional – and not so much maternal – writing. She succeeds in making her voice heard to the silent, outside reader.

Having established that the first edition of the *Miscelanea* (1604) presents Grymeston as, above all, an intellectual and provider of moral and spiritual counselling, the next section will consider the changes made to the second edition of the *Miscelanea* (1605/6) and whether these changes alter the perception of Grymeston. To establish this character in Grymeston's second publication (1605/6), it will be helpful to give a brief outline of this work which also provides the model for the subsequent editions in 1608 and 1618.

#### The Second Publication of the *Miscelanea* (1605/6): Format

The second volume of the *Miscelanea* (1605/6) was not printed by Melchisdech Bradwood as was the first edition, but by George Elde for William Aspley, with two other editions following in 1608 (by Bradwood for Aspley) and in 1618, printed by George Griffin for Aspley. The new copies all contained the same additional six chapters: "A good Fridayes exercise" (chapter 13); "Against Lasciuiousnesse" (chapter 14); "A Paraeneticall discourse perswading repentance" (chapter 15); "That Maiestie is the daughter of Honour and Reuerence" (chapter 16); "Of wilfull Murder" (chapter 17); and "Of the office of a Iudge" (chapter 18). Since all the volumes were published posthumously, these "new" chapters had already existed even when the first edition had

been published. They were probably consciously omitted from the 1604 volume due to certain circumstances which require, here, some explanation. As early as Queen Elizabeth's 1559 "Injunctions" to the clergy and laity of the realm, English censorship regulations refused to allow the printing of texts that defied the Church of England "in matters of religion or policy or governance" (Prothero, 1913, p. 189). This edict put a considerable strain on printers whose productions were closely monitored with anyone caught disobeying orders heavily prosecuted. This would later be reinforced in 1605/6 by James I who issued a statute which continued to make it illegal to circulate any books that espoused any Catholic belief or doctrine (Matchinske, 2002, p. 331). This policy found in 3 Jac. I, cap. 5, states that:

No person or persons shall bring from beyond the seas nor shall print, sell, or buy any Popish primers, Lady's psalters, manuals, rosaries, Popish catechisms, missals, breviaries, portals, legends and lives of saints, containing superstitious matter, printed or written in any language whatsoever, nor any other superstitious books printed or written in the English tongue.

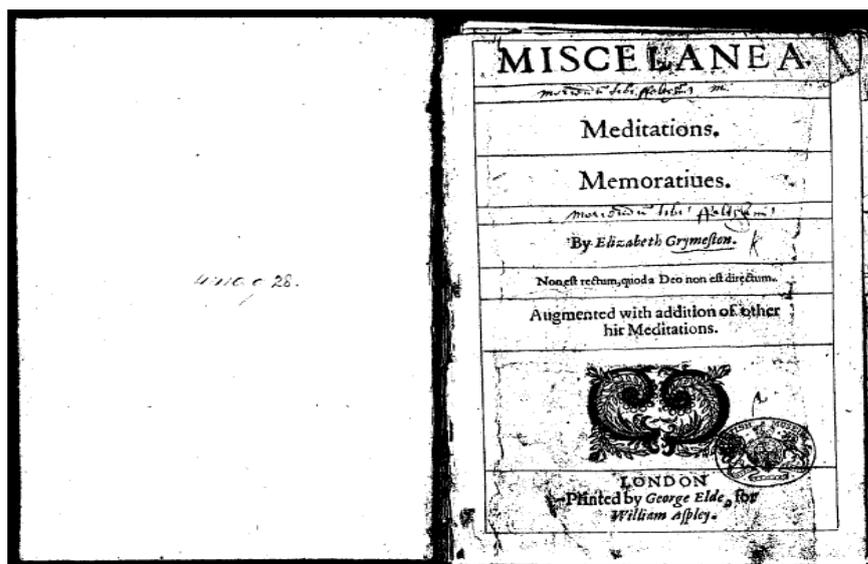
(J. R. Tanner, 1930, p. 103)

Inevitably, these injunctions influenced the printer's decisions about what to include or not in the different editions of Grymeston's *Miscelanea*. In the light of such edicts, the inclusion of the extra six chapters in the second volume

(1605/6) and subsequent editions was a strong political decision to take and may explain why the second publication omits the publication date as I will discuss in greater detail. Grymeston's Catholic roots often manifested in her work which meant that her book came closer to devotional material rather than a maternal manual. Perhaps, this injunction may have prompted the change in format of the ensuing editions of the *Miscelanea*. The printers of the following versions may have chosen to include the extra material but at the same time omitted the publication date to mislead authorities and avoid censorship. Hence with the enactment of James I's statute, the omission of the publication date would have kept "regulators guessing" (Matchinske, 2002, p. 331).

Moreover, regarding the publication of the first volume, the printers were aware that it would have been scrutinised thoroughly in order to gain approval for publication and thus the decision to publish it in a shorter format may have been taken in order not to jeopardise its approval for print. The first edition was, in fact, not considered by officials as a devotional book by a Catholic as it contained "nothing subversive or heretical" and it "enjoyed full ecclesiastical recognition" (Matchinske, 2002, p. 330). According to the Stationers' Register, the first edition of the *Miscelanea* also received the official *imprimatur* – an approval by both episcopal and secular licensers – such endorsement not being very common since "the invention of printing was regarded as a menace rather than as a boon, being recognized at once as a dangerous instrument of heresy and treason" (Greg, 1956, p. viii). The first *Miscelanea* was entered "under [the] hands of Master Pasfield and the Wardens" (Arber, 1875-

77, p. 104). Pasfield, a prebendary of St Paul's, was appointed to the licensing panel in 1600 by Archbishop Whitgift. It was only then that the 1604 *Miscelanea* was "entered in the Stationers' Register" (Matchinske, 2002, p. 329). The success of this first version which the publisher could not have predicted emboldened, then, the ensuing publications with a longer volume since it was plausible that the subsequent versions would have been subjected to a less rigid examination due to the "close monitoring" of the first edition of the *Miscelanea* (Matchinske, 2002, p. 331). Moreover, the additional chapters in the following volumes of *Miscelanea* fell towards the end of the book which might have discouraged "even the most diligent censors" (Matchinske, 2002, p. 320). The "new" chapters are inserted after chapter 12 of the first copy and shift chapter 13 and 14 to the end of the volume, as chapters 19 and 20 in the reprinted edition. These new chapters are only announced on the front page under the title of the reprinted *Miscelanea* through a short addendum: "Augmented with addition of other hir Meditations" (Fig. 4.2). This minimal description does not reveal the extent to which the revised tract differs from its predecessor nor of any religious leanings. All subsequent volumes of the *Miscelanea* retain the same simple design as the first edition which presumably had the added advantage of signaling that these later volumes resemble the first despite the addition of material:

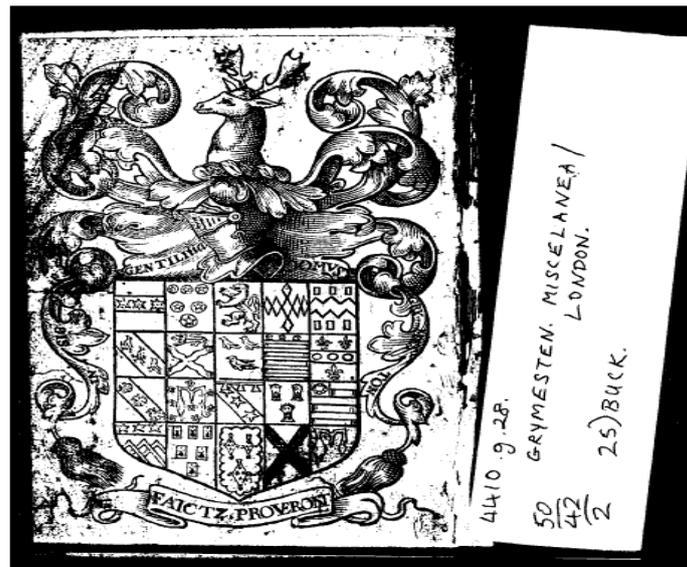


Miscelanea's Title-page, 1605/6 (Fig. 4.2)

This new content was kept through the second, third and fourth editions of the *Miscelanea*. They were also all printed in a new octavo format which included the twenty chapters. The printers possibly felt that this new kind of layout, which was one eighth the size of the original sheet and half the size of the first edition, gave the *Miscelanea* a more general feel of being a “manual,” an easy to carry, portable book (OED, 6), despite the additional six chapters that the new editions had: a “portable *veni mecum*” (1604, A3r).

Looking closely at the second edition as an example of the reprinted tracts, apart from a bespoke woodcut inserted by the printer on the folio of the title-page, showing the Grymeston family's coat-of-arms under its stag's head crest, there is little difference from the first copy (Fig. 4.3). The reproduction of the family's arms in the second edition is significant in that the printing of Grymeston's work must have been supported by someone close to Grymeston,

such as her husband, who may presumably have even edited her work. The other possible candidate is Bernye, her son. However, Bernye was at most only nineteen when the first edition was printed (his parents married in 1584) and he may well have been younger.



Grymeston's coat-of-arms found in the *Miscelanea*, 1605/6 (Fig. 4.3)

Having discussed the format and substantial changes found in the second edition of the *Miscelanea* and its subsequent publications, my discussion in the next section will outline how Grymeston's voice may be manipulated by men for political and ideological purposes to a greater extent in these new publications than the first edition. As a result, the voice in this publication appears to be different – assuming a more political purpose for example – than the voice in the first edition.

## Elizabeth Grymeston's Voice in the Second Edition and Occluded Female Agency

In the second edition and the succeeding publications of the *Miscelanea*, Grymeston's voice shifts the balance towards discussing political affairs rather than providing meditative counselling as in the first edition. This imparts the feeling that Grymeston was being made the vessel with which ideological perspectives were made available to the public. Even if the writings are Grymeston's own, since they are added posthumously, this must have been due to a man's decision: either the printer restoring material which was omitted from the first edition to avoid censorship, as discussed above, or from a male member of Grymeston's family (her husband or son) supplying further material. For example, in the first of the added chapters, "A good Fridayes exercise, or a Meditation of the Crosse" (1605/6, D2v), "she" makes an unequivocal defence of "martyrs of the Catholicke Church" who are "winged with innocencie of hands, and cleannesse of heart" (1605/6, D6v-r). OED (7a) signals a shift in meaning of the term "Catholic" by the end of the sixteenth century. Whereas during the mid-sixteenth century "Catholic" referred to the universal church, so was not a term that was the sole privilege of the Church of Rome, by late sixteenth century it became synonymous with the word "papist." For instance, Foxe in *Acts and Monuments* refers to "The Catholike Prelates of the Popes band" (1583, v.2, p. 1844). This implies that Grymeston or the voice in the *Miscelanea* was making a direct political defence of the Catholic martyrs. This hypothesis is even more credible when one considers the

fact that, coincidentally, although Grymeston was by then dead, this discussion concurred with the discovery of the Gunpowder Treason in November 1605 which was attributed to Catholics. This led the Parliament to pass an “Act of Recusancy” against Catholics in a bid to further control loyalty to the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church:

That for their better discovery and preuention every Popish Recusant conuicted or to be conuicted and which hath or shall conform him or herself, shall within one [year and a half] after conformance, and every six month after that year and a half, receiue the sacrament in the church of the parish where his abroad is, or if there be no such Parish Church then in the church of the next Parish, which if such conformed Recusants shall not do, he shall sustain the Penalties and forfeitures of a Recusant, his coming to church notwithstanding.

(Recusant Act, 1605)

The idea that Grymeston’s second edition may have been used as a vehicle for voicing the views of some English Catholics – ones who are loyal to the regime whilst also adhering to their faith – is made clearer when one looks at the new material added to this publication. In this “new” added material, the speaker dedicates three chapters – sixteen, seventeen and eighteen – which discuss at length political issues about treason, the swearing of oaths and the duty of judges and lawyers. The voice in the *Miscelanea* urges

obedience to earthly “Princes ... not for feare, but for conscience sake” (1605/6, E6v). The speaker asserts that kings are the “Gods of the earth” and places “her” complete trust in them for they have (1605/6, E7r):

Their hearts in Gods hands, if inclined to good: dispensers of his mercies,  
if giuen to cruelty, executioners of his Iudgements, by which foote you  
may gesse what a body of sinne H[igh] treason is.

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1605/6, E7r)

The argument here is that since the king is appointed through divine intervention, men should show complete loyalty and avoid treasonous activities even if the king rules unjustly for “all power is of God” (1605/6, E6v). The speaker’s total position of allegiance towards the monarchy is a way of trying to show that one can be Catholic – papist – and, at the same time, loyal to the crown. This has been done before by aristocratic families such as Anthony Brown, first Viscount Montague, who used various means to demonstrate his loyalty to Elizabeth I. For example, in his speech of January 1592 in West Horsely, he admits publicly his religious loyalty to the Church of Rome – evidencing a distrust inherent in being a Catholic during the reign of Elizabeth – while, at the same time, showing gratitude towards the Queen for trusting him. In addition, he downplays any threat emerging from his Catholic beliefs by making his faith a private matter and insists that he is not seeking to persuade others:

I confess before youe all that I am a Catholyque in my religeon which I keepe to my self; I seeke to drawe no man to that religeon, neather chylde nor seruant, but let them doo theyr conscyences therein as god shall putt in theyre myndes. My servantes are well knowen syx of them that I putt in trust for busyness to be in religeon contrarye to my selff, I meddell not with them therein, but leave them to god & them selves, I looke to my selff as I have most cawse.

(Viscount Montague, 1592, cited in M. Questier, 2004, p. 251)

In the same manner, Grymeston's second *Miscelanea* was making a political and religious argument regarding Catholic devotees. By placing "Grymeston's" discourse in the context of the time of religious discord especially due to a rekindled attack on the Catholic clergy and their supporters, one can start to believe that her maternal manual was being used – by men – as a way of getting controversial material into the public domain.

Building on this view, the use of Latin in the second edition is exploited as a form of critique towards the judicial system unlike the first edition where Grymeston's Latin was directed at her son. In one long sentence, permeated with extensive, technical Latin words, the speaker of the second *Miscelanea* describes in detail the duties of a good magistrate:

A Magistrate though he bee Gods deputie heare on earth, yet is hee no (**Cardignostes**) (knower of the heart) to search the corners of the heart,

he must iudge **secundum allegata** (according to the allegations and the proofs), *and probate*: as things appeare vpon him, so must hee deeme them: The means hee hath to searche the truthe, is by oath, which is **Vinculum anime** (bond of the soul), a course warranted by *Abrahams* example. 24. Gen. and out of the worde it selfe, which is *Hiphill* in Hebrew, in Greek *Orcos*: so that not onely the bodie, but **anima** (soul) also **est potestatibus subiecta** (subject unto higher powers), *Rom. 13.* for, **vt corpus traditur carceri: ne quo aufugeat, sic anima traditur iureiurando ne quo subter-fugeat** (as the body is consigned to a prison, that it may not flee from there, so the soul is constrained by oath-taking that it may not escape by stealth).

(Elizabeth Grymeston, 1605/6, E8v, emphasis added)

Clearly, engaging critically with the judicial system did not constitute a topic which fell within the parameters of the domestic sphere. For instance, in this case “Grymeston’s” voice appears formal and detached while passing judgement which is unlike her cordial, temperate advice in the first edition. Such reserved formality in the speaker’s voice can lead the reader to assume that her voice was being ventriloquised, possibly by men, to further their political agendas especially since all editions of the *Miscelanea* were published posthumously.

As has been shown the second and successive publications of the *Miscelanea*, present a different kind of voice from Grymeston’s voice of the

first edition: one which is more assertive and which, presumably, is being enabled by some male relatives or associates to further their agendas. The second edition intensifies the rupture between the voice of the mother and that of the knowledgeable writer who instructs the external world. Nevertheless, what is true is that through her original body of writing, the original manuscripts of which have been lost, Grymeston succeeds in making visible what is hidden in her heart. For although the *Miscelanea* was written under the guise of the maternal voice preoccupied with the mother-and-son relationship, yet behind this semblance lies the image of Grymeston as a reader, and a religious and political advisor.

## Conclusion

Early mothers' manuals in the early seventeenth century were meant for a particular audience, usually the author's child or another close relative. They were often presented with an eye towards remaining a private matter as most authors did not intend or seek publication. These types of manuals emerged from a need to advise the younger generation on their struggles and responsibilities during their childhood. Often, these mother writers feared death through childbirth, and this continued to spur them to write these kinds of books. As John Gero explains, "these writings are the thoughts, fears, and hopes of parents who might not live to see their children grow up" (John Gero, 2005, p. 55). Although Grymeston confirms that her sole intention for writing

was for the benefit of her son, Bernye, the nature and format of her tract encompasses the public as well as the domestic. Her role as a mother and a Christian is uniquely positioned to allow her to acquire a public voice. As she constructs her own authority, she creates a devotional piece of writing in dialogue with other, male authors. Her work is full of personal observations, prayers, anecdotes, and quotations from popular literary works. Her concerns about Bernye are not at all mentioned. The *Miscelanea* deals mainly with issues of morality, redemption, and eventual salvation in an effort to break "the barren soile of [her] fruitlesse braine" while avoiding censorship. The fact that the *Miscelanea* was published posthumously does not prove that she did not write her book for a wider public. This is especially true since we do not know when she had started writing and whether that coincided with her impending death. Although, as it has been shown, there are instances in her writing where it seems that Grymeston's voice was being ventriloquised by men to transmit publicly their own agendas, Grymeston's *Miscelanea* still paves the way for a tradition for this genre of women's writing. Other women, such as Dorothy Leigh and Elizabeth Jocelin, immediately follow this practice and found the authority to speak through these manuals. Thus, Elizabeth Grymeston may be considered not only as the first woman writer to start the genre of mothers' advice books but also as the first non-aristocratic female author who left a spiritual and political portrait of her mind through her legacy.

## Conclusion

This research has looked at the works of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century female writers in England – Margaret More Roper, Anne Askew, Isabella Whitney's and Elizabeth Grymeston – who despite a rigid patriarchal system and limited educational opportunities managed to find an authorial voice. These women writers challenged prevailing social conventions that women should remain confined within their domestic walls and persist in a stance of silence and obedience. Through their writings, these four authors succeeded in breaking beyond their private circles and acquired female agency regardless of the textual interference by men around them.

Further to that, these women writers can be seen to participate in mainstream literary culture. The different genres of their works reflect different phases of literary production: More Roper's translation belongs to an early Tudor phase where literary production is highly dependent on prose translations not just by women, but also by men. Thomas Elyot's translations such as *Education or Bringinge vp of Children* (1532), *Doctrinall of Princis* (c.1533), and *Sweete and Deuoute Sermon of Holy Saint Ciprian* (1534) or Thomas Wyatt's *Quyete of Mynde* (1528), for example, are testaments to such men's literary translations. As personal testimonial, Askew's *Examinations* exemplify a genre used by prominent reformers, such as John Bale and John Foxe. Whitney's move to secular poetry is part of a wider cultural shift in the early Elizabethan period where her single-author miscellanies of secular poetry were, in parts, a response to the success of Tottell's Miscellany (editions from

1557) and should be put alongside similar miscellanies by her contemporaries Barnabe Googe, Thomas Howell, and George Turberville. Grymeston's rather odd miscellany, meanwhile, can be seen as resulting from the expansion of print and the culmination of a "commonplacing" culture: it is not a work which would have made it into print in earlier decades.

Far from being "marginal," these women writers and the different genres they chose – translation, memoir, secular poetry, maternal advice and commonplacing – are part of the shifting landscape of English print. Their voices reflect, and are part of, a changing history. Understanding these women writers and the contributions they have left is thus vital to understanding the period itself. Recognising the constant struggles these early women writers had to face to be accepted in the literary world – having to provide justifications for their work and being subject to men's approval – is a step forward in valuing their effort in acquiring an authorial voice. The effort of convincing the public (mostly the male audience) of the importance and credibility of their work was a constant challenge and most of the time ended in leaving early women writers to stand in the shadow of men. However, these four women managed to gain recognition for their literary skills, albeit – with the exception of Margaret More Roper and Isabella Whitney – posthumously. In addition, three of these authors – Askew, Whitney and Grymeston – had their works published under their names, and even though Margaret More Roper did not publish under her name, there were enough allusions in her translation, *A Devout Treatise* (1526), for the reader to recognise who the real author was.

While More Roper, Askew, Whitney and Grymeston are by no means to serve as a prototype for all early women writers, their example of writing offers an understanding of some of the complexities of the time in which they lived: a time encumbered by social, religious and patriarchal constraints. In my reassessment of these early writers, my goal is not to isolate them from other voices – male and female – but to capture their literary contributions. What these women have provided, after all, is the possibility that there could be diverse interpretations in history: a history which does not necessarily pertain solely to male voices.

The voice and agency of these female writers were not only occluded in their own times. My thesis has explored the way in which later critics have responded to these women writers. For example, Mary Ellen Lamb (1999) feels that Margaret More Roper remained under the influence of her father and that she only assumed – like most sixteenth-century women – a subservient role. Others, like Beilin (1996), Watt (1997), Kemp (1999) and Coles (2002) feel that Anne Askew's text was appropriated by male authors – John Bale and John Foxe – to give a voice to their own religious agendas. In addition, critics like Ann Rosaline Jones (1990), Pamela Hammons (2005), and Paul Gleed (2012) assume that Whitney can only write autobiographical writing and is, therefore, not granted the possibility of creating a persona as male authors did. My thesis has endeavoured to challenge these perceptions about early women writers in order not only to investigate the relationship between male and female authors, but also to retrieve and recognise the agency of these women writers.

Women writers in Tudor England must, therefore, be acknowledged for the important social role they played and for the religious and political circumstances they found themselves in. For if one had to truly value the experience of women writing in sixteenth-century England, one would certainly uncover the subtle voices of these authors as they battled their way through other more overwhelming voices from the literary world in their effort to recover their own authorial voice.

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