The Ambiguous Female Voice: Recovering Female Subjectivity in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam, The Fair Queen of Jewry*

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Abstract

The Tragedy of Mariam, The Fair Queen of Jewry (circ) 1604 deals with the difficulties of a woman to express herself in a society that enjoins women to silence and to the private realm of the home. In the play Cary debates the actions of several female characters, presenting the reader with the understanding that they are wilful subjects who act to push the boundaries of the patriarchal confines of the royal household in which they find themselves. But Cary does not unequivocally endorse these women's actions. The main protagonist of the play is Mariam whose public voice and failure to comply with her husband forms the central drama of the play.

Drawing on the ambiguity that is evident in Cary's play, I explore female subjectivity in the play with regards to two of the most influential ideologies in early modern England: those of marriage and religion. Every woman in early modern England, as with all the women in Cary's play, were either married, to be married or had been married. Protestant ideology became the ambiguous space where women were for the first time considered as spiritually equal. But the family and marriage were social and gendered constructions that drew on Christian discourse in order to reinstate the notions of gender difference and ensure the submission of women in the home and in the family.

In the first section of my dissertation I look at how the discourse that surrounds the two ideologies of marriage and religion create a certain kind of identity for the women in the play. I look at how Cary presents the reader with an argument for female subjectivity. Cary is clearly aware of the complexity of the assumption which she makes about her

main protagonist's subjectivity, as well as of the difficulties which Mariam's recourse to voicing her opinion in public presents to early modern society. Looking at the injunctions that these two predominant ideologies of the time placed on women, I explore how female subjectivity still manages to emerge in Cary's play.

In the second section I look at how Cary uses the specific tactic of ambiguity to express her argument and to reveal the voices of her female characters within patriarchal discourse. I look at how patriarchal discourse, which functions in the society of the play through the ideologies of marriage and religion, semantically define and create the female subject, often defining her as "absence" itself. Ultimately the struggle for the female voice to emerge cannot be done through the disavowal of patriarchal language but through tactics of subversion, which disrupt the definitions of patriarchal language and the restrictions it imposes on women's experience. Using the psychological / linguistic theory of Julia Kristeva I show how the language of Cary's play exposes the difficulty for the female subject to emerge into the Symbolic social realm governed by patriarchal language. Cary's play, as an exposition of these difficulties, itself becomes a linguistic attempt to recover the female subject.

Introduction

In Elizabeth Tanfield Cary's play, The Tragedy of Mariam, The Fair Queen of Jewry (from hereon, Mariam) female subjectivity is ambiguously represented. Cary presents us with the difficulty for a woman, in a society governed by patriarchal discourse, to express her subjectivity by voicing her individual will. While Cary sometimes seems to endorse the legitimacy of the speech of her main heroine, she often disavows its legitimacy as the play progresses. This is the dialectical nature of her play. The ambiguity, which is apparent in Cary's play concerning female subjectivity, lends significance to what it meant to be a woman in early modern England. As David Evett notes:

> in almost all the normative paradigms of social relationship in early modern England... women occupy formal subordinate positions. Moreover, we can note that in this period, English women... began to gain more freedom than they had generally enjoyed before to choose—not the formally subordinate roles they would occupy, which continued to be ineluctably set by the society as a whole, but by the particular conditions of their subordination, the particular husband or master they would serve (159).

Choice implies the recognition of the individual's will in early modern England, but this will is severely restricted. How then does a woman express herself in these contrary circumstances?

In this dissertation I follow two trajectories in searching for the meaning that Cary's vacillation on the topic of female expression has for women of the time, and how this allows for the reader to recover female subjectivity in the play. The first is to see how the play is a meaningful discursive construction of the problem of legitimising a woman's speech, in terms of it being indicative of their subjectivity, in the play. I look at women's subjectivity in terms of the historical construction of early modern marriage and a woman's role in marriage at that time. I look at what social meaning the construct of marriage has in early modern society at large and how this manifests in Cary's play. Travitsky recognises "that the play provides a mirror for the sombre facts of woman's subordination in marriage in seventeenth-century England" (192). I show that in Cary's play women's subjectivity, agency, and voice are all contingent on the female characters' marriage status and their roles as wives. "That she [Cary] should have created a dialect between husband and wife is interesting, but it is even more noteworthy that she does not allow the conventional pro-husband response to dominate in either poetic form or content" (Beilin "Female Hero" 168). I analyse the play in this way in my first two chapters, each time showing Cary's exploration of women's subjectivity and the legitimacy of their agency within the restrictions of marriage.

Cary's play challenges the expectations of what it means to be a "good" or a "bad" wife by contrasting wifely behaviour with the moral theme of being a "truthful" or "deceptive" person. Cary seems to ask, what is more transgressive; moral or social transgression (Clarke 180-1)? As Evett shows, investigating "the relative force of ethical and social

imperatives" (132) with regards to obedience, was a common debate in early modern England.

That tragedy "commonly attracts the fundamental belief and tensions of a period," (Williams cited in Callaghan Women 49) is not what is remarkable about Cary's text. Mariam draws on the tradition of literary convention, where "tragedy is accorded central status [in the Renaissance] because it is regarded as the instrument whereby the concept of providential justice may be apprehended" (Callaghan Women 50). Cary uses this genre deliberately and the political nature of Cary's choice of closet drama does not make the questions of public morality unusual (Beilin "Cary and *Mariam*" 45). But Cary's play becomes unique when it asks particularly: how do social constructions limit the female subject, if not force her to be deceptive by its prescriptions for wifely behaviour (Clarke 179). In Cary's play the general question of obedience to authority is particularised by the question of a wife's duty to her husband (ibid; Beilin "Cary and *Mariam*" 46; Belsey Tragedy 171).

Cary was writing at a time when early modern "England was dominated by an oppressive patriarchal culture, yet pressure points–at which contradictions in the positioning of women occurred–created opportunities for resistance" (Findlay 7). By exploring the limitations placed on women within the institution of marriage, Cary disrupts the Symbolic certainties of the patriarchal discourse that prevailed when she produced her play. It is also clear that patriarchal discourse governs the social existence of the

characters Cary portrays. She uses them as a historical precedent to explore the didactics surrounding female subjectivity in her own time (Beilin "Cary and History" 137).

The second way in which I approach the legitimacy of a woman's subjectivity is to look at how the linguistics of dominant masculine language shapes the female subject and her subjectivity in the real world. Linguistics can also function on the theoretical level of the text to create new meaning. This makes texts threatening to social order. In spite of the prohibitions against women's writing and publishing (Wall "Dancing in a Net"; McGrath 29; Beilin "Female Hero" 169), it is a medium which Cary used to situate her debate about women's subjectivity and voice. The limits of (to use Lacan's phrase) "the Symbolic", restrict the female voice. I look at these restrictions and explore the tactics that Cary and the female voices in her play use in order to escape them. One such tactic is the ambiguity which Cary employs in her dialectic on female subjectivity. This ambiguity subverts the assumed meaning which patriarchal language imparts to the experience of being a woman. In each set of analyses, the issue of the legitimacy of female speech, which Cary explores, raises a larger question of the right of women being able to act from beyond the constraints placed on them by the patriarchal language which governed Cary's society.

What are the operations of patriarchal discourse that make it oppressive? Patriarchy works on a system of binary logic which is essentially a system of hierarchy. Firstly, this binary works on a system where (biological) sex presupposes gender (Butler Gender 9). Secondly this binary is a gender hierarchy which distinguishes "high" from "low", and

then reaffirms these gender positions constantly by virtue of their binary opposition. Patriarchal discourse takes man and the cultural construction of man (itself a complex relationship between sex and gender) as its "high" term. Men form the subject of patriarchal discourse, and as such they are endorsed with the imperative towards action. Men are subjects who have subjectivity. Women, by contrast, form the "low" part of the binary (Callaghan Women 10-11; Grosz Sexual Subversions 27). Women are taken as the object of patriarchal discourse, and as such are supposed to be passive since they are bound by the limits of the discursive condition of patriarchal language that is reliant on binary opposition. The language based on binary opposition is taken "as the language of universal rationality" (Butler Gender 12). The female subject, whose "femaleness" is not necessarily always linked to what might be called "biological-sex" (ibid 120-1, 153, 185), but who for the purposes of my discussion is always a woman, is effectively denied subjectivity.

This is, as Grosz describes it, a Derridarian take on linguistics to express the operation and endorsement of male subjectivity; where the higher term is dependant on the lower for its hierarchical position (Sexual Subversions 27). More broadly, I use the term "subject" as a place marker for any (male or female) psychological individual that finds him / herself defined by discourse. This is indeed at odds with the mechanics of patriarchal discourse, since, as I have pointed out, the patriarchal binary constructs men as its subject and women as its object. Restricted by this binary, like Cary, I assume female subjectivity in order to expose patriarchal language's workings to suppress it since the evaluation of the female "object" is not a reality, but a construction of patriarchal

discourse. In turn, the term "subjectivity" refers to the agency which discourse imparts on the subject.

Patriarchal discourse is a discourse for and about men. It is a power structure which creates its subject through the regulation and cultural construction of gender. Terms such as "good" and "bad" have a specific meaning within its discourse as well as having a different meaning for the subject of each binary. As I discuss in depth later with regards to early modern English marriage manuals, a "good" man, for instance is active, while a "good" woman is passive. The meaning of being a "good" or "bad" wife is implicated in the act of being. Being a "good" wife or a "good" woman is a performance which is restricted to a "set of meanings already socially established" (Butler Gender 191) around gender. The words which give meaning to the performance create a legitimisation of the individual socially through repetition (ibid). This performative repetition, says Butler, is a "public action" where the "performance [of gender] is effected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame" (ibid). A performance contrary to those which constitute the "socially established" meanings of gender does not erase the gender of the performer, if anything, it serves to accentuate it (ibid 185-90).[1] But a performance contrary to the meaning assigned to the gender of an individual on the basis of their sex and by patriarchal discourse, does destabilise the terms assigned to the subject as part of his / her gender identity. In order to control deviant performances and prevent the disruption of its binary framework, the terms "good" or "bad" become applicable to the

[1] Butler uses the particular instance of cross-dressing to highlight the performance aspect of gender- so that "performance" not only means to act, in the generic sense, but that the action or the "performance is a spectacle; a dramatic parody of the limitations which gender imposes on the physical body" (Butler Gender 187-90).

subject's gender performance. It is in relation to the possibility of disrupting the meaning of gender performance that I first discuss Cary's ambiguous construction of whether or not Mariam is a "good" wife. I do this by looking at early modern constructions of marriage and the performances that it demands of wives.

Callaghan traces, through the religious story of Adam and Eve, how this binary informs early modern notions and supports the discursive formation of the "high" and "low" binaries that define a subject's gendered existence (Women 101-2). This also informs a subject's understanding of him /herself as gendered. Eve was created from Adam, Adam being there first. In this story of creation, the masculine ("man") becomes the fixed term for humanity (ibid). The heterosexual male, Butler similarly argues (though she is not writing about a Christian or an early modern context) is what western patriarchal society takes as its norm (Gender 6, 29-30). Since Eve was created out of the rib of Adam, women were considered to be "both [an] excess and [an] abnormality" (Callaghan Women 102). This description of "excess and abnormality" (ibid), becomes valid in patriarchal discourse as it designates women as the binary opposite to the "male norm". This description by binary opposition imposes a meaning of woman which is culturally constructed. This cultural construction denies women's subjectivity and their agency so that they can never challenge the "male norm" as equals.

Callaghan remarks that early modern tragedy seems to focus on "man" where man is taken to represent the generic human being (Women 49). The problem with this is that it "acknowledges no contradiction between this position and the existence of either female

characters ... or for that matter [,] real women" (ibid). There certainly are several Jacobean tragedies written by men that have female protagonists, such as The Duchess of Malfi and The White Devil, to mention just two of which Callaghan herself makes an extensive study (Women). "Female inferiority was not an undebated cultural given," Callaghan points out (ibid 11). But what each of these plays, including Cary's Mariam shows, is an apprehension at what acknowledging female subjectivity means for a patriarchal society. Along with the account that they are excessive and abnormal, the possibility of women's agency appears to be the "problem" in early modern society and these plays reveal an anxiety about female subjectivity (ibid). While female protagonists might be tragic figures, Cary's play differs in that it was written by a woman who in writing, herself assumes the subject position that she scrutinises in her play.

Cary destabilises the notion of female subjectivity as being problematic by exploring the problems which *women* face. She explicitly labels the main patriarch of her play a tyrant, and by casting Mariam as a stoic heroine, she places gender performance in a political realm, and at centre stage of her play's moral dilemma. There are certainly other plays written at the time which also presented female protagonists such as The Play of Patient Grissell and The Tragicomedie of the Vertuous Octavia who have to face a monstrous husband's actions. But unlike these plays, which unequivocally advocate passive obedience (Belsey Tragedy 167-71 Straznicky; "Stoical Paradoxes" 120), Cary's play speculates and proposes the value of the heroine's socially unsanctioned actions.

There is a larger question which Cary's play poses to the reader. Are the rules of social behaviour everything that constitutes a woman or man? In asking this question, the play supplies a psychological dimension to its female characters. Belsey asks a similar question: What is real? Is cultural construction all that there is to being a human subject (Belsey Culture and Real 1-4)? Or does the human subject fundamentally exist before the constraints of language form it in the cultural world? Belsey reads Butler's take on culture as regulating the subject's existence, and that that regulation has no limits (ibid 11-2). Alternatively, Belsey proposes that there is the "real" which exists outside culture. Lacan maintains that this is a space in which we cannot be certain that our description of the world matches up with the cultural meanings which we use to create our sense of reality (ibid 4). The possibility of the real is one way of presenting the possibility that experience is not limited to its cultural construction (ibid 5).

What does the "real" mean for the female subject? It suggests that agency may exist outside of culture, and that the will to act is not necessarily controlled by patriarchal cultural restraints. It also implies that each individual has a voice outside of culture. For the women in Cary's play, I trace how this voice may attempt, but not always be able, to speak outside of cultural discourse.

By the end of my first chapter, I conclude that in spite of the patriarchal language that defines wifedom, Cary gives us no clear indication that Mariam is a wholly "good" or a wholly "bad" wife. This hints at the disruption of singular meanings of the supposed "universal rationality" that the binary of patriarchal discourse imposes. Eventually this

disruption of patriarchal language works up to demonstrating Kristeva's notion of the function of poetics and the Semiotic (Kristeva Revolution). In my final chapter I look more closely at how a female voice in Cary's text constantly attempts to affect a rupture of the fixed meanings of patriarchal language, based on the movement of the Semiotic as part of the signifying process in language, and as part of the subject (ibid 27-8, 30, 35-41).

According to Butler, the subject is both formed through discourse and subjected to the power which discourse holds, and one cannot exist without the other (Psychic life). This, she points out, is the ambiguity of being a subject. The traditional definition of a subject supposes that his or her speech or action is autonomous; believing that meaning originates with the speech or action of the subject. But in order to engage in language the subject must first submit to its order and meaning (ibid). It could be said, then, that women are subjects of patriarchal discourse because they form an identity as subjects through their subjection to the rules which patriarchal discourse imposes on them.

In addition to looking at Cary's ambiguous construction of Mariam as a good or bad wife, in the first chapter I look at how the combination of the wifely exhortation to silence is bound up with the control of the wife's person. Literal and carnal knowledge are bound up in the biblical tale of Eve, who was first tempted to eat from the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" in the Garden of Eden. It was through eating the fruit from the "Tree of Knowledge" that Adam and Eve became aware of their naked bodies. Calvin's sermons reiterated that "[t]here is no other shift but women must needs stoop and

understand that the ruin and confusion of mankind came in on their side...all this came from Eve" (cited in Findlay 12). As punishment for her transgression, Eve was cursed by having to suffer considerably in labour when she gave birth to a child (Findlay 13; Evett 140), a consequence of sexual activity. Giving birth was a life-threatening event in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as is evident by the literature that women wrote to their future sons and daughters in anticipation that they not survive through their births (Wall 278).

Since patriarchal language allows for the construction of the subject, and hence the structure of hierarchy, it is through language that power structures are maintained. It is for this reason that women are enjoined to be quiet and passive. In this way they are forbidden the linguistic tools in which to construct an identity for themselves, except perhaps, through the voice and laws of the patriarch. As I show in my first chapter, women's agency is further contained by the cultural construction of her identity as an object which belongs either to her father or her husband (Rosalind Jones 317).

Women with knowledge were dangerous, not only because men feared women's agency or voice on an intellectual level, but more because they feared women's sexual agency and transgressions which was also intensified by an anxiety about being unable to determine definitively the paternity of offspring. It is an anxiety which was further exacerbated by the paradoxes of Protestant ideology itself. While women were considered equal before God and even "inclinable to holiness" (Willen 140), women's "excess" was translated into lasciviousness.

Protestant discourse continually drew on examples from the Bible that constructed women as the "weaker vessel", which was the reason for a woman's necessary submission to her husband's control. In a wedding sermon in 1607, the Rev. Robert Wilkinson says a husband should be patient with his wife because he "must remember she is the Weaker Vessel: God therein exerciseth [a husband's] wisdom in reforming, and [his] Patience in bearing it" (cited in Fraser 2). Religion and marriage were ideologies which worked together in early modern England to produce an identity for women that defined them as both physically and mentally weak.

Wilkinson's passage suggests that women are unwise (unlike their husbands whose wisdom God tests), and they are irrational since it would take a husband's patience to effect any reform. As they were considered weak by nature, it was necessary for a wife to be subject to her husband, an argument which Vives uses in his Instruction of a Christian Woman.[2] What is also evident in Wilkinson's passage is that women are not weak by chance but by God's ordination, for the purpose of His testing man's superiority, which He gave expressly *him*.

Wilkinson's sermon presents to us again the Derridian understanding of the interdependence of the "high" and "low" terms, of the binary system along which patriarchal rationality functions. The "high" term only gains privilege "by disavowing its

[2] The passage, from the chapter "How she shall behave unto her husband", of the second book, reads: "The woman is not reckoned the more worshipful among men, that presumeth to have mastery above her husband: but the more foolish and the more worthy to be mocked: yea and moreover than that, cursed and unhappy: the which turneth backward on the lawes of nature, like as though a soldier would rule his captain, or the moon would stand above the sun, or the arm above the head" (cited in Aughterson 137).

intimate dependence on its negative double... they can be seen dependent on their opposites in ways that cannot be acknowledged" (Grosz Sexual Subversions 27). Men are only "superior" to women in a patriarchal hierarchy because they can say, in Saussurian linguistic terms, "we are not women". But where this unacknowledged debt exists, there also exists an anxiety that such a debt may have to be repaid, and so patriarchy displays an anxiety about female agency and therefore refuses to admit to female subjectivity. As I show throughout my dissertation, this fear of an "inversion" between men and women came from a fear of women ruling men in early modern England. This fear of an "inversion" also existed because "women's rule" threatened social hierarchy's ideal of sovereignty which mimicked and was perpetuated by the dynamics of patriarchal hierarchy. The connection between the early modern ideal of masculine sovereignty and masculine superiority comes into explicit focus in my fourth chapter, but as I show throughout, in order to counter any disruption of this hierarchal ideal, marital and religious ideology worked to maintain women's subjection, within the household as within the state.

By "ideologies" I mean sets of ideas that inform people's identity. These ideas all work together to perpetuate dominant power structures such as patriarchy. I also use the term "ideologies" to show that these are the constructed ideas of patriarchy and not necessarily the naturally occurring structures which govern society. I refer to Protestantism and marriage as ideologies. However, when I am discussing the literature and the expression of these ideologies, I refer to "Protestant" or "religious" "discourse" and to "marital discourse". While there may have been other discourses that defined the male subject in

early modern England, my concern is with the female subject. The discourse of these two ideologies was particularly drawn upon to define women in early modern English society and this is apparent in Cary's play. Conduct literature also continually drew on the Christian Bible for examples of the "virtuous behaviour" that was supposed to form the ideology of womanhood under patriarchy.

Callaghan points out that at times these ideologies might contradict dominant discourse. At these "sites of conflict within ideologies, [they] are dissolved into 'balance', that precariously apolitical space." (Women 34) I show that these "precarious apolitical space[s]" are points at which a dominant discourse, like patriarchal discourse, can be threatened. Protestantism is one such ideology that both colludes with patriarchal discourse and one which provides a "precarious apolitical space" for women's subjectivity. Aughterson, in the introduction to her sourcebook of Renaissance writings on women, opens her argument by looking at Phillip Stubbs' account of his idealised wife, Katherine Stubbs. In A Crystal Glass for Christian Women (1591), Katherine Stubbs' "whole life is artfully given meaning through... [the] careful weaving of literary structure with a normative account of ideal Protestant womanhood merging apparently effortlessly into the ideal of a Christian salvation" (Aughterson 2). At times this shows Katherine's "internalisation of the ideology of womanhood" (ibid) and she submits to her husband accordingly, displaying a "good" womanly silence (Aughterson 3). But at other times Stubbs' account shows, and even endorses, "her ability and capacity to speak on theological matters [which]... is (sic) firmly placed in a public and earthly environment" (ibid). This Protestant ideology, while it may balance a woman's spiritual freedom with

the representation of ideal womanhood as silent, also opens up a space from which women could claim the right to speak or act by appealing to the superior value of spirituality.

In the second chapter of my thesis I look particularly at the social and political circumstances of early modern England, and pursue the argument that the "conflict of ideologies" (Callaghan Women 34) feeds into the anxiety of patriarchy. Protestant discourse, as I have pointed out above, is one such instance that threatened the uniformly "high" position of the male subject and the construction of the passive female object. This is not only an issue that affected the man versus woman binary, but which applied on a larger scale to the hierarchy between ruler and subjects, as well as to husbands and wives. I show that the equality that early modern literature on the Protestant ideal of marriage proposes between the sexes is really only superficial. Instead, this literature operates on the same system of high / low binaries, so that woman's agency within the household and her marriage is dissolved under her husband's power (Hutson 85; Belsey Tragedy 160). This is yet another paradox of religious ideology which masculine anxiety works constantly to restrict. The dissolution of a woman's identity so completely in the institution of marriage and as subject to her husband (Belsey Tragedy 154) or father reflects this disturbing masculine anxiety about women's agency.

In this thesis I have placed a great deal of emphasis on the discursive subject, in other words, how the subject is formed through language and power structures. However, even dealing with the theoretical discursive subject, presents certain dangers when making

assumptions about the historical female subject. Much emphasis in early modern doctrine is placed on enjoining silence upon women as maids (unmarried women), wives and widows (Vives Bi). Conduct literature was a means to shaping women to an ideal, but this was not necessarily the way in which all women lived. For instance, it is arguable that conduct literature's expression of anxiety about women's volubility is an indication that women did question their husbands in the home. Other, fictional, literature, such as Shakespeare's comedies, show that women did readily act by their own accord; some pursue their lovers, as Helena does in A Midsummer Night's Dream, or have the courage to appear in disguise to defend a future husband at court, as Portia does in The Merchant of Venice. These women had a sense of agency and were prepared to follow their desires, whose eventual end was a happy betrothal albeit one that ideally entailed their submission.

Similarly, while the discourse surrounding marriage might appear limiting, it serves us well to note, as Findlay does, the dangers of transcribing our cultural experience onto those of women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (1). Women today may see the ideals of a housewife that Dod and Cleaver enumerate in their Godlie Forme of Household Government (1610), for women to "Keep house" and "Be solitary and withdrawn" (cited in Hutson 83) as restrictive and oppressive, and indeed I argue in my second chapter that discursively Dod and Cleaver's exhortations to women construct them as the negative opposite of their husband so that a wife's agency in the household and in society is erased. But this is not necessarily the way which women themselves saw their situation. While we cannot deny that such injunctions to women represent an

"oppressive patriarchal culture" (Findlay 7), women had advantages being in this position. Kate's final speech in The Taming of the Shrew shows how a husband as lord and maintainer of the household benefits women:

> Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
> Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
> And for thy maintenance commits his body
> To painful labour both by sea and land,
> To watch the night in storms, the day in cold
> Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe;
> And craves no other tribute at thy hands
> But love, fair looks, and true obedience;
> Too little payment for so great a debt.
>
> (V.ii.147-55)

In the last three chapters I look at the system of linguistic mechanics which creates the subject. I also make the move of describing patriarchal discourse as "the Symbolic." Lacan's term, "the Symbolic," allows me to link the linguistic aspects of patriarchal discourse or what he calls "the law of the father" to the psychological development of female subjectivity and the female voice. In chapter three, using Luce Irigaray's analysis on female subjectivity, I show how the institution of marriage is a masculine practice of exchange in the play Mariam, which undermines a woman's voice and her subjectivity. A woman's agency is dissolved by virtue of the fact that she has no subject position from which to speak. Her name and her body are meaningless in themselves. Rather these

aspects of her are a deferred reference to either her father or her husband who "owns" her. She becomes the symbol of the exchange of power between two men, and her meaning resides in the value of the social advance that that exchange generates (Irigaray "Market"). If this is the status which the female subject holds in the marital system of Cary's play it is clear that Cary's assumption of female subjectivity is ambiguous itself.

Mariam presents us with several other female characters who constantly try to give a voice to their agency. Alexandra constantly looks to the possibility of sitting on (or more accurately next to) Judea's throne (Travitsky 189). Weller and Ferguson tell us that she is the one who encourages her father (and Mariam's grandfather) Hercanus to take steps towards advancing the Maccabean claim to Judea's throne (64). She also tries to convince Mariam of her own powerful standing and her claim to the throne. Salome hopes for her own freedom by advocating women's right to secure a divorcing bill.

The female characters' attempts at voicing their desires in Mariam, are fraught with moral and social complexities. It is because of this that Cary remains ambiguous about their actions at the same time as she presents an argument for venerating female, especially Mariam's, behaviour. How is Cary able to define women's subjectivity within the complexities of the social restrictions placed on the agency which they try to access in the play? Lynette McGrath sums up this problem:

> [s]paces of feminine meaning must be found in the reputedly logical and binary language of the patriarch because this is the only social representing system available. But feminine texts can be written in the seismic displacements of

> language where the plates of logic do not in fact meet. *Mariam* prevents the reader from entering the security of language which relies on consistency and binary logic. This is what has caused many readers' discomfort with the play, yet it is the very strategy that saves the play for a feminist reader ("Elizabeth Cary" 203).

That Cary refuses to engage in the patriarchal language that relies on binary logic, is a departure point for me to conclude the necessity of the ambiguous voice with which Cary speaks in her play. It is also a form of rendering critique on the limits of patriarchal language and on the social practice of marriage.[3] Perhaps one of the most interesting ways in which Cary achieves these objectives is by displacing the characteristics that binary logic assigns to men and women. In my fourth chapter, "Hysterical Herod", I demonstrate how Cary shows the paradox of masculine power; in its extreme it is uncontrolled, unreasonable and unjust, but largely uncensored because of the positions which the male subject holds in patriarchal society (Shannon 139). The excessive use of power is only regarded as circumspect by other men and where such a man transgresses social hierarchy. By drawing on a conflation of historical Herods, especially the tyrant Herod Agrippa I who persecuted the early Christians, as well as Herod the Great of the play who ordered the "Slaughter of the Innocents" (Weller and Ferguson 22; Beilin "Female Hero" 165), Cary is able to create a picture of the patriarch who is uncontrolled

[3] We know that Cary herself had an unhappy marriage, but Mariam is dated as having been written around 1604, in the very early years of her marriage and possibly, but not definitely, before her husband had returned from being imprisoned in the Netherlands (Beilin "Cary and *Mariam* 50-1; Life 189). Cary was aware of the restrictions that marriage may have placed on her own intellectual endeavours and in that way Mariam reads as an analogy for the woman writer's voice (Beilin "Female Hero" 169). Mariam has also often been read as an analogy of Cary's defence for her choice of conversion to Catholicism. However, it is uncertain when Cary first seriously considered conversion and her conversion only became public in 1625 though she hid it for several years. (Beilin "Cary and *Mariam* 52, 63; Distiller 41)

and excessive. Both these attributes were applied to women in the early modern period, and if every woman did not display them, there was always the potential threat of her exhibiting these qualities which she inherited from her ancestor, Eve.

In this chapter I deliberately contrast Herod's tyrannical behaviour with Mariam's own stoicism. She holds true to her conscience in that she will not do or say what she does not believe. Mariam's disavowal of deception gives her moral superiority, especially when considered in the context of the martyr-like death that Cary creates for her. Mariam stands in stark contrast to Herod.

Mariam is accused throughout the play of voluble and uncontrolled speech. Women's speech was often summed up in early modern England by the scatological phrase "Many women, Many words; Many geese, many turds" (cited in Aughterson 230). This phrase presents women's speech as uncontrolled and meaningless. By contrast, Mariam's speech is often highly moral on the subject of deceit. Mariam's speech in her first scene with Herod is considerably briefer than his (Beilin "Cary and History" 137). In their second scene, together Mariam hardly speaks at all, and is taken silently off to prison. In the final act, Mariam's death is reported to Herod as dignified. This contrasts greatly with Herod's almost lunatic ranting about the regret he feels at Mariam's death (Beilin "Cary and *Mariam*" 63). Mariam's voice projects steadfastness while Herod's presents the uncertainty and lack of control. Cary's transposition of terms that describe the gendered subject illuminates the places where, as McGrath puts it, "plates of [patriarchal] logic do not in fact meet." ("Elizabeth Cary" 203)

Cary's work is not a rejection of the social values that governed her society, but it does point to the problems that they created for the female subject, then as now. Similarly, the final chapter of my thesis does not propose to discover a woman's language. This language can never be named by patriarchal language, just as a woman's voice cannot be fully expressed within the restrictions that the gendered binary imposes on women's experiences. Rather, Cary's play remains a critique of the limits which the Symbolic places upon the construction of the female subject. The meanings that are imposed by the Symbolic may be inescapable, but the woman who wishes to find her voice can constantly challenge the assumptions of the meanings placed on her by the patriarch.

Chapter One

Is Mariam a Good Wife?

In this chapter, I explore how Cary's ambiguous attitude towards marriage reflects her ambiguous treatment of female subjectivity. Cary seems to fully acknowledge, and even endorse, the patriarchal ideology of total wifely submission that she apparently voices through the Chorus. But upon closer inspection the "traditional wisdom" that the Chorus offers becomes circumspect (Weller and Ferguson 35), especially with regards to Cary's complex representation of Mariam as a "unified, autonomous subject" (Belsey Tragedy 173) and her heroic death. In spite of her apparent wifely transgressions, she retains her innocence (ibid). It is clear that Mariam values wifely loyalty. When she thinks that Herod is dead, she expresses her loyalty towards her husband and excuses the wrongs he did her when he was alive. However, on discovering his return, she recasts her feelings towards him in terms of her hatred of him, realising that his oppressive rule over her will persist. She refuses him his husbandly "rights"; she will not go to bed with him, and she refuses to show her wifely submission to him (Travitsky 190). She behaves like a "bad" wife. I show, looking at early modern perceptions of marriage, what wifely duties entail and how the fulfilment or refusal of them makes Mariam a "good" or a "bad" wife.

Being a "good" wife was strongly viewed as being linked to being a "good" woman in society. "Both Protestant and Catholic authorities [in the sixteenth century] increasingly viewed marriage as the "natural" vocation for women… so that women who did not

marry were somehow "unnatural" and therefore suspect." (Wiesner 77) In his introduction to his book The Instruction of a Christen Woman Juan Luis Vives says: "I wyl co(m)plyle rules of lyuing.... I wyll beginne at the beginnyng of a womans life, and leade hir foorth vnto the tyme of marriage.... [F]rom marriage vnto wydowehede: howe she ought to paſſe the tyme of hir life well and vertuouſly with hir huſband" (sig.Aii). In as far as a wife was considered to be part of early modern society, a connection which I explore more fully in the next chapter, being a "good" wife is inseparable from her being a virtuous individual. In her play, however, Cary separates the notion of being a wife from that of being a female subject.

Vives goes on to say that women are in fact the property of either their fathers, or of their husbands, both of to whom they are accountable:

> Now then, that a woman will be so presumptuous and so haughty to disobey her husband's bidding, if she consider, that he is unto her instead of father and mother and all her kin, and that she oweth unto him all the love and charity that were due to them all? A ragious and foolish woman doth not consider this, the which is disobedient unto her husband. Except peradventure she would say that, she oweth none obedience, neither to father, nor to mother, nor to none of her kin. For if she obey them, she must needs obey her husband: in whom by all rights, by all customs, by all statutes and laws, by all precepts and commandments, both natural, worldly and heavenly she aught to account allthing [everything] to him. (Vives cited in Aughterson 137)

We see in this passage that the husband becomes the replacement for a woman's family, and in this way that she has been exchanged between her family and his. Marriage, by Vives' account, is absolutist and shows that a woman owes complete obedience to her father and to her husband and that, the notion of owing obedience to one or the other is interlinked: she will obey her husband if she loves her family. Vives sets up the image of a "bad" wife by equating her with a "bad" woman who has the socially negative attributes of presumption and haughtiness. For Vives a wife and woman is the same thing.

Furthermore, the passage shows how the "sensible" behaviour of a wife is to obey her husband while "[a] ragious and a foolish woman" does not consider this to be her duty. In other words, a woman who seeks to behave autonomously, or in accordance with her own will, is insensible. The "woman" as an identity separate from the "wife" poses a threat to the family and her marriage. A wife in Vives' case is duty bound and should have no desire to act on her own. A good wife does her duty by replacing her own desire with her husband's. By Vives' account, a woman should not think for herself because women's thinking tends inevitably to insensibility or foolishness that can only be overcome by accounting "allthing" to her husband's better judgement.

Though this excerpt dates from a text that is from the 1540 edition of Vives' famous work, we see that the Chorus of Cary's play, at least sixty years later, reiterates the fact that women should have no desire of their own, but to please their husbands.

When to their husbands they themselves do bind,

Do they not wholly give themselves away?

Or give they but their body, not their mind,

Reserving that, though best, for others' prey?

No sure, their thoughts no more can be their own,

And therefore should to none but one be known.

(III.iii.233-8)

Belsey, among others, points out that the Chorus' argument is that a good wife gives over her mind as well as her body to her husband in marriage. Mariam makes the mistake of ignoring this (Tragedy 173). Belsey points out that perhaps it would have been more prudent for Mariam to keep her displeasure to herself and not even let Herod know about it "precisely because in marriage they are no longer her own" (173-4).[4] "No sure, their thoughts no more can be their own," (III.iii.237) presents an impossible predicament for a wife and her subjectivity, even on the most inward level. Thus the "one" in the line, "And therefore should to none but one be known" (III.iii.237), suggests that a wife cannot give in to her own desire without detrimental effect to her integrity (Ferguson 53). The denial of desire and will, aspects which make up the active subject, is a complete denial of any kind of self for wives to also be subjects. It is also a denial which Mariam does not effect. That she knows her own feelings and does not compromise them even in the face of her husband's displeasure makes Mariam a "bad" wife, because it also reveals her

[4] Margaret Ferguson also explores this quote of Belsey's, asking if the "one" in this line might mean that a wife can allow her thoughts to be known to none other than herself (Ferguson 53). I maintain that the "one" in this line refers to a woman's husband (Belsey Tragedy 173). A wife may not know her own mind, but her husband does. In what may be a semantic leap, the "none but one" could mean "no one", not even a wife herself, could know her mind, so that a wife's mind effectively should not exist within the married state.

subjectivity. Cary's play presents marriage as an extreme where the female who gives voice to her will and desire, has to be suppressed, if not through subjection, then through death. Mariam's death at Herod's command shows the anxiety that the male subject within a particular example of patriarchal ideology experiences in the face of female agency.

Travitsky shows that in Mariam there is no space for a wife to act in her own interest or according to her own desire. The Chorus later explains that Mariam's death is her own fault and that "she should not have been so disloyal to Herod as to "have bene by sullen passion swaide (4.8.1936)" (189). To act against one's husband, in the female subject's own interest, means disloyalty. In spite of the emerging Protestant ideal of marriage as being two autonomous persons who choose each other, this union, produces one person and that is, the husband. The term *feme covert,* or married woman, legally bound a woman to her husband so that she "had no public rights, no separate legal personality, and no redress under law for physical, economic, or social brutalization by her husband" (Travitsky 185). The wife who takes it upon herself to act in her own interest is transgressive, as the Chorus makes clear (Ferguson 52), and the Chorus does not waver on its judgements, so much so that at times it insists on putting forth its "wisdom" on Mariam's wifely duties to the detriment of appearing out of touch with the other goings-on in the play (53). Transgression makes a bad wife and a woman a bad political subject.

Through Cary's ambiguous depiction of Mariam's virtues and faults, she seems to produce a compelling argument for the reader at least to consider Mariam's agency. Cary

depicts Mariam's agency as the expression of her own desire. Mariam's desire for agency is constructed as her voluble speech in the play. Salome says to Mariam, "Now stirs the tongue that is so quickly mov'd" (I.iii.227). In view of the fact that a wife owed submission to her husband, Mariam's outspokenness makes her a "bad" wife. But Mariam's speech is also moralistic: she asks, "How oft have I public voice run on / To censure Rome's last Hero for deceit...?" (I.i.1-2) Mariam moralises against deceit (Straznicky "Stoical Paradoxes" 125). This moralistic stance is at odds with the woman who is also a "bad" wife. Since women's construction lay in their marital status, Cary presents us with a seeming paradox of a "bad" wife in Mariam, but a "good" woman, who is moral and chaste.

Herod's expectation of Mariam's "fair looks, and true obedience" (Shrew V.I.154), are not unusual husbandly expectations. However, this line does conflate what we might today regard as two diverse aspects of our human characters. "Fair looks", can be deceptive (Clarke 193), while "true obedience" is something that might not always be apparent, but is the result of our actions. For Herod in the play, "fair looks" imply "true obedience." But "fair looks", when they are not a reflection of "true obedience" become deceitful. What Cary shows here is "the split between being and seeming which Mariam terms 'hypocrisy'" (Ferguson 53). Mariam is faced with the moralistic dilemma of whom she owes "true obedience" to; the higher value of her own truth, or to her mortal, murderous, husband. This dilemma allows Cary to deliver a critique on marriage suggesting that it contravenes truth and advocates hypocrisy.

"Fair looks" can be doubly interpreted. The phrase can mean to behave in an acquiescent and pleasant manner towards one's husband. Phillip Stubbs (1591) cites the pleasant behaviour of his wife, as one of the elements of good wifely behaviour:

> If she saw her husband to be merry, then she was merry: if he were heavy or passionate, she would endeavour to make him glad: if he were angry, she would quickly please him, so wisely she demeaned herself towards him. She would never contrary him in anything, but by wise counsel and by wise and sage advice, with all humility and submission seek to persuade him. (Cited in Aughterson 239)

The play's climax is Mariam's defiance of Herod's return, and her refusal to submit her own feelings to his. She clearly regards herself as separate from him. She says, "My lord, *I* suit my garment to suit *my* mind, / And there no cheerful colours can *I* find. (V.iii.91-2, emphasis added). She fails in every aspect of the above description of the behaviour of a good wife. She transgresses her duty of wifely submission even more when she questions Herod's love for her saying, "or had your love to her [me][5] been truly tied: / Nay, had you not desir'd to make her sad..." (V.iii.114-5).

Alternatively, "fair looks" could also refer to a wife's physical beauty. Mariam's beauty is often referred to in the play. After Mariam has died, Herod's servant refers to her loss in terms of the loss of beauty in the first instance: "The end of beauty, chastity and wit..." (V.i.4) Herod similarly dotes on her beauty after she is dead: "For Leda's beauty set his [Jove's] heart in fire, / Yet she not half as fair as Mariam was." (V.i.217-8) He carries on

[5] Mariam refers to herself in the third person in this speech, as is often the case with all the characters in <u>Mariam</u>.

to lament her death in the strongest terms that link her beauty to her chastity (her sexual fidelity to him) and her wit:

> The queen of love would storm for beauty's sake;
> And Hermes too, since he bestow'd her wit;
> The night's pale light for angry grief would shake,
> To see chaste Mariam die in age unfit.
>
> (V.i.223-6)

For Herod, there seems to be a hierarchical structure of beauty, wit and chastity, so that the outward appearance of beauty signifies Mariam's wit and chastity.

One of the primary demands is that as a wife, Mariam must remain faithful to her husband. There are several instances where Mariam insists on her own chastity, which I will refer to often throughout this study to various effects. Her insistence on her chastity is linked not only to her fidelity to her husband but to her moral fidelity to the truth. She will not deceive her husband by being unfaithful, but neither will she deceive him by pretending that on his return she is happy to see him. She will not belie herself.

In her opening speech Mariam describes herself as a virgin maid who turns into a loving and chaste wife. She also calls Herod her "truest lover" (I.i.66), and she points out that her love for her husband was loyal:

> But yet too chaste a scholar was my heart,
> To learn to love another than my lord:
> To leave his love, my lesson's former part,

I quickly learn'd, the other I abhorr'd

(I.i.27-30)

Her loyalty and fidelity, owing to her husband is something that Mariam never deceives her husband about. In this way, she is a "good" wife. Mariam also recognises that her love is a duty as well as a debt that she owes him:

And more I owe him for his love to me,

The deepest love that ever yet was seen:

Yet had I rather much a milkmaid be,

Than be the monarch of Judea's queen.

(I.i.55-8)

Mariam reveals a further advantage of hers that makes her a "good" wife to Herod. This is her royal birthright. The play continually emphasises that Mariam's nobility of character is connected with her royalty. Sohemus, after trying to compel Mariam to fulfil her wifely duty and submit to her husband and quell her own desire, emphasises her innocence with her royal birthright as queen: "Poor guiltless queen! Oh, that my wish might place / A little temper now about thy heart: / Unbridled speech is Mariam's worst disgrace..." (III.iii.181-3). Yet Sohemus, who is Mariam's servant, feels that he can reprimand her, since "unbridled speech" is a "disgrace". Mariam's "unbridled speech" is a disgrace because in an early modern context, and the context of the play, it is the insignia of uncontrolled, irrational, female action. It is, moreover, an indication of escaping masculine control. Sohemus constructs his speech in terminology of control. He is the active subject who "wishes to place / a little temper about thy [Mariam's] heart"

(III.iii.181-2) so that Mariam becomes the object that he wishes to control. Sohemus' wish to control Mariam's temperament is meant sympathetically (Ferguson 50) but is indicative of the gender performance assigned by patriarchal discourse to men; all "good" men can control women. Even though Sohemus' wish seems slightly inappropriate since Mariam is a queen, and he is a servant, his masculinity seems to allow him to transgress class hierarchy. In this instance it appears that gender hierarchy is what regulates a subject's action in all spheres.

When Mariam is about to die, she consoles herself with her noble heritage, again allowing Cary to show that Mariam's royalty and her goodness are indicative of one another. She points out that when she is dead, "In Heav'n shall Mariam sit in Sara's lap" (IV.viii.574). In this line she points to her reward of heaven for her goodness and that she shares this reward with her royal ancestor, Sara. Even Herod, after her death, laments her loss as being distressing because of her noble birth: "No more distinguish which is day and night: / Since her best birth did in her bosom die" (V.i.201-2).

Another of Mariam's wifely duties is to share her bed with her husband. Furthermore, it is part of her wifely submission to remain silent. This is also supposed to be an indication of her wifely chastity, which signals that she is not a desiring subject. Callaghan explores the stereotypical notion of female desire in early modern tragedy. She notes that "Desire is inscribed at every level (social, economic, political, sexual) as the motivation for change, upheaval, disruption, and crucially, for female transgression" (140). Female desire, whatever it may take as its object, is perceived in early modern tragedy to be

constantly threatening. Female sexual desire is the most capable of disrupting society. This can partially be attributed to the patriarchal anxiety of indeterminate paternity. The control of female sexuality becomes vitally important in order to control individuals according to their inheritance of class, economic, political and social status. "Voracious female sexual desire was posited as the most conspicuous sign of gender difference, and was treated both as a disease and as a monstrous abnormality" (ibid), because it posed a problem to male control.

Speech and sexuality become irrecoverably intertwined for Mariam. Kim Walker quotes Ferguson in summing up the dynamic of Mariam as threatening in her search for autonomy and through the expression of her speech. Mariam also expresses this threat through sexuality, in that she refuses Herod her body: "The problem is that she *both* speaks too freely *and* refuses to give her body to Herod—its rightful owner, according to the Chorus. She censors the wrong thing: his phallus rather than her tongue" ("Publike Language"137; Ferguson 52). Moreover, Mariam, as subject to her husband, certainly has no business censoring her husband on any level, moral or sexual.

Mariam's speech, seen as a symptom of her desire, is what makes her a "bad" wife. Even the fact that her speech is morally conditioned does not excuse her from the disruptive desire it portends. The Chorus' comments on Mariam's behaviour in the play bring together the transgression of speech with as being the same as a sexual transgression, even though sexually, Mariam has always been faithful to her husband:

Then she usurps upon another's right,

That seeks to be by public language grac'd:

And though her thoughts reflect with purest light,

Her mind if not peculiar is not chaste.

For in a wife it is no worse to find,

A common body than a common mind.

(III.iii.239-244; Walker "Publike Language" 137)

The female mind and body are one in the Chorus' estimation so that a woman's bodily transgression cannot be separated from that which has already been conceived of in the mind. A mind that exposes the will and desire of an individual, and in Mariam's case the will and desire to be an autonomous individual, is just as threatening to the patriarchal construction of marriage as if Mariam were to act on the monstrous sexual desire that, as Callaghan points out, all women in the early modern period were thought to be prone to (Women 140). The lines: "Then she usurps upon another's right, / That seeks to be by public language grac'd" (ibid), show that Mariam's desire for her own voice and her own autonomy are clearly transgressive. The term "usurp" is implicated in the notion that Mariam is displacing the already-established hierarchical ordinance of her husband if she desires her subjectivity. Margaret Ferguson traces this complex relationship of subjectivity, speech and wifely transgression: "When the Chorus goes on to specify the error as a fault of *speech,* however, its 'lawfull' status seems to disappear. By stanza five, the error is the distinctly illegitimate and usually masculine political one of 'usurping upon another's right'" (52). Ferguson points out that Mariam, through speech and by refusing to act in a wifely manner that supposedly entails her "happiness", enters into a

political and masculine arena. Mariam, challenges the laws of the patriarchal gender hierarchy. She also makes her sentiments public through her speech, even if it is initially just to those in her household, and so expresses her subjectivity by demanding public acknowledgement.

In her essay "Insurgent Flesh: Epistemology and Violence in *Othello* and *Mariam*" Elizabeth Gruber shows how knowledge in early modern England is a male prerogative and that this search for knowledge is violent and is carried out against women (393): "'investigation' is a masculine pursuit conducted upon feminine objects... Texts such as *Othello* and *Mariam* highlight this prerogative. In so doing, they show how the correspondences of active / masculine and passive / feminine are created and sustained via the workings of epistemology" (394). Knowledge is engendering and engendered, which allows for "the domination of the [female] object by the questioning [male] subject" (Gruber 393). It becomes a husband's prerogative not only to seek knowledge of his wife but to be the only one who has any kind of knowledge of her (Gruber 402). Gruber points out that "While early-modern women's bodies were presumed to speak for them, women themselves were typically enjoined to refrain from talking" (401). The gender performance of a good wife is silence.

However, "to have knowledge of someone" can also mean to have carnal knowledge of that person, and so knowledge is a sexual transgression that is regulated by gender construction. By speaking, Mariam makes herself publicly known, a right that only her husband has. The double entendre of the term "to have knowledge of someone," (Gruber

407) means that when Mariam tries to know herself, and by being true to herself and not acquiescing to her wifely role for Herod's pleasure, she has committed a sexual transgression. Similarly, this is the problem when Mariam makes herself publicly known through her public speech. The early modern adage, which proposes that a woman with a loose tongue is a sexually "loose" woman (Gruber 402; Aughterson 230), means that in an early modern context, Mariam's public voice allows for a public knowledge of her body. In other words, that she becomes sexually available to the public. Absorbed into the public economy to be had "knowledge" of, Mariam is assumed to be a whore, who is to be marginalised and despised by "good" society.

In this sense, the early modern construction of women's bodies and their minds, especially a wife's mind "also seems to be an entity or space vulnerable to the predatory desires of others. It is for this reason, that wives should make their thoughts only known to their husbands" (Gruber 403). By making her mind known, and knowing her own mind, Mariam "usurps another's right." She is obliged to be, and remain, a body and an object. The ultimate patriarchal control over women's bodies as objects is to separate them from the possible inquiry of their minds. Kim Walker concludes that the physical beheading in Mariam is the ultimate breaking up of the mind from the body (139).

Unlike Salome, who tries for a divorce so that she can get re-married, Mariam seems to have no such intentions and rather craves autonomy (Weller and Ferguson 36). In spite of Cary's careful construction of Mariam as chaste, in view of women in society as being either married or to be married, Mariam's desire to be without a husband seems to be

curious at least and sinister at worst. Such a choice always implies that Mariam at least believes that she can exist as an independent individual, and in this way, her beliefs subvert the social norm that upholds the values of male authority over women. In this way, Mariam completely refutes the ideology of a "good" wife who gives over her mind to her husband. Mentally Mariam has transgressed the rules of wifehood since she is not engaged in her marriage as Vives and Cary's Chorus say a "good" wife should be.

Mariam's wish to be rid of Herod not only makes her a "bad" wife, but by early modern accounts based on patriarchal discourse, a "bad" woman too. Despite her chastity, her "fair looks" and her noble birth, which make her a good wife, Mariam is criticised by the chorus as being a bad wife. Because of this ambiguity, the reader cannot categorically state that Mariam is "good" or "bad". This is exacerbated when we see Mariam silently going to her death. Mariam does not dispute the fact that she deserves to die. In her final speech she acknowledges that she is at fault, though she continuously cites her innocence as her defence. This is in spite of the fact that Mariam desires her individual autonomy. She claims the right to the control of her own voice, in spite of being culturally forbidden to do so.

The dilemma that Cary has in representing Mariam in this play is the same that the reader encounters reading her play. Without a doubt, Mariam is constructed as chaste and innocent (Fischer 233; 234) but then what is the reader to make of Mariam behaving transgressively and the injunctions that the Chorus makes against such behaviour? Sandra Fischer points out that the "[c]horic commentary in *The Tragedy of Mariam* is

conventionally traditional, almost reactionary in its observations, and certainly not to be heard as the voice of the playwright" (236). However, the question of Cary's voice cannot so easily be constructed when it comes to the Chorus, since she herself is writing from under patriarchal ideology which she takes great care not to simply dismiss.

So how can we tell Cary's voice as being separate to the conventional (and patriarchal) wisdom of the Chorus? Weller and Ferguson, in their introduction to Mariam, say that "[a]t the end of act 3… the question of how much weight should be given to the Chorus's judgements becomes crucial, since these verses articulate the doctrine of wifely self-containment" (36). And "wifely self-containment" is exactly what Cary seems to be questioning in her ambiguous positioning of Mariam. The Chorus'

> gnomic, conventional utterances seem somewhat off the mark, not only capricious and volatile in the application of the general precepts but also inadequate to the psychological, spiritual, or even practical situation of the protagonist. The uneasy match between dramatic representation and choric commentary suggests some characterization, if not of the Chorus, at least of its perspective. (35)

Among some of the "off the mark" comments that the Chorus make, Weller and Ferguson mention the trite reduction of Mariam's own ambiguous feelings towards her tyrannical husband after his death at the end of act one and that for the most part, the Chorus seems to be more critical of Mariam than of the patently villainous Salome (Weller and Ferguson 35-6). A possibility is that the Chorus points to the fact that Salome and Mariam are similar in their situation of being trapped in an unhappy marriage (ibid)

and that while ironically they judge Mariam for her transgressive behaviour, they allow Salome's to pass since she willingly works "within a patriarchal script and manipulate[s] it for [her] own ends" (Findlay 157). Whatever Cary intends the Chorus is to convey, materially it remains ambiguous.

It is as difficult to know what Cary intended to convey by the Chorus as it is to know if Cary intended Mariam to be seen as a "good" or "bad" wife. In contemplating this question, Cary forces her (contemporary) readers to question their own judgment, as well as their internalised ideas about their accepted doctrine of marriage.

Chapter Two

Early Modern Marriage Discourse and Love: Male Mastery and Female Subjectivity.[6]

Mariam particularly looks at women's positions as wives, in order to show the struggle of women to find and use their own voices. Cary explores the position of wives in the play as providing an identity for women[7], while showing that for the female subject this is a precarious position which is neither stable nor guaranteed.

The play clearly draws on the Protestant, or more particularly, the "Puritan emphasis on the authority of the original conscience" (McGrath 20). This Puritan ideal clearly allows for women to consult their own consciences about the ways in which they should act, in spite of the social injunctions for them to be submissive to their husbands. Cary's play seizes this "precarious apolitical space", to recall Callaghan's terminology (Women 34), and uses it to present the very much politicised debate of female subjectivity. Mariam presents us with "[a] wife's right to speak, to subjectivity, [and] to a position from which to protest" (Belsey Tragedy 171).

[6]Clarke's article "'This domestic kingdome or Monarchy': Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* and Resistance to Patriarchal Government" similarly explores this issue. Coming late to Clarke's article, I have realised that throughout her article she touches upon issues which my own approach of Cary's ambiguity towards female subjectivity in the play has similarly explored in depth and at length. In other words she has often summarised in a sentence or two, the point of an extensive study that forms a chapter in my dissertation. That her points and mine collude is unsurprising considering that they are clearly the informing aspects which allow Cary's play to say what it does. Naturally, as far as I am able to discern that I make the same point as her within those chapters, I reference her in brackets next to the relevant point, as is the usual MLA practice.

[7] Fischer more broadly points out in her essay "Elizabeth Cary and Tyranny, Domestic and Religious", that all the female characters in Mariam are "defined solely in relation to men: as wives, widows, sisters, former wives, mothers-in-law, maidens, [and] whores." (232) Belsey makes a similar point (Tragedy 172).

Meaning in the play is contingent on the fact that Mariam seems to hold true to Protestant ideology, as she refuses to use her charm to please her husband, Herod, on his return from Rome. She says, "I scorn my look should ever a man beguile / Or other speech than meaning to afford" (III.iii.165-6). Here Mariam seems to be paying heed to her conscience, which insists she should remain loyal to her personal truth, and which also forbids her to be deceptive. Mariam's conscience displays an "unrestrained desire for personal integrity." (Straznicky "Stoical Paradoxes" 125)

Travitsky points out that "Cary's main thesis [in Mariam is] that physical chastity alone is inadequate in the wife..." (189) But, as I detailed in the previous chapter, Mariam's integrity is in constant conflict with her wifely duties in the play. Mariam's integrity becomes meaningful in the specific way in which Cary writes her heroine in opposition to the tyrannical behaviour of her husband (Belsey Tragedy 173; Clarke 179), a topic which I discuss in depth in chapter four. However, as it stands, the play, which ends with Mariam's death for her supposed infidelity to Herod, shows punishment for Mariam's manifest agency. It reveals the underlying male anxiety about female agency as female agency pushes at the boundary of men's own agency. Herod's punishment is excessive, though it is accompanied by a certain amount of sanctioning from the Chorus. His victory, however, is limited as he mourns Mariam's death and afterward praises her virtues.

The apparent freedom that supposedly comes with Protestantism, is paradoxical in early modern England. Religious and marriage discourses were interconnected in early modern England, and depended on each other to situate the political position of women in society. The role of wives within marriage reinforced their submission to their husbands even as aspects of religious discourse, such as the "authority of the original conscience" (McGrath 20), conflicted with such total submission. It is within this paradox that male anxiety about female agency erupting at the level of the private realm of the household becomes apparent and indicative of a larger and more public social paranoia about female subjectivity and agency. As Belsey explains, "[t]he contest for the meaning of marriage cannot be isolated from the political struggles which characterize the century between the Reformation and the Revolution" (Tragedy 143). Marriage is a political issue which Cary tackles in her play, and treats it as such.

With Henry VIII's divorce, the king, as head of state, became the spiritual head of society (Belsey 110), replacing the pope in Rome. The king, however, still relied on the hierarchy of a religion that saw God as its head, and his people as his subjects, in order to maintain his seat of power legitimately. Religious and political servitude were therefore complexly intertwined. Protestantism proclaimed for each individual to hold "autonomy" under God's law (Belsey Tragedy 118).

In order to counter the anxiety which the potential agency of this ideal proposes, Evett notes that Thomas Cranmer moves the *postcommunico* prayer of the *Missa Pro Pace* (that is the post-communion prayer of the Mass for peace, said on special occasions

before war) into the Anglican Prayer Book's service for Morning Prayer, where it becomes a enhanced insistence on submission. The prayer contains the paradox that in God's "service is perfect freedom" (Evett 2). Evett shows that more or less everyone in early modern England was a servant with "all people called to an ideal service by the central doctrines of Christianity to which they subscribed" (1). But the prayer, subsequently said on a daily basis, not only showed that such service was applicable to God, but was supposed to reinforce the idea that in *all* service (and submission) was "perfect freedom" (2).

The anxiety about appropriate submission of servant to master in the political social order was never far removed from that of husband and wife in the private realm of the home.[8] With the banishment of the power of the pope, came a renewed view of the state as a family. James I uses this image in his The True Law of Free Monarchies (1598) (Aughterson 45-7) to counteract the potential threat of an individual's agency which the notion of "original conscience" advocated.[9] James I draws on the state / family analogy to assert his absolutism, but this analogy is firmly embedded in biblical commandments to encourage a subject's obedience to the monarch. In order to maintain his position of power, the king is to be served and honoured in the same way *as God's law commands* one to honour one's father and mother. "Father and mother" was not to be taken literally

[8] Evett notes that the injunctions of Saint Paul 'to servants fall shortly on his injunctions to wives..." (159) and that in early modern English thought, there was a "homology between wives and servants—" (181).
[9] Publicly, the power of this ideology was explicitly recognised by the House of Commons in 1649. It stated that "the people, under God, are the original of all just power" (ibid). This provided good reason for monarchic anxiety since the individual, as purveyor of justice, eventually allowed the House of Commons to have "Charles I... tried and executed in the name of the people of England" (Tragedy 119).

but meant, as Robert Pricke writes in 1609, "all such as are instead of parents... Kings, princes, and magistrates..." (Pricke cited in Aughterson 48).

Callaghan shows how marriage in the seventeenth century, in its turn, was seen as representative of the contract between the king and his subjects and thus expressed the loyalty and obedience that they owed him (Women 24). What these analogies more clearly show, is the need to reinforce the idea of a subject's subjection to his monarch and of a woman to her patriarch. Each analogy reinforced the other. Pricke's list of analogous persons to "father and mother", follows a particular order in the circles of patriarchal power that moves down in hierarchy: On the top is all subjects to the King (with perhaps the exception of the Church to God being higher, but this is not explicitly expressed by Pricke); subjects to prince; public to magistrate; and eventually servants, wife, and children to father - where the household is the smallest concentric circle of patriarchal power. When Pricke asks, "Why is the name of *father and mother* given to superiors?" (cited in Aughterson 148, emphasis added), he suggests equality between women and men, in the household at least. But when he lists the "superiors" under those names, Pricke only mentions men, with the possible exception of "Those that are endued with any excellent grace and gift above others... [and] the aged and the grey." (ibid). But since women are not explicitly mentioned, we cannot take it for granted that women are included in these categories either. This example of Pricke's logic exhibits a fundamental ambiguity of women's life in early modern England where religious ideology provides them with the status of subjects, but then reneges on the agency which this status affords.

"Marriage is the foundation of the family, which is in turn the foundation of the state society and cosmos in analogical order" (Callaghan Women14). Belsey points out that "[m]arriage becomes[,] in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries[,] the site of a paradoxical struggle to create a private realm and to take control of it in the interests of the public good" (Tragedy 130). Marriage, based on Protestant ideology, provided a very specific place for women, who were the necessary "equals" of their husbands (Belsey Tragedy 194). Yet this is also paradoxical, since marriage, as the private version of the subjection of subjects to monarch, becomes the site of gender control (ibid). The family becomes "an instance of the centrality of the domestic (the sphere to which the category of 'women' is confined), in a political philosophy which proceeds by analogical argument" (Callaghan Women 15).

Thomas Smith, a prominent lawyer, scholar and diplomat, in his major work on the political theory in England, shows one of the microcosms of government in the state to be the family (Aughterson 144). In The Commonwealth of England, and Manner of Government Thereof, published in 1589, his first chapter is entitled "The first sort [of government in the commonwealth of England], or beginning of an house, or family". He qualifies this by saying that "in the house and family is the first and most natural but private appearance of one of the best kinds of a commonwealth..." (Smith cited in Aughterson 144). The connection between the household and the state highly politicises marriage, so that marriage and the household become a springboard for the control of women in public as well as in the private realm.

The instability of women's subject positions as wives in early modern England is further exacerbated as Smith goes on to break down any notion of female agency by excluding women from public life, and even as citizens of the commonwealth. He does this by constructing a woman as being subject to her husband in the home in the same way that a bondsman is subject to a freeman in early modern English society:

> ...and that freemen be considered only in this behalf as subjects and as citizens of the commonwealth, and not bondsman who can bear no rule nor jurisdiction over freeman... In which consideration also we do reject women, as those whom nature hath made to keep home and to nourish their families and children, and not to meddle with matters abroad, nor to bear office in a city or commonwealth, no more than children or infants.... (Smith cited in Aughterson 145)

Smith does make an exception for women who have a blood-right to duchies or kingdoms, writing as he was, during Elizabeth's reign. Excluding this last amendment to the government of the country might very well have been construed as treason against the queen.[10] Nonetheless, it is clear in this passage that the woman as wife has no place in society at large and Smith seems to reduce her role in the household to a similar level as that of a child's. A woman in the household and within marriage, we can conjecture from Smith's work, is governed by her husband. She is incapable of action without him, being "weak, fearful, fair, curious of her beauty and saving." (Smith cited in Aughterson 144)

[10] Eaton also suggests that the public's taste for reading about women and their behaviour, as well as the rhetorical engagement of women as textual representations of how they were perceived by men, was only temporarily dulled by censorship, for example during the last years of Elizabeth's reign (168-9). Elisabeth herself was exceptional in the way in which she was able to construct her image as a monarch in spite of her gender, and one need only read Antonia Fraser's account of Mary Queen of Scots to see how differently these two women played out their roles as monarchs.

She cannot protect herself, does not know herself, being "curious of her beauty" and cannot provide for herself. She is entirely dependent on her husband.

Hutson, in "The Housewife and the Humanists" exposes the unstable nature, and the erasure of a wife's subjectivity in early modern England. Hutson's study shows how conduct literature about women's roles as wives created (via linguistic construction of pronouns and binary logic), a woman's subjectivity only to insist on her secondary place within the household to her husband (Hutson 83-4; Belsey Tragedy 160).

Hutson concurs with Nancy Armstrong's assessment of Davies' schematization of husbandly and wifely duties in John Dod and Robert Cleaver's A Godlie Forme of Householde Government, a hugely influential seventeenth century text copied virtually verbatim from Miles Coverdale's translation (1541) of the German humanist, Heinrich Bullinger's, Der Christlich Eestand. The conclusion that Armstrong reaches is that the household of this era really only consisted of a single gender, with the husband as the head of the household (83).

A wife's duties are derivative of her husband's (83-4). In other words, "[t]he woman, as good wife, is merely the example of his ability to govern." (Hutson 84) Even in the household, supposedly the domain of the wife and female, humanist texts such as these household manuals do not "legitimate a new version of femininity, but a new version of masculinity." (Hutson 85) A wife, in essence, is the negative of masculine subjectivity, assertiveness and government of her husband. Overall a "wife's responsibilities are to

provide a visible model of submission, and not to get in the way, unless her husband is absent" (Belsey cited in Hutson 84).[11] Looking at Dod and Cleaver's suggestion that a wife should "[t]alk with few," "[b]e solitary and withdrawn," and "[b]oast of silence" (Hutson 83), a wife should not so much be a visible model of submission as try to be invisible. Hutson sums this up as women and wives being "the displaced marker of the husband's accountability as head of the household."(85), as all subjects of the state were of a monarch's ability to govern.

In early modern English marriage, though not unthinkable, a woman's choice of husband was seen as foolish if it did not comply with the same choice of husband as that of her father's (Belsey Tragedy 192). Belsey shows that in the case of choosing a spouse, the autonomy of such a choice is really addressed to a man rather than to a woman. When Dod and Cleaver give advice on choosing a mate in marriage, they inevitably use the universal male pronoun 'he'. They change the object of the sentence from "mate" to "wife" suggesting that they expect men to actively chose wives but that the reverse is improbable, if not unthinkable, (ibid, 201-2). While the Protestant ideal of marriage was beginning to be cast as two autonomous individuals who chose their partners, this ideal was rarely the case: "Protestant thought on marriage gave women a new, if merely *notional* equality." (Belsey cited in Callaghan Women 14, emphasis added) This "notion" of female equality becomes extremely problematic for patriarchy because it portends the threat of female subjectivity and the possibility for women to act as independent subjects.

[11] Kim Walker makes a similar comment in her chapter " Wise Virgins: Authority and Authorship" (17)

Nowhere is the possibility of women's actions more problematic than in the realm of female sexuality. And sexuality is regulated but a constant source of anxiety in marriage. Callaghan sums up the problem of the ideal of female equality within marriage, and, more specifically, the issue of sexuality which Protestantism brings along with it:

> [T]he Protestant doctrine of marriage in [its] endeavour to dissociate itself from Catholicism's exultation of celibacy, ratified and sanctified a sexual association with women which exacerbated the status of women as a problem category. (Women 14)

For patriarchy, which depends on its distinctions of power through the binary of gender, Protestant doctrine becomes more than just a theoretical site for woman's emancipation, it is in fact a site of male anxiety which called for the reinstatement of the control of women. The notion of women's subjectivity, and subsequently the desire to control women, is made possible through the patriarchal family / state analogy of early modern England, where women were politically subsumed subjects to their husband / male subject heads.

Smith's work similarly iterates patriarchal control. He seems at first to offer a liberalized view of marriage in which both husband and wife should obey each other. He indicates that the "commonwealth" of the family is governed by two supposedly autonomous individuals, who have been joined in marriage, though this again, was for reasons that are highly gendered:

> ...God hath given to the man great wit, bigger strength, and more courage to compel the woman to obey by reason or force: and to the woman, beauty, fair countenance, and sweet words to make the man to obey her again for love (ibid).

In spite of using the possessive adjective "their" later on to describe the contents of household as belonging to both husband and wife, the above passage presents a typical example of pretended equality, that is not really equality at all. Reason and strength are a man's tools for forcing his wife to obey him. In Mariam we see that this force is taken to its extreme. Herod orders Mariam's death because he presumes that she has been unfaithful to him, as she will not behave with "fair countenance, and sweet words". The "love" that Smith proposes is supposed to make a husband obey his wife, is a love which is highly unstable. Nor is it an ideal, steadfast kind of love. Such "love" may be emotional, but love in the early modern period is really constructed as a duty, not so much on a husband's part, but on a wife's, as I showed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, this notion of love is one that places women's agency in a highly paradoxical situation. She must "do" or "behave" in a way that makes her husband love her, but she may never "do" or "behave" in a way that pleases herself. To this effect a woman's agency is effaced. If she is a subject at all, it is only because she is subject to, in Butler's sense (Psychic Life of Power), her husband.

In a conflation of male reasoning and force, we see the unstable ground upon which the notion of Herod's and a husband's love is built in Cary's Mariam. The love that a husband has or "owes" his wife, according to Smith, is dependant on a wife's submission

to behave as her husband commands her. Herod begins to reason with Mariam, using his "love" for her as an excuse for his crimes against her family and against the state of Judea, since Mariam's grandfather and brother held the bloodline ordained by God to be the rulers of Judea. Later Herod starts to threaten Mariam, till at the end of the play we see that the "love" he bears her, sublimated to the rage he feels when she threatens both his kingly and husbandly authority (Walker "Publike Language" 138).

> *Herod:* Wilt thou believe no oaths to clear thy lord?
>
> How oft have I with execration sworn:
>
> Thou are by me belov'd, by me ador'd,
>
> Yet art my protestations heard with scorn.
>
> ....
>
> I will not speak, unless to be believed,
>
> This forward humour will not do you good:
>
> It hath too much already Herod griev'd,
>
> To think that you in terms of hate have stood.
>
> Yet smile, my dearest Mariam, do but smile,
>
> And I will all unkind conceits exile.
>
> *Mariam:* I cannot frame disguise, nor never taught
>
> My face a look dissenting from my thought.
>
> *Herod:* By Heav'n, you vex me, build on my love.
>
> *Mariam:* I will not build on so unstable ground.
>
> (IV.iii.117-120; 139-146)

The instability of Herod's love, Mariam realises here, means the submission of her own happiness and her own will to that of Herod's. Her subjectivity in the situation of her marriage is unpredictable. The "fair countenance and sweet words" which Smith suggests are the duty of a wife expressing her love to her husband, never come from Mariam. When Mariam acts as an autonomous individual within her marriage, things fall apart. Herod's love, as a consequence, dissolves and Mariam's subjectivity is annihilated with her person. Patriarchal control remains the aim of the marital situation and the ideal of love disappears as part of marital ideology.

The "steadfast" love that Petrarchan sonnetry constructs as the "ideal" kind of love is notably absent. Herod's and Mariam's marriage is not a "marriage of true minds" (Weller and Ferguson 8), but a love that alters when it alteration finds, to paraphrase Shakespeare (Sonnet 116). Herod constructs Mariam's hatred for him, as "unkind conceits" (IV.iii.44) that not merely expresses Mariam's feelings, but shows the lack of wifely duty on her part. By authoring her own view on how to behave she distorts the "poem" of acceptable wifely behaviour. Ironically, Herod's love, if it were a poem, is made up of dissident conceits itself, not least being the odd way in which he insists that killing her brother and grandfather was out of love for her.

His description of her is typically Petrarchan[12] in that he refers her by parts of her body rather than as a complete person and Petrarch's "Laura is always presented as a part or parts of a woman" (Vickers 266). This dismemberment ultimately proves sinister in Cary's play. After he performs the physical dismemberment of her by having her

[12] I thank my Dr. Distiller for drawing my attention to this aspect of Herod's speech.

beheaded, he praises aspects of her, but never her self: "One smile of hers—nay, not so much—a look/ ... / But can her eye be made by death obscure? / I cannot think but it must sparkle still: (V.i.167, 183-4). He is willing to forgive only if she puts her own feelings aside and submits to his will and smiles. His endeavour to ask his mistress to submit to his desire is undermined by the fact that Mariam points out the ultimate instability of his love.

By exposing Herod's love as being unstable, Cary questions the ideology of marriage, and exposes the ambiguity of women's position in the home, and through its analogy to the state, women's role in society at large. Cary's construction of marital love, which she points out is unstable in a patriarchally governed situation, is shown up as problematic in terms of the Protestant conceptions of God's love. Protestantism especially focused on Christ dying for men's sins because he loved the world so much. If the analogy of wife and husband as the Church is to Christ (Gouge 29) was to remain, men fell miserably short of His example.[13] The idea of a wife's perfect freedom in serving her husband is made complex in Mariam. While marriage discourse reconstructs the concept of masculinity and man's ability to govern (Hutson 85), Cary's play explores marriage to call attention to the matter of legitimate female subjectivity.

Like Mariam who threatens Herod's husbandly and kingly authority by questioning his rule on a political and "private" level, wives who might disobey their husbands provide a threat to their hierarchical position and potentially dissolve the hierarchy that maintains a

[13] St Paul calls on men to initiate Christ's love, which is selfless and stable. That men fail to try is, of course, understood to be their failing, and not Christ's. It is a Godly ideal to pursue, rather than a complete analogy.

patriarchal society. Cary is not necessarily championing a female liberation, but she does expose the precarious nature on which male-centred power is constructed, as well as the possibility for women to act in their own interest.

Chapter Three

"Objects of Exchange": Describing Women's Use Value in *Mariam.*

In this chapter I will be discussing how it is possible to read marriage in Cary's Mariam as a cultural construction that restrains the women in the text from creating any definition of self. The only identity that is open to women is imposed by gender distinction, which restricts them from the activities of men. As I have argued, Protestantism provided a new outlook for women and with that, the paradigm of marriage evolved—theoretically at least. But women's identity was still defined by their wifehood. In marriage prior to Protestant ideology, as Belsey explains it, women were "objects of exchange and the guarantee of dynastic continuity." (Tragedy 192) The more liberal notion of marriage was supposed to be based on the autonomy of each party's choice of partner and on romantic love in early modern England (ibid 192, 206). Mariam, I show, does not offer this liberalised view of marriage. As a historical text Cary's play shows that, while the ideology of marriage may have begun to change as Belsey suggests it has, the paradigm had not. As I have indicated in the previous chapter, marriage was a structure based on patriarchal anxiety to maintain hierarchy, even as a religious view of marriage began to purport an equality of responsibilities between marriage partners. The institution of marriage refused a wife any real kind of autonomy. A submissive wife showed an "effective family which is the seminary of good citizens" (ibid 192). On the other hand, a woman who sought autonomy or refused her husband's authority was transgressive. She threatened to unsettle the family construct and to disrupt society at large.

Here I turn away from the internal dynamic of patriarchal power as it functions within marriage and the family. Now I look at how the cultural construction of gender difference in marriage presents implications for constructing a woman's subjectivity in Mariam. Irigaray extensively explores the matter of women in marriage as a cultural construction where they are "the objects of exchange" between men (Irigaray "Women on the Market). As objects, the women in the play are unable to exert their agency. When Mariam does, it leads to her death.

In this chapter I begin to explore how the female subject fails to come into being through the patriarchal language that maintains the social practice of marriage. "Language and systems of representation are vital elements of all social, political and interpersonal life..." (Grosz 38). In as far as I have examined early modern discourse on marriage in this dissertation; it is evident that such discourse works to the effect of creating a specific kind of identity for its subjects. Cary has variously used language in her play either to repudiate or to perpetuate the discourse which concerns women's social place in marriage. Simple linguistic representation of women by using patriarchal language is impossible says Luce Irigaray ("Volume" 53-6). Women form a void of meaning in patriarchal language because it cannot define them (ibid 56). But patriarchal practice also makes impossible the refusal of singular representation of women in Cary's play. In order to represent the female subject, Cary is forced to employ ambiguity as a covering for her dissident "speech" against patriarchal norms. What the play does unequivocally show are

the limitations that the patriarchal language of the early modern practice of marriage sets for women's identity and their understanding of themselves as subjects in such a system.

Cary provocatively places the female subject at the centre of her dialectic on patriarchal social function which leads her readers to ask, as Judith Butler does, "[w]hat would it mean for the subject to desire something other than its specified and continued 'social existence'?" (Psychic Life 28). The answer which psychoanalysis provides to that question is that a social "existence cannot be undone without falling into some kind of death..." (ibid). Cary may not have had access to psychoanalytic theory in order to discuss the need of the female subject to break from the definition that is provided for her in patriarchal society, but she realises the implications of such a move. Mariam suffers a literal death for her transgression of her gender position. This death is only necessary because of patriarchal practice. It is desire, which is part of the human condition and which precedes cultural construction, that drives Cary's writing to give voice to the female subject. In the next chapter I show how Cary's manipulation of patriarchal language, which genders human traits, allows her to create a new meaning for the characters Herod and Mariam and their subjectivity. In other words, meaning and identity come together in social practice in what Lacan calls the Symbolic. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, for a subject to come into being it has to accept the terms, which language as a social practice, allows it to operate within; the terms of language construct the subject (Mitchell 5).

The language of the social practice of marriage, I show in this chapter, creates women so that by analogy they take the semantic place of an object in a sentence; they are nominal place holders whose identity is an empty signifier (Butler Gender 54-6). Their place serves only to highlight the action of men in patriarchal society who form the subject the subjects of patriarchal discourse's sentences (ibid). Such a social practice produces the subject and a language of self-effacement that refuses to represent women except in terms of their competitive value in a masculine economy of desire. By looking at Judith Butler's and Luce Irigaray's studies on the cultural construction of marriage, one can see how this practice works to maintain a patriarchal hierarchy of male subjectivity and female objectivity (Butler Gender; Irigaray "Women on the Market"). Both Butler and Irigaray's theories discuss relatively current issues of feminist discourse, but their description of marriage is evident in Mariam and is useful in discussing how this ideology functions and the psychological effects which this has on the female characters of the play.

In her discussion of Lévi-Strauss's The Elementary Structures of Kinship, Butler, like Irigaray shows how women are not allowed to own an identity within the predominance of the patriarch's cultural power structures and the cultural practice which maintains them. Within this system, a woman's lack of identity becomes her definition- she is the absence of identity. A bride is an object of exchange between groups of men, and a sign of the kinship that forms between them because of this link. However, this signification does not extend to the bride herself. She has no identity, and "neither does she exchange one identity for another" (Butler Gender 52). Thus the bride is a form of exchange which

at once differentiates between "clans of men" and binds them together; she signifies their bond, but the "name" which she carries is her father's and not her own (ibid). "As wives, women not only secure the reproduction of the *name* (the functional purpose), but effect a symbolic intercourse between clans of men" (ibid 53).

The bride, who then becomes a wife, is a socially constructed identity performance which signifies masculinity as the basis of its construction. However, the performative function of the bride / wife is really the absence of her identity, because its performance is only relative as the passive counterpart to the male activity of exchange (ibid 52). The bride / wife, herself, does not perform any action since she is exchanged and she is represented by passivity. That is to say that the signification of woman, the symbols that represent her, are void of meaning in terms of subjectivity and serve to highlight her difference from the active male. This effects a sublimation of their identity into a transaction between those of masculine society while "[s]he *reflects* masculine identity precisely through being the site of its absence" (ibid).

We see in Cary's Mariam the way in which Mariam becomes almost the absence of her own identity, and how she functions as a signifier of the identity and connection between men. Alexandra, Mariam's mother, explicates the bond, which is advantageous to Herod, but demeaning to their own "clan." In act one, scene two, we see that Alexandra welcomes Herod's end on the basis that his marriage to Mariam allowed him to rise to the powerful position of king of Judea. Alexandra resorts to arguing politically concerning the just reasons why Herod should have died. She does this through a series of paternal

namings. By contrasting the names which Herod has inherited with those of Mariam's forefathers, she distinguishes Herod as an outsider. His paternal name is not endowed with the same royal significance that Mariam's family's is, so that again marriage becomes a political issue in Mariam. She says:

> Will ever wight a tear for Herod spend?
>
> My curse pursue his breathless trunk and spirit,
>
> Base Edomite, the damnèd Esau's heir:
>
> Must he ere Jacob's child the crown inherit?
>
> Must he, vile wretch, be set in David's chair?
>
> (I.ii.84-8)

We can see that Herod's ascending the throne ("David's chair" (I.ii.88)) is contingent on his marriage to Mariam (Clarke 184). It has created a consolidation of power between his patriarchal line ("Esau's heir" (I.ii.86)), and that of Mariam's, since Mariam is David's heir. What is evident here is that Mariam is the bearer of the name which allows Herod to have recourse to power by virtue of his marriage to the Maccabean princess. Mariam on her own however, has no political power. Since she merely bears the authoritative name, she cannot act as queen in her own capacity and it doesn't define her power, even within her own household. By using a patrilineal naming in order to bar Herod from being Judea's king, Alexandra is accessing an authorisation that is patriarchal. More importantly, "male" naming links the physical bodies of people to their symbolic social positioning allocated by patriarchal authority. I have already pointed out that the family / state analogy in early modern England functioned to reinforce authority. By introducing

the lineage of a royal family, Cary similarly uses the family / state analogy. By questioning the validity of Herod's right to inherit the throne, Cary questions Herod's position of authority as husband (Clarke 184, 188), albeit to Alexandra's knowledge, a dead husband.

Luce Irigaray's own address of the control of women as objects of exchange is explored in her essay "Women on the Market." Irigaray uses Lévi-Strauss' anthropological position to query women's social status within patriarchy. Lévi-Strauss suggests that women are "scarce [commodities]... essential to the life of the group..." (Lévi-Strauss cited in Irigaray 170). How can this be, asks Irigaray, when there are as many women as men in number in the world (ibid)?

This "scarcity", Irigaray points out, is because not all women are as desirable as each other. For this reason women's bodies can be circulated in a polygamous manner where only a few are venerated as valuable commodities. As I pointed out in chapter one, Mariam's royal birth is part of what makes her a "good" wife, but it is also what makes her a good choice of wife for Herod. Mariam, we see, is constructed by Alexandra in the play as the bearer of a name that is valuable as a way to garner power.

Irigaray points out that "As both a natural value and use value, mothers [wives] cannot circulate in the form of commodities [like the prostitute does] without threatening the existence of social order ("Market" 185). One of Mariam's greatest claims of value is her chastity, ensuring her sexual loyalty and the production of offspring to only one man.

Cary makes it clear that Mariam is physically chaste. However, Mariam's chastity is a double bind in the play: it shows she venerates her fidelity in accordance with patriarchal norms, while it also evidences the moral stance she has taken to detest and never display falsehood, which is a testament to her personal and individual integrity. Her personal integrity is superfluous, if not problematic, since as Irigaray points, out in a patriarchal society, or masculine economy, women are a commodity whose "metaphysical origin is substituted for its material origin" (ibid 179). Essentially "[i]ts [metaphysical] value, its truth, lies in the social element. But this social element is added on to its nature, to its matter, and the social subordinates it as a lesser value, indeed as a nonvalue" (ibid). In other word's women's metaphysical existence is nominal and not supposed to be acted upon. Moreover, women's "social element" describes her subordinance, effectively not allowing her to partake in the physical surrounds of society.

Between men, a woman's value is a "representation of the needs / desires of consumer–exchangers subjects [men]: in no way is it [needs / desire] the "property" of the signs / articles / women themselves" (ibid 180). Hence, the promise of chastity is conventionally one that a woman should make to her husband and not to herself since it is a disavowal of her own desires.

Alexandra's distinction between Herod's "base" name and the royal name which Mariam carries links his social position to that which Mariam *represents*. Mariam, as an object to be exchanged, also *represents* the possibility of an increase in power for her own kin. In spite of Alexandra's demeaning speech about Herod's birth and race, Herod, through his

own masculine activity of military prowess, could lend solidarity to the current rulers of Judea. Historically, Herod won the governorship of Judea by being noticed for his military skills, before he took possession of Jerusalem itself in 37 B.C. (Weller and Ferguson 63). In this way he becomes a good choice of husband to Mariam for her kin's sake, but not necessarily to Mariam herself. This gender-political aspect of marriage is clearly presented by Cary in Mariam's agonising over the ambiguity which she feels at Herod's loss. She values her duty to love him (because he is her husband) against acknowledging the wrongs he has done her. To value his loss over her injuries means to deny her selfhood and renders Mariam a representation of the exchange of power between her male kin and Herod. Of course, later Mariam does choose to hold true to her own integrity which opens up the patriarchal cultural construction to scrutiny.

Representation, however, removes Mariam from the signified power that comes from the kinship and the connection which arises out of her exchange between her male kin and Herod, just as in language the signifier is only a representation of the signified but is never unified with its significance (Butler Gender 54). "*The virginal woman…is pure exchange value.* She is nothing but the possibility, the place, the sign of social relations among men. In and of herself, she does not exist: she is a simple envelope veiling what is really at stake in social exchange" (Irigaray "Market" 186). In this sense Mariam is a signifier but never carries with her the power that she signifies and so she essentially dissolves into symbolism. Herod's order to have Mariam die upon his own death abroad, shows concern for Mariam only so far as "what is really at stake," (ibid) and repudiates Mariam as an autonomous subject.

More than Mariam representing Herod's access to power, the name which Mariam carries initiates him into Jewish society with an identity. The name which Mariam carries, but is never recognised for, becomes a symbol of Herod's subjectivity and agency, not of her own. She does not become more powerful by marrying and she is restrained by her husband, her new patriarch. By virtue of the exchange which takes place between Mariam's family, presumably executed by her brother and her grandfather[14] and Herod, aligns Herod with those patriarchs who hold power in their society.

Mariam's value lies not only in the name, and the entrance that this symbolically offers Herod, but also lies in her reproductive capabilities. In Mariam, women's variable desirability becomes more pronounced in the event of a woman's ability to bear children and so cement the link between men of her exchange. Children become the sign of the link between "clans" of men and become the source of sustaining such a link. But this relies on the contingency that these children are appropriated by the father as his own private property, and "marked with the name of the father" (Irigaray "Market" 185). As I later show, this discrepancy is evident in Herod accepting Mariam's children over Doris' child.

Alexander says to Mariam that *it is not Herod's* children who are royal children, but Mariam's. Cary appears to use Alexandra as a figure who contests the symbols which consolidate male power. Alexandra tries to encourage Mariam's "use of the means of a

[14] Irigaray points out that women pass between men, fathers and brothers but not mothers (Irigaray "Market" 171)

'petticoat' government" (Travitsky 189), though I disagree with Travitsky that Alexandra's attempts are done in order to "undermine the patriarchal conditions which stifle her" (ibid). However, Alexander is sensible of the potential power which Mariam's family name and her royal position holds.

However, it is only in Herod's absence that Alexandra sees a possibility for accessing such power, and she still relies on masculine authority to support her and her daughter's claims. Her references are all patrilineal: "Was Alexander not of David's blood? / And was not Mariam Alexander's heir?" (I.ii.146-7) Alexandra says: "He did not raise them, for they were not low, / But born to wear the crown in his despite:" (I.ii.149-50). Alexandra's attempt in reiterating the male line to which she belongs seems to be a pointless task since the name she holds (at one stage her dead father's and now her dead husband's) is no longer significant. She merely carries the name but not the meaning behind it. Her attempt to claim its power is thwarted with the return of the patriarch, Herod. "The real and pitiful limits to Alexandra's power are underlined by her denunciation of her daughter when Mariam passes on her way to execution" (Travitsky 189). In this way Alexandra is an awkward character for the reader to access, because she is changeable according to patriarchal presence. At first she commands Mariam to recognise herself independently of Herod by slighting his family lineage. But then she supports Mariam's death as punishment for Mariam's transgression when Mariam tries to recognise her personal integrity. Alexandra's lack of conviction can be read as the absence of her agency within the masculine economy of power in the play.

Mariam may be the object of exchange between men, but the play presupposes Mariam's subjectivity. Again the ambiguous nature of Cary's play becomes apparent. Alexandra points out the damage that Herod has done with regards to Mariam's kin and that this is an ultimate betrayal and show of hatred towards Mariam herself. In her chastising Mariam she says, "Weep'st thou because his love to thee was bent, / And read'st thou love in crimson characters? / Slew he thy friends to work thy heart's content?" (I.ii.107-9) As far as Mariam has been an object of exchange between her male kin and Herod, Alexandra seems to point out to Mariam that she is nothing more than an object to Herod, and dispels any thoughts of romantic love between the two, and at this Mariam should take offence.

The impetus behind Alexandra's assertion in this scene is that Mariam makes herself heir apparent now that Herod is dead. Mariam may or may not agree with her mother but Alexandra's suggestion here furthers the possibility which is constantly present in Mariam, that Mariam's subjectivity should be recognised. If we read the play historically in light of the then-just-dead queen Elizabeth I, Cary's suggestion here of recourse to female agency (albeit limited to royalty) becomes compelling.

In spite of her adherence to her personal integrity later in the play, in this scene Mariam seems to be aware of her value as a commodity, and even more so as a commodity on a competitive market. The play exhibits Irigaray's theory that "The body of a commodity ...becomes, for another such commodity, a mirror of its value." ("Market" 179) While

Mariam cannot affirm Herod's love for her as her mother seems to demand, she can affirm her "worth" against another commodity, Doris:

> [Of] Mariam's love, and she was now disgrac'd,
>
> Nor did I glory in her overthrow.
>
> He not a whit his first-born son esteem'd,
>
> Because as well as his he was not mine:
>
> My children only for his own he deem'd,
>
> These boys that did descend from royal line.
>
> These did he style his heirs to David's throne;
>
> (I.ii.133-139)

Of course, by divine right, only Mariam's children are heirs to the throne, but there is, throughout the play, the threat that Doris's son, if sanctified with the name of his father, Herod, may inherit the throne. Indeed this is the outcome of Josephus' version of these events (Weller and Ferguson 172-3). Despite their divine right to inherit the throne through Mariam's lineage, this still relies on the patriarch's sanctioning. Doris continuously uses the hope that Herod may acknowledge her son as an heir to the throne to justify her return to Judea in the play. Mariam understands, in the above excerpt, that as a mother in a patriarchal economy, her "responsibility is to maintain the social order without intervening so as to change it. [Her] products [children] are legal tender ...only if they are marked with the name of the father" (Irigaray "Market" 185). She persists with the fact that their significance lies with the acknowledgement which Herod's name deploys on them by saying, "My children only for his own he deem'd," (I.ii.137), even

though Herod probably acknowledges them over Doris' because of the signification of power which Mariam father's name brings with it.

In the play, the word "love" becomes confused with what Irigaray calls: "[*T*]*he economy of exchange—of desire*—[which] *is man's business*." ("Market" 177) The "love" that Mariam supposes Herod has for her is dubious, since Doris is "exchanged" in favour of Mariam, not in terms of affection, but of value. Herod's desire is for power, not for love. Mariam defends her belief in Herod's "love" against her mother by validating her "use value" as the mother of Herod's children. Mariam points out that her being the mother of Herod's children compares favourably against Doris' progeny. Mariam's "use value" therefore becomes equated with the quantity of "love" that Herod expends on Mariam. Moreover "love" (in terms of being the object of Herod's desire) is a signification which Doris fails to carry with her and which lessens her worth in the patriarchal economy of Herod's household: "Doris! Alas, her time of love was past" (I.ii.131). Here again Cary presents the reader with an image of marriage that is restrictive of women's agency.

Alexandra's request to Mariam that she seeks to be happy at Herod's demise suggests an autonomy that celebrates a freedom from the patriarch. Moreover, Alexandra's words suggest that Mariam herself can make a rational choice to be happy.

> Then send those tears away that are not sent
>
> To thee by reason, but by passions power:
>
> Thine eyes to cheer, they cheeks to smiles be bent,

And entertain with joy this happy hour.

(I.ii.151-4)

But again Cary vacillates from any precise assertion about Mariam's behaviour as she revokes Alexandra's seeming call to independence. At the same time that Alexandra seems to be an advocate for Mariam's personal happiness, she goes on to relate that her own happiness can only take place in the economy of exchange between men. She points out to Mariam that she would have been happier if Mariam had married Anthony:

And did not I to her [happiness] presents send

....

To woo her love by winning *Anthony* :

For when a princes favour we doe crave,

We first their Minions' loves do seek to win:

So I, that sought Felicity to have,

Did with her Minion *Anthony* begin.

(I.ii.168-75)

It is clear that Alexandra sees both Mariam's, and her own happiness, as being reliant on the man that Mariam would marry. This happiness, in Alexandra's estimation, relies heavily on the fact that Anthony has great social status and political power. In this scene, she doesn't seem to conceive of a "personal" happiness. Fate and happiness, for Alexandra, are not aspects of individual integrity or psychology, as it is for Mariam, but a direct consequence of social and political acceptance via the power of the patriarch.

Women as "[c]ommodities among themselves are ... not equal, nor alike nor different. They only become so when they are compared by and for man" (Irigaray "Market" 177). It is clear that Mariam measures herself by these values contingent on the patriarch when she elevates her status above Doris' because of the children and the royal name which she brings to Herod. However, this elevation in value is only relevant with regards to Herod, whom Mariam assumes is making the comparison.

Perhaps one of the most disturbing aspects to the modern day reader is the racist manner in which Mariam compares herself to Cleopatra and Salome. As Dympna Callaghan points out, "'Race' is not self-explanatory; it is the site of intense cultural debate." ("Re-reading Mariam" 164) It is not my intention to explore the play's aspects of race or racism here. That is not to say that this is not an important issue of inquiry, but for the immediate purposes of this dissertation I rather want to point out that race is used as a system of difference. In the masculine economy women are constructed through a binary system of "good" versus "bad." This binary is paralleled by the binary of "white" versus "black" and "light versus "dark". Here Mariam, caught in the economy of male exchange that values the female object with the logic of "good" versus "bad", reproduces this discourse in order to validate her own worth.

Cary's position on marriage in the play is one that shows that marriage is more than just restrictive for women. Unlike the "liberal version of marriage" that Belsey proposes was emerging in early modern England (Tragedy 192), marriage in Cary's play is not based on the notion of autonomy of each marriage partner, nor on the notion of romantic love,

as its prerequisites. In this chapter I have shown how Irigaray's reading of Lévi-Strauss's anthropological study of marriage as the exchange of women between men erases their identity. Women as wives are the empty signifiers of the exchange of power between father and husband. In turn I have shown how this applies to the events of Cary's play so that marriage in the play can be read as the erasure of female subjectivity. In a play that draws our attention to the validity of the female voice, the reader is forced to question the operations of the discourse that sanctions the institution of marriage as it is presented here. The ambiguity which Mariam and Alexandra exhibit and their understanding of themselves as part of a masculine economy also presents the reader with women's difficulty to find their own voice.

Chapter Four

Hysterical Herod: Cary's Transference of Gender Attributes.

In this chapter I draw together the early modern perception of the feminine with that of subjectivity, by looking at how the concept of being a woman clashed with the concept of sovereignty. In other words, I look at that what it meant to be a sovereign was a set of attributes that also applied to the definition of masculinity in early modern England. Femininity therefore, did not encompass the characteristics that befitted a ruler of the state, in the same way that patriarchal culture behoved that a woman should be subject to her husband. The ruler of the state was assumed to possess masculine qualities; a bad ruler or tyrant was often described as effeminate and seen as possessing feminine qualities. Since this was seen as abnormal in a man, and his rule was unjust, this made the tyrant an unnatural phenomenon as well as an illegitimate ruler. The illegitimate and deceptive nature of his rule made him a figure that could not be trusted since his rationality was questionable. By transposing the attributes that make up the definitions of male or female gender in her time, Cary undermines the legitimacy of patriarchal rule by effeminising Herod, the most powerful male protagonist in the play. By contrasting this with the (male) stoic qualities that Cary lends to her heroine Mariam, the reader can see Cary affect a kind of linguistic erasure of the gender distinctions that accompany the concept of what it means to be a man or a woman (Clarke 190).

In 1558, as a defamation of Mary Queen of Scots and part of a debate against the legitimacy for a woman to rule a state, Knox wrote, just before the ascension of Elizabeth I to the throne of England, The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women. In it he states, "Nature, I say, doth paint them [women] forth to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble and foolish: and experience hath declared them to be unconstant (sic), variable, cruel and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment." (Knox cited in Aughterson 138)

Knox was drawing on contemporary stereotypes of women's weaknesses in order to illustrate why women's rule was unnatural (Findlay 166, Aughterson 138). Linguistically, "woman", by Knox's description, means everything that a ruler is not. She is to Knox, essentially the "lower" term over which the "higher" male should always govern. The argument of what is "natural" played a principal part early modern rhetoric. As I pointed out, Vives also cites it as unnatural for a wife to rule over her husband (Aughterson 137). Both John Aylmer, on behalf of Elizabeth Tudor, and John Leslie, on behalf of Mary Stuart, who provide a defence against Knox's publication, appeal to nature to show that women's rule is not unnatural. Both also appeal to "God's law" as a reason for a queen to rule (Aughterson 140-4). Nature and God seem by Leslie's account, to be more or less the same thing; though God's decision is ultimately above nature's laws since God made the world. Aylmer, however, cites that old men having dark hair, and women giving birth to twins, is unusual but not unnatural (Aughterson 133, 142). He goes on to make his point:

> yet when it happeneth that sometime by the ordinance of God and course of inheritance that they [women] bear rule, it is not to be concluded that it repugneth against nature: no more than the old man's black hairs, or the woman's two twins. So that you see in this acception [exception] of nature, their rule cannot be against nature. (Cited in Aughterson 134,142)

Leslie entitles his argument "Wherein it is declared that the regiment of women is conformable to the laws of God and nature." (Aughterson 143) Leslie's argument is interesting because in this extract he does not refer to "nature" *per se*, but rather argues his defence with quotes from the bible where the generic term "man" or "brother" is supposed to be taken as referring to both women and men. He also says, "in the Greek tongue one word representeth both brother and sister saving that there is no difference of gender; after the same rate the words king and queen are knit up in both one" (cited in Aughterson 143). The preference, however, of male terms in the bible suggests that patriarchal language's linguistics overwrites the female subject position.[15] In arguing for the legitimacy of women's rule, Leslie performs an interesting linguistic manoeuvre which presents multiple meanings for a singular word. This tactic of destabilising patriarchal language by refusing to conform to a singular meaning, I argue in my final chapter, is a particular way in which a woman's voice can make itself heard within patriarchal language.

Cary's use of tragedy allows her a remarkable scope in presenting the reader with challenges to the patriarchal constructs that define the meaning of gender (Distiller 35).

[15] I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Natasha Distiller for pointing this out to me.

In spite of Aylmer and Leslie's arguments, women's rule was still warily considered since it had a strong connection with another illegitimate ruler: the tyrant. (Bushnell 67) "[T]he typical portrait of the tyrant... is a monster and a shifter of shapes, and who rules without rule, law, trust or reason. Woman is represented as 'naturally' what the tyrant becomes: in both, the principle of the lower, ferocious power of desire usurps the sovereignty of reason" (ibid). Cary also draws on a particular politics which accompany tyrant tragedies and which became apparent with the writings and translations of the Sidney circle.[16]

In her study "'Stoical and Profane Paradoxes': *The Tragedie of Mariam* and Sidnean Closet Drama" Martha Straznicky shows that if Cary herself was not intimate with the Sidney circle, she was certainly acquainted with it, and more particularly with the writing that Mary and Philip Sidney produced (105-9):

> There is a network of acquaintances—however loosely conceived—that includes Elizabeth Cary and that intersects with the membership of what we conventionally refer to as the Sidney circle....*The Tragedy of Mariam*, [is] a closet drama modeled closely on the neo-Senecan tragedies of Mary Sidney, Thomas Kid, Samuel Daniel, Fulke Greville, William Alexander and Samuel Brandon....*The Tragedy of Mariam*...reveals a woman author who is anything but domesticated, a woman author who in fact shares a politically charged cultural literacy with the intellectual aristocracy of her day. (108-9)

[16] Straznicky further explores this connection in "Elizabeth Cary: 'private' drama and print" (49).

It is within this context that Cary produces a work that is politically and culturally meaningful. The drama, which is produced in this political context, is the basis for Cary to introduce her own intellectual debate on the subject of tyranny to her personal end.

"Tyranny was a topic of enduring concern for Sidney....[I]t was tyranny and the resistance to tyranny (not national interest or state power) that constituted their (Sidney and Languet's) primary vocabulary for analyzing European politics" (Stillman 1292), which for them revolved mainly around the Protestant fight against Catholicism in Europe. Languet was both Philip Sidney's and Phillip Du Plessis Mornay's mentor: Mornay wrote *Vindicticae, contra tyrannos* (1576) as a revocation of the St. Bartholomew's day massacre (Stillman 1293) where we see that the fight against tyranny forms the basis of Protestant political discourse. Later Mary Sidney would translate Mornay's A Discourse on Life and Death (1592, first edition), a Protestant religious work, and then Marc Antoine (1595) a political drama that similarly focuses its critique on tyrannical rule. Philip Sidney's tyrant figure in his Defence of Poesy similarly creates a political / religious discourse in early modern England (Stillman "Poetry and Tyranny in Sidney's "Defence"). By placing my assessment of Mariam's character in the specific political context of Sidney's literary politics, I show how Mariam also becomes a martyr and a defendant against tyranny. By engaging in this type of drama Cary finds a voice for herself as a woman to expound a valid political opinion.[17]

[17] See for example the political correlation which Weller and Ferguson draw between Herod and Henry VIII. They similarly draw a parallel between Henry VIII's divorce and the theme of divorce in the play. As I mentioned earlier, the social commentary which Cary makes on wives and women's place in marriage is a political comment because it challenges patriarchy. By using the story of Herod as the ruler of Judea, Cary automatically takes on a political argument as the background to her play.

Returning to the question of female subjectivity and its value in Mariam, by structuring her play as a neo-Senecan drama, Cary also engages in a particular "politics of desire" (Straznicky "Stoical Paradoxes" 109). But Senecan drama deals with desire ambiguously. The desire of the stoic hero(ine)[18] is different from the desire of a tyrant; the one is good, and the other is bad. "The word desire performs a curious double duty in stoic writing, designating both that which enslaves the human and that which liberates it." (Straznicky "Stoical Paradoxes" 115) Bad desires are linked with the feminine attributes that, by Knox's account, makes a woman a bad head of state. Bad desire might initially be seen as Mariam's "feminine" impulse to disobey her husband. Knox goes on to point out that "in the nature of all women, lurketh such vices as in good governours are not tolerable...Womankind... is rashe and foolhardy, and their covetousness is like the golf of hell, that is, insatiable" (Knox cited in Bushnell 65). To Knox, women are lustful in every sense: of power and goods, as well as being lascivious. But this desire changes in the light that Mariam is challenging a tyrant as well as a husband (Clarke 188). Cary tackles the issue of Mariam's refusal to obey Herod as husband and patriarch in the home by aligning it with the political issue of sovereignty (Clarke 179-80). If masculine rule fails and a woman can adopt the qualities of a stoic hero, she is good enough to govern—her own person at least.

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[18] Straznicky distinguishes between male and female stoics. She suggests that in female-centred closet dramas (by men), stoicism is amplified but that the subversive potential remains evasive (115). Women stoics are assumed to naturally be privy to the "bad" desire (like Eve's desire for knowledge that is also sexually complicit) that causes social chaos. This is especially evident in Fulke Greville's tragedies (119). Generally, the stoic heroine's victory is to refuse to give into such desires, as Straznicky shows in her treatment of Octavia in Samuel Brandon's The Tragicomoedie of the Virtuous Octavia (121) In this case the stoic heroine overcomes the feminine condition of chaos which is similarly the challenge facing the tyrant ruler faces but ignores. She points out that Mariam is a play which circulates and operates in a political economy (107) that is contingent not only on female desires, but on stoic action by the female protagonist.

In order to undermine the legitimacy of the main patriarch of the play, Cary draws on Herod as a tyrant figure. Robert Zaller points out that "The figure of the tyrant has been since classical antiquity one of the most potent antitypes in Western thought.... [H]e has represented absolute transgression, the political villain who defies heaven and earth" (585). The tyrant's desire for power is therefore a desire which is destructive to social and political relations.

The tyrant's soul is overruled by desire (Bushnell 65). Herod's lust for power seems insatiable. All in all, including Mariam's grandfather and brother, and Josephus, Salome's first husband, Herod puts no less than six characters to death in Cary's play. What is most disturbing about Herod is the way in which he murders Aristobulus. Herod sets up a swimming party and in a charade of playfulness drowns Aristobulus. The deceptiveness of Aristobulus' murder heightens the fact that it is not legally warranted. It also highlights the cruelty of his act, since Aristobulus had no idea that he was in danger. This cruelty reminds us of the cruelty which Knox says his experience of women has taught him make them unsuitable leaders. In this way Herod's cruelty makes him a bad ruler.

The deception of the murder also feeds into a larger fear about tyrants. "The tyrant is... at once the most open and concealed of men, feigning kingly virtue when it suits his purpose, revealing his true (though forever inconstant) aim in boastful triumph when its realization is at hand" (Zaller 591). Deception is another characteristic that particularly pertains to the early modern stereotype of women. We see that in the play Constabarus

accuses all women (notably except for Mariam) (Beilin "Female Hero" 170), of being deceitful:

> Tear-massacring hyenas: nay far worse,
> For they for prey do shed their feignèd tears.
> But you will weep (you creatures cross to good),
> For your unquenchèd thirst of human blood:
> You were the angels cast from Heav'n for pride,
> And still do keep your angels' outward show,
> But none of you are inly beautified,
> For still your Heav'n depriving pride doth grow.
> ....
> You'll love today, and for no other cause
> But for you yesterday did deeply hate;
>
> (IV.vi.317-24; 330-1)

Constabarus' speech highlights the monstrous and beastly nature of women who are worse than those animals who hunt for prey. He also highlights the notion that women are proud and changeable. Their inconstancy in the last two lines also highlights women's irrationality. There is no reason for them to change their minds except for their uncontrolled wills are given to change. Ironically Constabarus says this as he is being put to death with Babas' sons, but it is Herod who commands their death, though is Salome who demanded it. As I show later in this chapter, Herod is also proud and changeable, which highlights his lack of reason.

I have previously pointed out that Mariam lacks political power because of her position as an object of exchange within marriage. However, the power which Herod exerts as a patriarch does not necessarily match with the hierarchical laws of inheritance in early modern England, which allowed a woman, though not preferably, to inherit the throne. The tyrant, Herod, contravenes this cultural hierarchy since it is through Mariam's birthright that he gains access to Judea's throne. Herod's usurpation is complete in that through his masculine right, he has sovereignty over Mariam as a woman and wife. He also kills off all those who do have a direct (and masculine) blood claim to Judea's throne. In the final scene of the play, after Herod has had Mariam put to death, he admits "'Tis I have overthrown your royal line" (V.i.178).

In terms of Jewish law and in early modern perception, this goes against God's law since God appointed the monarch through his (or sometimes, though not unproblematically, her) birthright and bloodline. Herod is therefore illegitimate in his action and an impostor. His place on the throne contravenes God's order, which is the "natural order" of the birthright of kings. As an impostor on the throne Herod doesn't only contravene God's law, he is also deceptive.

Herod proves to be inconstant, another fault which Vives and Constabarus align with women. He is inconstant in both his love for Mariam and for Doris, as I pointed out in the previous chapter. Herod's inconstancy is also visible when he has sentenced Mariam to death. He cannot make up his mind that she should die:

Why whither would you carry her?

Soldier. You bade

We should conduct her to her death, my lord.

Herod. Why sure I did not, Herod was not mad.

Why should she feel the fury of the sword?

Oh, now the grief returns into my heart...

(V.iii.238-44)

It appears in this scene that Herod's love for Mariam is sincere. But "[t]he tyrant is also, typically uxorious" (Zaller 591). Though Herod's love for Mariam seems to be evident throughout the play it is by all accounts an unstable love. It is also excessive. His words to Mariam when he has returned from Caesar are indicative of this. Typically inconstant, he seems to have patience when at first Mariam refuses to be glad at his return. But his concern soon teeters on reproach:

Herod. Is this my welcome? Have I long'd so much

To see my dearest Mariam discontent?

What is't that is the cause thy heart to touch?

Oh speak, that I thy sorrow may prevent

(IV.iii.93-6)

When Mariam tells him that it is the death of her relatives that causes her sadness, Herod obstinately, if not proudly, tells her that it was for her sake that he killed them. The irrationality of this argument is apparent since the death of her kin obviously caused her to be unhappy. Eventually Herod becomes angry and frustrated when Mariam will not believe his argument. This gives the reader a sense of the uncontrolled nature of the

tyrant. The tyrannical attributes which Cary gives to Herod's character in this scene make the reader wary of Herod's worth to rule wife, household and state.

Herod's love is already understood to be excessive, because he ordered Mariam's death in the event of his own, "unwilling that any should enjoy her after him" ("The Argument" 67). Herod's possessiveness also alludes to the excess of his desire, that he wants all and is not willing to see reason by imparting with his goods, in this case, giving his wife her life. But here Herod usurps God's right to give and take life. The judicious prince may dispense with the lives of criminals. In fact, James I urges that a good monarch binds

> himselfe by a double oath to the obseruation of the fundamentall Lawes of his kingdome: *Tacitly,* as by being a king, and so protect aswell the people, as the Lawes of his Kingdome...whereas the proude tyrant doeth thinke his Kingdome and people are only ordained for satisfaction of his vnreasonable appetites. (Cited in Zaller 589)

And Herod's order for Mariam's and other characters' death seems unreasonable. He murders Sohemus for his disloyalty in telling Mariam about her impending death in the event of his own, forgetting that had Sohemus carried out his task, Mariam would be dead on his arrival back in Judea. As Herod uses his political authority to punish Mariam's private transgression, he displays another quality of the tyrant who uses, according to James I, "the inessential use of essential powers" (Zaller 589). And Herod's murder of Mariam foremostly, but also of her kin, is an inessential use of his power to command the death of others.

But within the patriarchal culture which Cary's text operates, it is female desire that is viewed as excessive and problematic. "[Mariam's] desires become, in effect the central ethical problem of the play's first half, a problem that is expressed in the familiar stoic terms of unchecked passions and lapsed self-control" ("Stoical Paradoxes" 126). However, Mariam's passions and desires are limited towards good and moralistic ends and in this way, as I pointed out in chapter one, her character's worth can be read against her transgression of "wifely duty". The question of wifely transgression is a central concern for Cary (Beilin "Female Hero 166). I will show how this question is further destabilised by the fact that Mariam is not just transgressing a husband, but a tyrant (Belsey Tragedy 171).

But as a wife, Mariam is required to be obedient to her husband. Moving out of the wifely realm of the home, Cary looks toward public-political reasons for resistance. The legitimisation of resisting the tyrant again lies firmly at the root of the Sidney / Mornay political-religious project. In his *Vindicticae*, Mornay adopts a political philosophy to point out that tyrants should never be obeyed, using the story of the Papanian who will "reproach Caracalla to his face and will choose death rather than obedience..." (Mornay cited in Stillman 1294). Mornay "shows how 'one in whom... conscience remains' will effectively counter tyranny" (Stillman 1293). Such resistance must be shown, according to Mornay, even if the tyrant is of the worst kind, such as the Sicilian tyrant Phalaris of Acragas, who would roast his victims alive in a brazen bull (Stillman 1293). Drawing on the aspect that even those in a lowly position, such as that of a servant who could can counter tyranny, Cary adopts the masculine quality of courage from this stoic hero for her

heroine Mariam. Here again Cary underscores the accepted notions of gender attributes. Straznicky points out that heroines in the Sidney Circle's tragedies succumb to a passive constancy ("Stoical Paradoxes 120) rather than behave with active resistance as Mariam does (ibid 124). In Cary's play we see how Mariam reacts in the same way in which the Papinian did against his master, the tyrant Caracalla, for the cause of Truth.

While Cary is ambiguous about Mariam being a "good" or a "bad" wife, she is unambiguous about presenting Mariam's virtues as a spiritual being. As often as the chorus and other characters in the play report Mariam's fault of speech, others report Mariam's good qualities. Such a character is the Nuntio. He says

> Why on she went
> And after some silent prayer had said,
> She did as if to die content,
> And thus to Heav'n her heaven'ly soul is fled.

Mariam achieves the goals that are supposed to be the desire of stoic heroes. Her "silent prayer" shows an allegiance to God and to a higher spiritual cause. The devout and the virtuous are not afraid of death, but are content, if not eager to die when the time comes. Stubbs' A Crystal Glass draws the link between virtue, spirituality and death in early modern England. His description of his wife's death is depicted as the final confession of her faith in which she says "'I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ....Come quickly Lord Jesus, come quickly...'" (cited in Aughterson 240). Most notably, in order

to express the exceptional virtue of his wife, he relates her vision of death that shows the glorious life after death as her reward:

> When her Husband asked her why she smiled, and laughed so, she would say 'Oh if you saw such glorious and heavenly sights as I see, you would rejoice and laugh with me, for I see a vision of the joys of heaven and of the glory that I shall go unto and I see infinite multitudes of angels attendant upon me, and watching over me, ready to carry my soul in the Kingdom of heaven.' In regard whereof, she was willing to forsake herself, her husband, her child and all the world besides. (ibid 240)

Mariam expresses a similar understanding about her innocence and the spiritual relief that awaits her after death:

> That I was ever innocent,...
>
> And therefore can they but my life destroy
>
> My soul is free from adversary's power
>
> ....
>
> In Heav'n shall Mariam sit in Sara's lap
>
> (IV.viii.568-74)

Cary reconciles Mariam's actions, prohibited as they might be within the state of marriage, with the search and reward of spiritual truth according to Protestantism to show that a wife is spiritually obliged to question the husband who would have her act falsely.

We see that Cary actively engages in Christian symbolism to venerate Mariam's innocence and heroism in death. Her death is a martyrdom that is closely aligned with

Christ's. In his gospel, Mark recounts how people passing by remember Jesus' words that he could tear down the Temple and in three days he would rebuild it. This metaphorical interpretation of his death is highlighted as mystical and prophetic by the fact that the people don't understand the triumph of the soul over worldly constraints (Beilin "Female Hero" 171). Mark recounts: "People passing by shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus: "Aha! You were going to tear down the Temple and build it up again in three days! Now come down from the cross and save yourself!" (Mark15:29-30) The people passing by resemble Cary's depiction of Alexandra hurling insults at her daughter: "But as she came she Alexandra met /.../ She [Alexandra] did upon her daughter loudly rail" (V.i.33-6 ; Beilin "Female Hero" 172).

Alexandra's chastising mimics the Chorus' chastising of Mariam's wifely transgression throughout the play. These penalizing words are rendered impotent by what seems to be the Chorus and Alexandra's lack of spiritual understanding. However, Mariam's words "'By three days hence, if wishes could revive, / I know himself would make me oft alive'" (V.i.76-7) strongly evoke Christ's metaphor of rebuilding the Temple and his ultimate triumph in resurrection after three days of being dead (ibid). Like Christ who had the power to rescue himself from death but did not, Mariam had the power to save herself, by acquiescing to Herod. But she does not in the name of spiritual triumph and of overcoming worldly constraints.

Mariam's death is further aligned to Christ's through the similarity of the Butler's suicide to that of the betrayer of Jesus, Judas' (ibid). The Nuntio recounts to Herod that:

As I came by

From Mariam's death, I saw a man upon a tree

A man that to his neck a cord did tie:

Which cord he had design'd his end to be.

When me he once discern'd, he downwards bow'd,

And thus with fearful voice [he] cried aloud

"Go and tell the King he trusted ere he tried,

I am the cause that Mariam causeless died."

(V.i.103-10)

This description of the Butler is remarkable in similarity to Matthew's account of Judas hanging himself:

> When Judas, the traitor, learnt that Jesus had been condemned, he repented and took back the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned by betraying an innocent man to death!" he said.... Judas threw down the coins in the Temple and left; then he went off and hung himself. (Matthew 27 3-6)

By aligning Mariam's death to Christ's, Cary draws on a powerful discourse of salvation and spirituality for her heroine. Her performance of speaking out, normally regarded as transgressive in a wife, against her husband and a tyrant is sanctified through her death. Her innocence is endorsed and she is a hero and a saviour like Christ. As Beilin puts it, "her [Mariam's] death cannot be an execution... [it is] a sacrifice" ("Female Hero" 171).

Mariam's unrestrained personal will might be constructed as a moral weakness in the play (Straznicky "Stoical Paradoxes" 127), but Cary's play makes the point that this

censure is particular to women, whereas Herod's passion and unrestrained desire are not censured by the reader until it becomes apparent that they are extreme. The problem of arguing Mariam's stoic nature against Herod's tyranny is not just a simple matter of measuring her actions against his. It is a matter of showing Mariam's actions as non-transgressive and ensuring that they are moral, due to the patriarchal anxiety of her culture about the actions of her sex, and in order to do so must erase the meaning which patriarchal discourse assigns to create gender boundaries.

The process of Cary's subversion of gender assigned meaning becomes complete in Mariam's death. "In the fifth act of the play, Cary reverts to a male-like stoic discourse, representing Mariam as effectively subversive and Herod as utterly debilitated." (ibid 124) Cary works within patriarchal discourse, but takes it upon herself to engage in a genre that is political and which is paradoxical in itself. She assigns "good" desire, the desire for justice and truth to her heroine. These stoic ideals allow her heroine to stand up to tyranny as Cary performs a transposition of sexual difference in the play. Mariam might curb her tongue while going to her death, exhibiting self-control, but Cary assigns her one last moment of authorised public display: "Mariam's execution is a public spectacle," says Straznicky, "a form of death that makes visible to her the terms of a masculine discourse of honour and glory" (ibid 130). In view of the fact that tyranny and women's rule are bound up in each other (Bushnell 67), Mariam's stoicism seems to answer against Knox's argument that women are "lacking in spirit and regiment." Moreover, Cary creates an ambiguity around gender meaning and performance that unequivocally expresses Mariam's subjectivity as a woman.

Chapter Five

Critiquing the Patriarch: Semiotics and the Female Voice.

According to Butler, Lacan's proposition of "paternal law" is that it "structures all linguistic signification, termed 'the Symbolic,' and so becomes a universal organizing principle of culture itself" (Gender 107). Within the Symbolic an individual's (sexual) identity is created (Rose 41-3), signifying a gender performance which is maintained and perpetuated by patriarchal language. The "culture itself" is patriarchy. Paternal law represses all "primary libidinal drives" (Gender 107). These libidinal drives exist before the "subject"[19] enters into the Symbolic (Butler Gender 112), and because they are not signified within the Symbolic, are referred to as "pre-Symbolic" (Kristeva Revolution 29).

The Symbolic repudiates the dependency of the child on the mother (Butler Gender 107). It feeds into what Irigaray has shown to be the denial of the importance of the female reproductive body and reinforces the objective status of women as wives and mothers, so that children can be appropriated and marked with the "name of the father" ("Market"

[19] I have put the term "subject" in inverted commas because, as I have explained, women are constructed as objects within the Symbolic, but since I am discussing the recovery of the female subject within Cary's play to repudiate this construction of women as objects, here the "subject" refers to the generic subject; both men and women. Butler also puts the term in inverted commas, to indicate the difference between the idea of an individual who generates his/her own meaning, and the Lacanian subject who is subject and has to submit to the construction and terms of the Symbolic.

185). This refusal of the maternal body removes women's agency on the most primary level, and refuses "the libidinal multiplicity which [is] characterized [by] the primary relation to the maternal body (Butler Gender 107).

The denial of libidinal multiplicity is important to paternal law and to the Symbolic because patriarchal language is dependent on the restriction of meaning based on a simple, universalised binary logic. One is either a man; or one is not. And the Symbolic unifies this signification with either the subject (one is a man) or the object (one is not; one is a woman). Most importantly, the Symbolic unifies the signification (one is a man or one is not) to the body. Thus, paternal law is able to perpetuate its principles since "[t]he 'subject' that emerges as a consequence of this repression [of libidinal drives] becomes a bearer or proponent of this repressive law" (ibid).

Paternal law consists, as I have explored throughout this dissertation, of the manner in which patriarchal ideologies, borne by patriarchal language, impose limitations on the female subject in the world. Thus the signification of the female subject, under paternal law, is that women are the object of patriarchal discourse which refuses them a subject position, especially a subject position from which to speak.[20] The linguistic refusal of women's subject position means that in a literary context they are "operating in the literary margins" (McGrath "In the Margin" 28). Women, despite the interdiction against their voice and their subjectivity are driven to write and address the issue of their subjectivity. Cary, assuming subjectivity, relates women's experience in early modern

[20] One of the main points of Belsey's The Subject of Tragedy is that "[t]o be a subject is to speak, to identify with the 'I' of an utterance, to be the agent of the action inscribed in the verb"(5).

England in the form of what Kristeva's theory calls the "text". The "text", Kristeva points out, is "the essential element of a practice involving the sum of the unconscious, subjective, and social relations in gestures of confrontation and appropriation, destruction and construction" (Revolution 16).

It is the linguistic mode of patriarchal language which constructs an identity for women in Cary's play, as well as for women in early modern English society. How is this "text" produced, if culture and the Symbolic forbid women their voices by suppressing them? It is by connecting to the unconscious drives which the Symbolic represses. The connection to these drives is provided through the theory of the Semiotic, which Kristeva claims, is more than a "theoretical supposition" (ibid 68). It allows for the possibility of women voicing their subjectivities and to express the drives of the unconscious, in the moment that exists before all signification evolves into the Symbolic (ibid 34).

Kristeva recognises that in the signifying process there is an arbitrary connection between the signifier and the signified and that the sign is a substitute for that which language represents (Revolution 21). But since patriarchal language would claim that the "subject" cannot know anything about itself outside of patriarchal culture, the Symbolic insists that there is unification between the signified and the signifier, producing a singular meaning for the subject who speaks (Kristeva Revolution 26). But within the sign lies an ambiguity; since within the 'arbitrary' connection between the signified and its signifier lies a range of possibilities for new meaning. The signifier and the signified are in fact split from each other in a way in which the "subject" has to split from itself, from its

mother, and submit to the suppression of its primary libidinal drives in order to be born into the Symbolic (ibid 48). Lacan first sees the "subject" as unified within the mirror, but his body is necessarily split from this image (ibid 46). This is the split of the signifier from the signified (ibid 47), and which creates a place where multiple forms of meaning are possible. Multiple meanings disrupt the signifying process of the Symbolic (Butler Gender 112) In Cary's "text" is a vision of the female subject that is split from the Symbolic reality that paternal law imposes through the Chorus and other characters' criticisms.

The Semiotic is itself a description of the process which leads up to the Symbolic (ibid 68) and so is itself a part of the Symbolic. The Semiotic leads to the split of the subject from its unconscious or pre-Symbolic state (Kristeva Revolution 36), which Kristeva terms the thetic (ibid). The thetic has to take place in order for one to enter into the Symbolic and become a subject, in which he believes he is unified just as the sign becomes a unified symbol of the signifier and the signified. But the sign actually contains the split of the signifier and the signified (ibid 35, 49), so that meaning in language is always deferred (ibid 35). The Semiotic specifies the functioning of "the preconditioning of the [S]ymbolic" (ibid 49), and is "discernable before the mirror stage" (ibid) in which "no Meaning exists, but there *do* exist articulations heterogeneous to signification and the sign: the semiotic *chora*" (ibid 36).

This description of the production of the subject, prior to language, also reflects the woman writer in process. In this case it is Cary's own representation of the emergence of

the female subject, both of herself as a writer and of her female characters in her text. If it is beyond the limitations imposed by the Symbolic for a woman's voice to express subjectivity, then her emergence can be described as the Semiotic process: Davis and Schleifer point out that "in Semiotics [is] a new dynamic of production that will encompass the unrepresentable - the unconscious - while maintaining itself as a social practice and a reflection on social construction and signifying systems" (274). In this case the Semiotic provides a space in which to display and signify the female subject's voice which the Symbolic has denied

Kristeva introduces the *chora* to explain the drives which exist prior to language and therefore to signification (ibid 26). Despite the fact that the *chora* is mobile and prior to language, it is still subject to regulation "which is different from that of [S]ymbolic law, but which nevertheless effectuates discontinuities by temporarily articulating them and then starting over, again and again" (ibid). In this way drives resurface in the Semiotic description of language where the "arbitrary" link between the signifier and the signified can be described by the Freudian notions of the unconscious and the death drive (Kristeva Revolution 22), as the Semiotic breaks constantly into the Symbolic. This notion connects what Kristeva terms "empty signifiers" [suppressed drives] with "articulation" through the "text" (ibid 37). It is a "*signifying process* as a whole, in which significance puts the subject in process /on trial" (ibid 22).

As Cary argues for the acknowledgement of female subjectivity, her text becomes a representation of her female subject on trial. The dialectic which is apparent in Mariam is

Cary's argument for the action of her female characters limited within the terms of the Symbolic but expressed via the tactic of the Semiotic. Cary's ambiguity about female subjectivity is a symptom of representing Mariam's drive to express herself (and thus her subjectivity) and still work within limits of the Symbolic. Mariam's own speech represents "censure and critical judgement" (Ferguson 48) so that censure becomes a theme in Cary's play (ibid). Essentially the significance of the ambiguity which Cary displays about female subjectivity is that it puts into practice a particular linguistic strategy that theoretically collapses the subject, including its extra-linguistic factors (such as the psyche and history (Davis and Schleifer 273)) into the signifying process. Each chapter in this dissertation has shown how patriarchal ideologies create and limit women and the term "woman" within patriarchal language.

In no way am I intending to read Cary's play autobiographically, but the linguistic strategy of ambiguity is a fundamental part of Mariam, precisely because Cary is writing as a woman who is denied her voice by patriarchal language. Ambiguity, by definition means to have more than a single possible meaning and that the meaning intended is doubtful or uncertain. The ambiguity of Cary's text allows it to create the space for the denied woman's voice to speak but still pander to paternal law. However, Cary's ambiguity also casts doubt and uncertainty on the functioning of paternal law and, as I have shown, this reveals the limitations which it places on women's subjectivity. In this sense Mariam is a "text" whose ambiguity presents a critique of patriarchy. Moreover, Cary's text creates multiple meanings which disrupt the singularity of meaning which the

binary logic of patriarchal language permits. In this way Cary's act of writing is the theory of the Semiotic in practice.

Cary's play also presents the workings of the Symbolic and the Semiotic through the figures of her characters in Mariam. Bearing in mind that the Semiotic is part of, or the precondition for, the Symbolic, it is not surprising to encounter the patriarchal voice in the play. Herod presents the reader with the voice of the patriarchal language of authority, which assumes control over the feminine and dissolves it into symbolism and submission to patriarchy. Mariam presents the feminine voice of the Semiotic. She critiques patriarchal rule, but also exhibits an ambiguous understanding of herself in relation to the patriarch. Following her own drive for self-expression by maintaining her personal integrity, she goes to her death, signifying the enforcement of paternal law, and the Symbolic's designation of Mariam's body-object as the site of patriarchal control.

The opening lines of Mariam form part of a soliloquy by the main protagonist Mariam. These lines present the reader with three aspects of the Semiotic: ambiguity; a critique of patriarchy; and a critique of the critique of patriarchy. The last two aspects of the Semiotic are what Kristeva expounds on in her paper "Semiotics: A Critical Science and /or a Critique of Science." The very title of Kristeva's essay implies the multiplicity and ambiguity which she later extrapolates on in Revolution of Poetic Language, for which the "theory of processes" becomes implicated in the process of signification. In addition, Semiotics, as the site of the critique of meaning, is especially evident in literature where meaning is never reducible, nor simple, but continuously generative of new meanings

(Davis and Schleifer 274). The opening lines of the play query the production of language and the speaking subject, and produce a complex argument for women's speech (Ferguson 48) that is ambiguous.

> How oft have I with public voice run on?
>
> To censure Rome's last hero for deceit:
>
> Because he wept when Pompey's life was gone,
>
> Yet when he liv'd he thought his name too great.
>
> (I.i.1-4, cited in Ferguson 48)

Ferguson offers a reading of the rhetorical question of the first line which exposes the complexity of the question in relation to the female speaking subject as part of a larger unit (ibid). Ferguson assumes that this first line is already a critique of the female voice since the theme of "unbridled speech" is what leads to Mariam's downfall as her husband decides "to censure her voice definitively" (ibid). But the Semiotic structure of Mariam's speech is exposed here and refuses censure even as it acknowledges the censure against her "running on" with her public voice. This is especially evident in Ferguson's description of these lines:

> The structure of the verse creates for the reader a slight but significant tension between pausing—to respect the seemingly self-contained formal and semantic unit of the first line—and proceeding, according to the dictates of the syntactic logic which retrospectively reveals the first line to be part of a larger unit. The verse thereby works to fashion a counterpoint between formal and semantic strains. We pause on the theme of 'running on,' we run on to encounter the theme

> of censure.... These lines work not only to anticipate the drama to come (deploying the strategy of the 'pregnant' opening...) but also to mark the play, for Cary herself and perhaps for her first 'private readers', with something we might call a woman's *signature*. (ibid)

Ferguson's description not only exposes the deployment of meaning in these opening lines, which creates the space in which she later suggests one is able to read the question of the female voice, but she terms this strategy of deployment female (a woman author's *signature*). The 'pregnant' pause suggests a return to the maternal body by Mariam, as the speaker of these lines, and by Cary, as the author of the play.

The connection between this question of speech and the semantic ordering of this line exposes the process of the Semiotic. By creating what Ferguson has called a "counterpoint", the question does not seek to be answered in any single manner. It allows for multiple answers and so, as a question, presents the reader with a multitude of options with what asking this question means. Naturally it is for the reader to decide by reading the rest of the text, but the "text" similarly refuses a single answer, we see instead the female subject on trial.

We further encounter ambiguity in the above lines as Mariam compares her relationship with Herod to that of Caesar's to Pompey (Gutierrez 239). More particularly by aligning her experience with Caesar's "she 'degenders' her prior speech act..." (Ferguson 49).

She also opens up, through drawing on this classic story, a strong connection that this criticism is not only personal, but highly political and moralistic.

Mariam accuses Herod of being power hungry and murderous by drawing a parallel between Herod and Pompey. However we see that Mariam recants, after making such a criticism of Herod's behaviour. "Excuse too rash a judgement in a woman: / My sex pleads pardon, pardon then afford, / Mistaking is with us, but too too common." (I.i.6-8) As soon as she perceives herself as gendered she enters the Symbolic mode of binary logic. In her effort to realise her subjectivity, she splits from the Semiotic and enters the Symbolic signification of woman as object. But she still retains some of the Semiotic process, available to her in the ambiguity of the text, as in censoring herself she also censors Caesar; the "us" in the last line could either mean "us women" or refer to Mariam and Caesar (Ferguson 49), since she has previously addressed the "Roman Lord". In a society which identifies an acceptable female identity as quiet and chaste through the literature of "countless conduct books" (Hiscock 106), it is not only Mariam's judgement which is rash, but her speech too. To speak is a double mistake: she erroneously assumes the role of subject within the Symbolic and in doing so expresses the death drive (in that it leads to her end) by articulating her desire and critique of patriarchal limitations.

Though Mariam may at first seem to be endorsed with the power to censure the behaviour of "Rome's last hero," moving through her speech we see that Caesar may be the subject of Mariam's discourse but Mariam, as a woman and as a subject with the ability to speak, soon becomes the object of the discourse which governs the play. By

censuring her own actions and the rationality behind her own speech she constructs her own speech as needing to be censored. She shows how female speech is negatively constructed within the discourse that governs her social interactions, by constructing her speech negatively against Caesar's actions. The binary logic of the opposites of discourse come to be valued as positive, but this does not prevent Mariam from speaking or critiquing the patriarch.

Despite the fact that she has made the error of speaking out against Herod in the past, she reinforces herself with the identity of a chaste wife, reintroducing the ambiguity of the Semiotic and renewing the process of being on trial. In trying to assume subjectivity by rupturing the meaning which patriarchal language imposes (that a wife who speaks in public is an unchaste wife), Mariam mimics the thetic phase which the male subject undergoes when entering the Symbolic (though this, I have noted before, does not mean that all masculine action within the Symbolic is sanctioned). Thus the signifier / signified break is synonymous with social sanction: 'the first social censorship'" (Kristeva Revolution 48). Mariam's ambiguity attempts to comply with these sanctions as well as undergo the thetic phase which would allow her sanctioned signification within the symbolic. As if on trial, Mariam's soliloquy rehearses sanctioned action in the form of her acceptance of patriarchal rule against suppressed desire:

> Then why grieves Mariam Herod's death to hear?
>
> ....
>
> These thoughts have power, his death to make me bear,
>
> May more, to wish the news may firmly hold:

Yet cannot this repulse some falling tear.

That will against my will some grief unfold.

(I.i.38, 51-4)

Mariam desires to be rid of Herod, but we see the sublimation of this desire and the power of the Symbolic over the construction of her position as she expresses grief against her will for Herod's loss over her own injuries.

What the contrasting lines in Mariam's soliloquy highlight is her desire to express herself and then her denial of this desire. It shows that Mariam moves between a Semiotic rupturing of Symbolic language only to have recourse to a language which suppresses her subjectivity. This is essential in order to avoid the psychosis which Salome's murderous desire tends to verge on, and for which Constabarus sanctions the restriction of women's subjectivity.

But the vacillation in these lines has a secondary effect which is also an attribute of the Semiotic. That is in their ambiguity they are able to critique patriarchal language and paternal law. In the play, we see that Cary critiques binary logic as being contradictory in itself. In the play, the patriarchal perspective which valorises women's passivity the refusal to act becomes problematic as Mariam's refusal to save herself makes clear. Mariam herself believes that her innocence and chastity are enough to protect her and she expects Herod to realise her sexual inactivity and her fidelity. What Mariam does not realise is that in order to be cast as a "safe" woman (McGrath 203) the projection of this

image, even with its reinforcement of female passivity is, in fact, a performative gender act. By refusing to behave in the way which Herod wants her to in act four, scene four, she becomes the object of suspicion rather than the agent of her innocence and chastity. When it comes to the point where Mariam needs to defend herself against the accusation that she has tried to poison Herod, we see that the subjectivity which she intermittently expressed at the beginning of the play is now suppressed. Her refusal to behave in the way in which Herod demands of her in the previous act becomes her refusal to act out and defend herself when she is condemned to death by Herod.

Andrew Hiscock points out that "[t]he martyrdom of Mariam *may* lead to a dramatic tribute to female potential as the female body is absorbed into Christological symbolism, but it also effectively silences her voice." (106) This means that, on the one hand, Mariam becomes a heroine because Cary has aligned her death with the religious discourse of Christianity. Christian discourse would be well understood by Cary's readers. But even here Cary leaves the reader in an uncertain position. Mariam's martyrdom serves to emphasise her innocence and therefore leaves the reader with the intense discomfort of her death. The reader is left with the full force of the tragedy, and all that the genre exposes: the understanding that the events might have been different, while also knowing that they could not be because they are the products of the culture governed by paternal law. Mariam's self, as a fictitious character has literally died to the Symbolic language which signifies the limits of her identity as a woman. Mariam as a "subject" in the play can no longer attempt to assert herself, and it seems that the paternal law has definitively set limits on the female subject.

We see the definitive nature of the Symbolic assert itself within Mariam, in spite of the Semiotic nature of the female writer's voice. After her death in the play, Mariam effectively becomes the object of male discourse without the threat of her subjectivity. When Nuntio comes to tell Herod of Mariam's death he refers to her in terms of ideas and their signifiers in the male binary logic of language. He refers to Mariam's end as "[t]he end of beauty, chastity and wit..." (V.i.4). Her beauty, chastity and wit become the signifiers of Mariam's being.

We see Mariam die entirely to the Symbolic since it is eventually Mariam's name, and not her self that becomes the object of Herod's desire. His speech asserts his ownership of her and Mariam, as a woman in the Symbolic, is an object appropriated by the patriarch. "Were I not made her Lord, I still should be: / But now her name must be by me ador'd" (V.i.731-732). Within this Symbolic mode of the binary logic of patriarchal language becomes apparent: Herod can express his desire, the object of which is Mariam, while Mariam could not even express herself. He can also express his subjectivity in terms of "I" "me" "my", without the censure and uncertainty that accompanies Mariam's speech: "How oft have I with public voice run on?" (I.i.1)

Even while Herod desires to hear what Mariam's last words are, he seeks to control her expression by denying her the act of dying.

> *Herod.* Oh say, what said she more? Each word she said
>
> Shall be the food whereon my heart is fed.

Nun: "Tell thou my lord thou saw'st me lose my breath."

Herod. Oh, that I could that sentence now control.

(V.i.71-74)

In the context of the patriarchally governed social order by which Mariam lives and dies, Herod appropriates the language which ends Mariam's life: "My *word*, though not my sword, made Mariam bleed," (V.i.189; emphasis added). This extract shows how the signification through the Symbolic eradicates the female subject and controls the female body. This psychosomatic aspect of language shows how language becomes inextricably linked with the world and the subject's actions. In effect, language becomes psychosomatic in that the perception of the self as expressed or repressed through language, is linked to the performance of the gendered body.

The glaring absence of Herod's acknowledgement of Mariam as a complete psychological and physical being erases Mariam's subjectivity entirely in the fifth act as he again deconstructs her person into dismembered objects of the mind and body. His, and the Nuntio's, praise of Mariam's beauty becomes the contingency on which she is judged to be acceptable by paternal law. In a curious set of lines, Cary shows how, while Mariam's beauty endorses her as a desirable object of patriarchy, it is also the cause of the demise of her subjectivity. "And not so fair, she had been longer lived: / Her overflow of beauty turned back, / And drowned the spring from whence it was derived." (V.i.240-242). That Herod utters these words is indicative of the patriarch delineating the Symbolic assignment of Mariam as an object of beauty.

Mariam is even more completely the object of the patriarch as Herod points out that there is a division between those who *may* utter Mariam's praise and those who *may not,* reinstating the limitations which patriarchal language imposes on the 'subject':

Herod. Thou dost usurp my right, my tongue was fram'd
To be the instrument of *Mariam's* praise:
Yet speak: she cannot too often fam'd:
All tongues suffice not her sweet name to raise.
(V.i.29-32)

Mariam's name in the event of her death becomes the symbol of her existence, but moreover of the power that Herod holds as he is the one who deploys the right upon those who may speak it. Mariam's physical existence has dissolved into a symbol, a word. But the meaning of that word is more than that which Herod defines it as. For the reader it is embroiled in the complexity of emotion that underscores the genre of tragedy. Moreover, it holds for the reader the symbol of a woman who refuses definition. Both Mariam and the play, Mariam, can be described by the Chorus' words at the end of the play:

So many admirable changes therein contain'd
So admirably strange variety.
This day alone, our sagest Hebrews shall
In after times the school of wisdom call.
(V.i.291-4)

Mariam is not considered the wisest of the play by the Chorus or by any of the other characters or readers, who conform to patriarchal culture, but she is the heroine and she is

true to herself. She shows courage in voicing her morals and she refuses obedience to a tyrant. What is the wisdom of the play then? Is it to behave as a wife should and be submissive, or is the message for women to remain true to themselves; a form of perfect freedom that does not lie in service to one's husband but to personal integrity. Perhaps the play is an appeal to husbands to be more clement and to recognise that a wife may be chaste and know her own mind. Perhaps it is even an appeal to husbands to recognise the sacrifices which their wives make in being submissive. The play could tell us all of these things and it is in Cary's refusal to conform to a single meaning that the play challenges the Symbolic and patriarchal logic. Women are valued in Mariam and the multiplicity of experiences of the women in the play allows us, discursively at least, to construe that the experiences of early modern women were just as various. The play allows us to understand that as difficult as it might be to express the meaning of what it was to be a woman, women recognised a dialectic space in which they could speak about, and question, what patriarchal culture said that it should mean to be a woman.

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