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"A New Kingdom of Femininity": Women's Utopias in Early English Culture and Imagination (1405-1666)

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"A New Kingdom of Femininity": Women's Utopias in Early English Culture and Imagination (1405-1666)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

Alexandra Cassatt Verini

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

'A New Kingdom of Femininity': Women's Utopias in Early English Culture and Imagination (1405-1666)

by

Alexandra Cassatt Verini

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Christine N. Chism, Co-Chair

Professor Lowell Gallagher, Co-Chair

This dissertation uncovers an overlooked history of women's utopian thought that has its foundations in the medieval period. Challenging scholarly narratives that position Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) as the foundation of utopian thought, I argue that medieval and early modern women's writing produced and/or read in English contexts engaged in unrecognized forms of utopianism that reemerge in contemporary conversations about gender and sexuality. I thus trace an earlier lineage of what Mary Louis Pratt calls "feminotopias," idealized worlds of female self-realization and social harmony, from the fifteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries. But I also expand Pratt's notion of feminotopia by showing how writers from French author Christine de Pizan to religious leader Mary Ward extended utopia beyond its narrow generic definition as an ideal world into a heuristic for imagining the world otherwise. Through such utopian thinking, women generated gynocentric models of identity, friendship and community. Writing at moments of social and political tensions, the women in my project collectively imagine ways for communities to negotiate difference—between individual women, between the past and future, humans and nature, and religious and

secular life. Reading their writings together builds a picture of how early women engaged in radical political thought that uses the past to map the future. Placing early women's writings into conversations with post-modern feminist and queer theory, my project reveals how the past can illuminate the present by offering insight into a transhistorical effort to resist oppression and imagine new possibilities. This dissertation thus generates a literary history that is not exclusively informed by geography or periodization but rather focuses on structures of feeling that strive for a better future.

The dissertation of Alexandra Cassatt Verini is approved.

Sarah T. Kareem

Eleanor K. Kaufman

Charlene Villaseñor Black

Christine N. Chism, Co-Chair

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

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"Visions of Medieval Queenship: Gender and Genre in *La Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei*." *Medieval Feminist Forum* 50, no. 2 (2015): 5-32.

"Reading Between the Lines: Female Friendship in Osbern Bokenham's Life of St Katherine of Alexandria." *Magistra: Women's Spirituality in History* 17, no. 2 (2011): 53-70.

Presentations

"Women's Complaint and Utopia." The Shakespeare Association of America, 46th Annual Meeting, March 2018.

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"Miracles of Disability in the Anglo-Norman Lives of Three British Foundresses." 47TH International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo: Session sponsored by the Society for the Study of Disability in the Middle Ages, May 2012.

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Introduction

Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) opens with a verse in which the island of Utopia itself speaks: "Utopus my ruler, converted me, formerly not an island, into an island. Alone of all lands, without the aid of abstract philosophy, I have represented for mortals the philosophical city."[1] In this prosopopoeia, utopia announces itself as created *ex nihilo*, apart from everything that has come before. As Karma Lochrie has recently argued, Renaissance scholars followed Utopus, "cordon[ing] off Thomas More and the book, *Utopia*, for modernity."[2] In addition to its look forward to modernity's interst in its own newness, this poem also has implications for utopia and gender: Utopus, a male sovereign, rules over an island that is feminized, both in its grammatical gender and its topography.[3] This gendering does insidious work, as Jean Baudrillard's much-discussed writing on islands makes clear. Baudrillard captures the long-standing framing of man as the creator of utopia and women as utopia itself when he writes: "It is that naïve creature, man, who exudes utopias, one of these being precisely woman. The latter, being a living utopia, has no need to produce any."[4] While Baudrillard claims that women passively embody a utopianism created by men and so have no need to create their own, this dissertation will argue otherwise. I argue that women, before and after More, appropriated and mobilized the association of their gender with utopia to envision and enact social change.

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[1] Thomas More, *Utopia* in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More,* ed. S.J. Edward Surtz and J.H. Hexter, vol. 4 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 113.

[2] Karma Lochrie, *Nowhere in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 181-182.

[3] On the gendering of utopia's topography, see Lee Cullen Khanna, "Utopian Exchanges: Negotiating Difference in Utopia," in *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century: Essays in English and French Utopian Writing*, eds. Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tolley (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2007), 17-38.

[4] Jean Baudrillard, *Cool Memories* II, 1987-1990, trans. Chris Turner (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996), 26.

In the West, the notion of utopia as an ideal yet unlocatable or non-existent society dates as far back as Plato's *Republic* (c. 381 BCE) and *The Bible,* but the word itself was not coined until Thomas More's 1516 eponymous publication. While More's original name for his society *Nusquama* means "no place," utopia derives from the Greek *u* (no) and *topas* (place) and puns on *eu-topas* (good place); it thus literally means "a good/happy place that is nowhere." From its earliest conception, therefore, utopia encoded paradox and tension, acting as place and no place, desire and absence, and signifying both "new" knowledge and a return to a classical past. Such tensions persisted in later canonical early modern utopian works written in the style of More by Francis Bacon (*New Atlantis*), Tommaso Campanella (*The City of the Sun,* 1602), and Francis Goodwin (*The Man in the Moon,* 1638).

Because utopia has been too narrowly defined, women, particularly before the eighteenth-century, have been excluded from studies of utopia as a genre, and Margaret Cavendish's proto-feminist revision of More's work has generally been seen as the first women's utopia. However, this genealogy is troubled if we expand the definition of utopia from an ideal, geographically-unlocatable, programmatic space, to, in Lochrie's words, "a heuristic device that opposes our habits of thinking and ideologies with the intimation of the possibility that things could be different."[5] Taking this more expansive definition of utopia as a conceptual frame rather than defining it as a discrete set of elements within a literary genre, it is possible to identify strains utopianism before More, and it becomes clear that medieval and early modern women could and did engage in utopianism.

The timeframe I have selected, 1405-1666, proposes an 'anti-genealogy,' that diverges from that generally asserted by the scholars who posit Thomas Moore's *Utopia* as the inaugural utopian text and follow this tradition through to modern science fiction.[6] By beginning with Christine de

[5] Lochrie, *Nowhere,* 17.

[6] A key text in this vein of scholarship is Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), which argues that More's *Utopia* is the first utopian text and is "almost exactly contemporaneous with most of the innovations that have seemed

Pizan and ending with Margaret Cavendish, I suggest instead that the utopian impulse is not uniquely wedded to the modern but also connects to a different, older tradition of spiritually-infused female community. Women in this period were particularly well equipped to engage in utopian thinking because of their theoretical (though not always practical) exclusion from political life. Their omission from traditional theories of identity, friendship and community drove them to develop new constructs, to think outside the bounds of what had been formally articulated and to engage their present realities with the "not yet being" of the future.[7] Female community in the medieval and early modern periods is thus aligned with a utopian mindset: though many examples of women's communities and women in positions of power exist, women's politics in this period occupied a no-place within dominant discourse, a site of potential rather than a predetermined set of directives. Rather than propose an essentializing view of women as more sociable, virtuous or benevolent than men, I argue that pre-modern women were particularly attuned to utopianism because of their exclusions from political life. They enacted models of identity, friendship and community in utopian visions that pushed the boundaries of utopia itself. The works in this project represent communities driven by future-oriented activity (as opposed to the general communitarianism of, for instance, a domestic household) that are not statically harmonious but rather develop radical visions of communities that work across difference. Their visions, moreover, have persisted in the contemporary utopian discourses of feminist and queer studies. My project, therefore, delineates a cross-section of women's literature that participates in a tradition of women's utopia across chronological, geographic and generic divides, challenging the monopoly of the modern and the secular upon utopia.

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to define modernity (conquest of the New World, Machiavelli and modern politics, Ariosto and modern literature, Luther and modern consciousness, printing and the modern public sphere)" (xvii).

[7] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 119-120.

To describe a mode of aspirational thinking developed and enacted by women, I use the term "feminotopia," a word originally coined by Mary Louis Pratt. Pratt defined feminotopias as "idealized worlds of female self-realization and social harmony," but the works in this project expand Pratt's definition since while they depict female agency and community, they are often far from harmonious. Instead, I use feminotopia to describe communities that are not necessarily already perfect but rather strive towards the future to establish worlds in which women thrive. These works are utopian not because they offer blueprints for an ideal society but because they enact aspirational thinking that draws on the past to map a better future that is at once critical of the present and, at times, of its own aspirations.

To investigate this pre-modern feminotopianism my project uses Christine de Pizan and Margaret Cavendish as bookends, examining a selection of texts and artworks produced in England and/or produced for Anglophone women's communities on the Continent between 1405 and 1666. By looking to a future in which women had increased autonomy and happiness, women not only critiqued the practices of their present but they also theorized and enacted alternative political, religious and economic systems that imagined better futures for both genders. Rather than jettisoning the past, these utopian alternatives worked with the past to build new models. The women in my project developed a tactical utopianism as an effort to create unity across difference that contains multiple, oftentimes oppositional, impulses. As I will ultimately show, this utopianism, far from the naïve idealism that is usually attributed to utopia, remains aware of its own limitations—they warn against simplistic idealism as a means of self-preservation, allowing women to engage in dreams of a better future with a degree of pragmatism.[8]

To describe the process whereby premodern women's writing uses pieces of the past to construct new futures, I employ the term bricolage, which Levi-Strauss coined in his anthropological

[8] This notion of a utopia that makes due with limited resources is developed in Anahid Nersessian, *Utopia Limited* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

work on myth. Bricolage refers to "the necessity of borrowing one's concepts from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined."[9] Lévi-Strauss opposes the enactor of bricolage, the *bricoleur,* to the engineer, who, he posits, constructs the totality of a discourse from "raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project."[10] A *bricoleur,* on the other hand, "uses 'the means at hand,' that is, the instruments he finds at his disposition around him..."[11] In bricolage, therefore, there is always a degree of the unintended because the cultural elements that the *bricoleur* employs "are restricted by the fact that they are drawn from the language where they

[9] This is Jacques Derrida's summary of Claude Lévi-Strauss's theory in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference,* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 285. While Lévi-Strauss introduced bricolage in an anthropological context, it has been applied in a broad range of subjects. For example, Gérard Genette applied bricolage to literary criticism in "Structuralism et critique litteraire" *L'Arc* 26 (1965): 37-49. Gerald Garvey used "bricolage" to refer to the ongoing process of constitutional bricolage (*Constitutional Bricolage* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971]). Jasper Halfmann and Clod Zillich discussed bricolage as a technique by which marginal social groups might produce "reduced models," for example a neighborhood, as a part of a process of empowerment ("Reality and Reduced Model," *Studio international* 193, no. 986 [1977]). Medieval art historians use bricolage to describe the reuse of antique subject matter or fragments of antique artifacts. See Jane Hawkes, "The Rothbury Cross: An Iconographic Bricolage," *Gesta* 35 (1996): 77-94. Claire Sponsler has discussed bricolage as a cultural process of appropriation in "In Transit: Theorizing Cultural Appropriation in Medieval Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32 (2002): 17-39. The term has also been applied to contemporary art. Bruce Ferguson wrote that Kalus vom Bruch uses "the techniques of the bricoleur" in a video combining documentary footage of World War II with images of himself (Bruce W. Ferguson, "Video? Art? History?" in *Kunstlerischer Austausch. Artistic Exchange,* ed. Thomas W. Gaehtgets, 3 vols [Berlin: Akademie, 1993], 3:213-22). Finally, bricolage has been associated with postmodernity. See Martin Roberts, *Michel Tournier: Bricolage and Cultural Mythology* (Saratoga, CA: ANMA Libri and Stanford: Department of French and Italian, 1994) and Homi Bhabha, who writes, "the absence of the dialectic of depth-inside/outside—is now replaced by a lateral 'side-by-sideness' (collage, bricolage) of the postmodern as palimpsest" ("Postmodernism/Postcolonialsm" in *Critical Terms for Art History,* ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996], 316). These references are cited in *Myth, Montage and Visuality in Late Medieval Manuscript Culture: Christine de Pizan's Epistre Othea*, ed. Marilynn Desmond and Pamela Sheingorn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006) n. 24, 245-8.

[10] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 17.

[11] Ibid.

already possess a sense which sets a limit on their freedom of maneuver."[12] Lévi-Strauss does not read gender into his discussion of bricolage, but my work suggests that this kind of cultural assemblage can be gendered feminine. I thus find new significance in a critical term that has, for the most part, been laid aside. If feminotopia is the product, bricolage is the method through which it is produced. To imagine worlds in which women not only wielded power but lived in supportive communities, medieval and early modern women did not jettison the past: rather, they deconstructed models that had been crafted by men and used pieces from them to construct their own worlds. Moreover, by explicitly portraying gender itself as a form of bricolage, these women frame this strategy as particularly useful for women.

Using bricolage, the works in this project enact utopias that, while distinct, commonly juxtapose incommensurate elements. They consequently produce self-critical, secular and queer modes of utopianism. By bricolating pieces of misogynistic rhetoric to build an ideal women's world, Christine de Pizan incorporates an awareness of vulnerability and self-criticism that sheds light on the complexities of contemporary gender performance. While Christine's work implicitly evokes a women's religious community, the bricolage of lay and religious elements becomes more explicit in the works and careers of the nuns of Syon and in the lives of Margery Kempe and Mary Ward. By overlaying worldly ideals with religious ones, these women represent non-linear forms of time—earthly and eternal—, which produce proleptic visions of both the queer and the secular. Their aspirational worlds are queer because they bring together asynchronous temporalities that contest normative lifecycles. This queering of time enables these works to enact prescient forms of secularism. I use secular here not in the way we often understand it now, as non-religious, but rather

[12] Ibid., 19. In this sense, bricolage corresponds with Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic, of which he writes: "Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated –overpopulated– with the intentions of others." Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Text Press, 1981), 294.

in the Augustinian sense of a middle ground between lay and religious life in which ethical values are shared. As the aspirational women in my project negotiate between earthly and spiritual exigencies, they produce a mode of Augustinian secularism that results in the ethical openness, ambiguity, and self-critical aspects that characterized feminotopia. Bricolage in these women's communities admits surprise, difference and chance, and when these elements come into contact with aspirational thought, they have the capacity to change how we think about utopia. Reading these works as utopian reveals the legacy of religious thinking, which found its way into the works of Protestant authors Lady Mary Wroth and Margaret Cavendish and, later still, into writings by twentieth century women like Margaret Atwood and Octavia Butler. By placing such disparate writers into contact with each other, my project enacts its own bricolage, with the intent of producing unexpected connections and meanings.

Utopia

To understand how and why we should read the texts in this dissertation as utopian, we need to consider utopia itself. Because of its narrow generic classification as a work in which a male traveler discovers an unknown ideal land that casts a negative light on his contemporary world, histories of utopia have generally disregarded works before More's *Utopia.* While scholars of utopia concede that medieval notions of New Jerusalem and the Land of Cokaygne resemble utopia, they have generally concluded that they are unutopian because they act as wish-fulfillment narratives of a time after and place outside history. Some scholars, however, have made the case for medieval utopianism. In the early twentieth-century, R.W. Chambers, Helen C. White and P. Albert Duhamel alluded to utopia in medieval contexts. More recently, as Lochrie summarizes, Sheila Delany proposes heresy and alchemy as "sites of medieval utopian thought;" Michael Uebel reads utopian modes in the cognitive disruptions of *The Letter of Prester John* and defines utopia in terms of an otherness that results from "some temporal, cultural, or spatial break with traditional modes of

thinking and living that turns alterity itself into an object for analysis;" Sylvia Federico argues that Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* enacts a kind of impossible utopian hope; Aranye Fradenburg reads medieval romance for its utopian ability to surface "revolution as well as reaction;" Patricia Clare Ingham argues for utopian elements of medieval Arthurian romance, particularly its links to Welsh resistance to English cultural and political sovereignty; Christopher Kendrick argues for the importance of the Land of Cokaygne to Utopia; Anne Lake Prescott links More's radicalism to his use of medieval materials, including Mandeville's quasi-utopian places and the idea of carnival from the Lady of Cokaygne; Paul Strohm applies Ernst Bloch's notion of "utopian surplus" to Chaucer's Friar; and Margaret Ferguson has considered the utopian elements of Christine de Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies*.[13] Finally, Lochrie herself has published the first book-length study devoted exclusively to medieval utopianism.

These scholars have opened up utopia to the middle ages. They have argued for the imperative of "unmoor[ing] utopia from More" and reading utopia not as a geographical place or an idealized mirror society but rather according to Ernst Bloch's conception of a utopian function found in everything from literature to popular culture to architecture, fairy tales, music and circus.[14]

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[13] Sheila Delany, *Medieval Literary Politics: Shapes of Ideology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 6. Michael Uebel, "Imperial Fetishism" in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 267 and *Esctatic Transformation On the Uses of Alterity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Louise O. Fradenburg, "The Wife of Bath's Passing Fancy," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 8 (1986): 31-58; Patricia Clare Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies: Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), "Pastoral Histories: Conquest, Utopia, and the Wife of Bath's Tale," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 44 (2002): 34 – 46, and "Making All Things New: Past, Progress, and the Promise of Utopia," *JMEMS* 2006; Paul Strohm, "Fictions of Time and Origin: Friar Huberd and the Lepers," in *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 65 – 79; Margaret Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 179 – 224.

[14] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1986), 144.

Bloch coined the term "utopian function" to characterize the anticipatory consciousness of a utopianism that imagines "future possibilities of being different and better."[15] For Bloch, utopia is found in "illusionary expectations and wish-fulfillment, but its naivety has a heuristic function and belongs to the logic of discovery" or a "method of delivery of new ideas."[16] In this characterization, Bloch frequently refers to the "not yet" by which he means a search or desire for something better in the lived moment. His utopianism thus actively resists the teleological closure of an apocalyptic or utopian ideal in favor of an unfinished, unsettled, and anticipatory present.

Other scholars have followed Bloch's lead, theorizing a utopianism independent of the legacy of More's work. Russell Jacoby, for example, posits an iconoclastic utopianism that resists blueprints while Louis Marin pursues utopianism in terms of spatial play, according to which the pun of utopia renders it a 'neutral space,' neither here nor there. In her study of Renaissance utopias, Marina Leslie writes: "I want to consider utopia as a kind of edgy, multiple, and palimpsestic way of reading."[17] Sociologist Ruth Levitas, even as she critiques Bloch's essentialist notion of a utopian impulse as an anthropological given,[18] supports his expansion of the term by reading utopian narratives in terms of the "education of desire" and arguing that utopias "operate at the level of experience, not merely cognition, encouraging the sense that it does not have to be like this, it could be otherwise."[19] For Levitas, utopia is not an ideal detached from reality; rather, "the unfinished

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Wayne Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982), 54.

[17] Marina Leslie, *Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

[18] Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 290.

[19] Ibid., 143.

nature of reality locates concrete utopia as a possible future within the real."[20] For Levitas and other theorists such as José Esteban Muñoz and Paul Ricouer, utopia is grounded in "estrangement and defamiliarisation, rendering the taken-for granted world problematic, and calling into question the actually existing state of affairs, not the imposition of a plan for future."[21] For these thinkers, utopia is a mode of critique that renders strange our everyday existence rather than a precise geographical place, or a realized ideal. Scholars of science fiction such as Tom Moylan, Fredric Jameson and Darko Suvin have also contributed to the notion of utopia as a form of estrangement.[22] They argue for a utopianism that operates not as naïve wish-fulfillment but as a heuristic device that opposes conventional habits of thinking and ideologies with the hope of something different, a hope that often manifests as every-day practice.

Within this conception of utopia lie the intertwined affective impulses of desire, wonder, melancholy and failure. Utopia, as the longing for something else, is inherently infused with desire in ways that include but are not exclusive to the erotic. The product of such desire, as Bloch maintains, can be wonder, which is the necessary cognitive shock that precipitates "the cracks and crevices in ordinary, conventional perception" leading to utopian foresightedness.[23] Wonder makes visible vistas beyond the present that anticipate the future. While such utopias are about possibility, they are also inevitability bordered with unfulfilled longing and disappointment. As Lochrie explains, the estrangement that utopia enacts is rooted in melancholia: "melancholy is not the disease for which

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[20] Ibid., 89.

[21] Ruth Levitas, "For Utopia: the (Limits of the) Utopian Function in late Capitalist Society," in *Philosophy of Utopia*, ed. Barbara Goodwin (New York: Routlege, 2001), 39.

[22] For Jameson's idea of desire as a function of utopia, see *Seeds of Time,* 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994-1996). Darko Suvin, *Defined by a Hollow: Essays on Utopia, Science Fiction and Political Epistemology. Ralahine Utopian Studies*, vol. 6 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010).

[23] Ernst Bloch, *A Philosophy of the Future*., trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 4.

Utopia is the cure: rather, it is the very affective mode of all utopianism: melancholia itself contains the possibility of transformation in its rebellious complaint against loss…offering a 'form of revolt' against the static pragmatism that would deny utopian ideals."[24] Melancholy at once drives utopia and can emerge from utopia.

The latter possibility occurs through the fact that for utopia to remain utopian, it must fail. As Jameson puts it, "Utopia's deepest subject, and the source of what is vibrantly political about it is precisely our inability to conceive it."[25] Terry Eagleton concurs, observing, "The only authentic image of the future is, in the end, the failure of the present."[26] For Bloch, "utopia is not presence but promise, and a promise to which we can never fully respond since that would work to close and negate utopian spaces of possibility. Utopia succeeds through its very failure to imagine a better future, or rather, through its demonstration of our imprisonment in a non-utopian present."[27] Muñoz in his study of queer utopias equally embraces the potential of failure, as he writes that "utopianism represents a failure be normal" but that "within failure we can locate a kernel of potentiality."[28] Because utopia is linked to failure, it is not neatly distinguishable from dystopia. As Marina Leslie writes, "The establishment of an ideal definition is itself a utopian construction that covertly polices its borders by displacing its own negative (or dystopian) other onto those utopian

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[24] Lochrie cites Gunter Grass's essay on Durer's *Melancolia*: "melancholy and utopia are heads and tails of the same coin" 187. In *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton characterizes melancholia as symptomatic of societies burdened with "many discontents, common grievances, complaints, poverty, barbarism, begging," for which he offers his own utopia as a remedy. Lochrie, *Nowhere,* 188-191.

[25] Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986,* vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 1988), 101.

[26] Terry Eagleton, "Utopia and Its Opposities," *Social Register* 36 (2000): 36.

[27] Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia,* trans. Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[28] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 172.

fictions that it rejects."[29] Utopia thus teems with seemingly incompatible affective orientations: it yearns for happiness but only because it is dissatisfied with the existing world. This duality become especially visible in utopian worlds created by women who had been disenfranchised but nonetheless envisioned radical possibilities for hope. This dialectic of hope and failure in women's utopias results in self-critical utopias that advocate liberal, progressive reform in "self-critical or qualitative ways," emphasizing the tensions and contradictions surrounding the very idea of reform.[30] Tom Moylan has classified these types of utopias as critical utopias, which afford the utopian alternative its own weaknesses, ambiguities and imperfections.[31] Moylan makes the case for this mode of utopianism in science fiction, but as we will see, it emerges much earlier.

The utopias in my project accord with views of utopia as a conceptual and affective framework that casts new light on the present and future, but I also chart new ground by examining real-world communities alongside literary fictions, which accord, in some cases, with Michel Foucault's notion of "heterotopia." Heterotopias, a term borrowed from the medical term for a part found out of place in a body—a tooth in the skull, a fingernail in the hand etc., —are spaces of otherness and difference that exist in the 'real' world.[32] Foucault outlines six principles for heterotopias. Most relevant to my project are his assertion that these spaces can change in function and meaning over time (he uses the example of a cemetery); his argument that heterotopia can

[29] Leslie, *Renaissance Utopias*, 4-5.

[30] Amy Boesky, *Founding Fictions: Utopias in Early Modern England* (Athens, GA: the University of Georgia Press, 1996) 9.

[31] Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction the Utopian Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1986).

[32] Foucault outlines the notion of heterotopia on three occasions between 1966-67. He discusses it firstly in his preface to *Les mots et les choses* (1966), later translated into English as *The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), secondly, in a radio broadcast on utopia and heterotopia (1966) and, finally, in a 1967 lecture, "Des Espace Autres," presented to a group of architects and not published until shortly before Foucault's death in 1984. The first refers to textual spaces, whilst the other two, with close similarities, concern particular social and cultural spaces.

juxtapose several incompatible spaces in one real place; the notion that heterotopias are linked to slices of time, heterochronies; and his conception of heterotopias as at once isolated and penetrable.[33]

Foucault uses mirrors as a metaphor for the relationship between heterotopia and utopia, conveying their inter-related qualities:

> The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.[34]

While Foucault's distinction initially suggests a binary between 'unreal' utopias and 'real' heterotopias, the two are not, in fact, opposed: they form a continuum with the mirror placed in between as an intermediate experience, somewhere between the real and the unreal. Indeed, most of the examples of heterotopia that Foucault provides include utopian aspects.

Strikingly, mirrors appear in nearly all the works in my project: Christine's Lady Reason from *The City of Lady* holds a mirror that represents her ability to reveal the truth; Syon Abbey's religious rule for women is called the *Mirror of our Ladye,* indicating the way in which Syon's nuns were

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[33] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986) 22-7; *Order of Things*.

[34] Foucault, "Other Spaces," 22-7. Lefebvre also develops a theory of the utopia and heteropia. For Lefebvre, utopia is the central conception of urban space that cuts through capitalist spatializations, resisting homogenization and rationality. He conceives of urban space as a generative unification of differences in which something is always happening through assembly and reassembly and creative encounters: "contrasts, opposition, superpostions and juxtapositions replace separation, spatio-temporal distances." *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 125.

intended to imitate the Virgin Mary as well as St Bridget their foundress; Mary Ward's career-changing vision occurred while she was sitting before a mirror; and Mary Wroth's *Urania* compares romance to a mirror that at once reflects the present and shapes the future.[35] The prevalence of mirror imagery in these texts is one of the reasons that I have grouped them together as utopian: they are each engaged in a two-way process of shaping and reflecting the present and future, which shares some of the qualities of Foucault's heterotopia but, given the more expansive definition of utopia that I have offered, can more usefully be classified as utopian.

This metaphor of a mirror that at once reflects and projects forward visualizes these works' participation in a utopianism that is rooted in the past. Utopianism since More has been tied to a future that breaks with the present and thus with the advent of an 'original' modernity. More's utopia is, however, far from *sui generis:* it draws on many pre-existing genres and engages with ideas from the past such as Plato's *Republic* and monasticism—it is, therefore, a bricolage creation. As Jameson writes, "even a no-place must be put together out of already existing representations." But even Jameson equates utopia with singularity —with that status of being "one of a kind."[36] The women's utopias I examine are, on the other hand, constantly aware of the impossibility of newness—they foreground their own hybrid constructions, and they mobilize these hybridities to their advantage. Pre-modern feminotopias use the past to contemplate the future. In this, they accord with Bloch's insistence on the essential role of the past in creating utopian futures, as he writes that the past offers "figural traces of the future."[37] In the works I examine, there is an

[35] On this metaphor, see Jennifer Lee Carrell, "A Pack of lies in a looking glass: Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* and the Magic Mirror of Romance," *SEL* 34 (1994): 79-107.

[36] Jameson, *Archaeologies,* 211.

[37] Michael Landmann, "Talking with Ernst Bloch: Korcula, 1968," *Telos* 25 (1975): 165-185. Bloch discusses two means of encountering the past: anamnesis—the idea that recollection demonstrates similarity between past and present, that there can be no fundamentally new knowledge since the past already contains them—and anagnorisis, which creates novelty out of a tension between the

especially urgent need to bricolate the past to reform the future, as these women's visions seek to use the lessons of a past that privileges male authority to make a new future that provides positive foundations for women.

These reconsidered notions of utopia—its function as a heuristic that frames the present in a critical light, its affective registers, its productive use of the past—inform my approach to utopia. But none of these utopian theorists has addressed how gender factors into utopianism. Indeed, most of their examples are works written by and for men.[38] Lochrie's book on medieval utopianism indirectly accounts for this neglect of women when Lochrie explains that she does not consider apocalyptic and religious mystical works because of "their failure to imagine utopia in this world."[39] Therefore, because the majority of English records of medieval women come from religious contexts, Lochrie's study of utopia includes no major women characters or authors. However, my project asks, what if we choose to include the religious, as well as genres traditionally associated with women like romance within the utopian framework? What if we include lived experience alongside literary fiction? What if we read the history of women's aspirational thought through the lens of bricolage? Could we then adduce a picture of utopia that not only includes women but also makes gender central to its operations?

Women's Utopias

To consider a women's utopianism, I draw on historicist studies of women's utopias from later periods. In particular, I borrow the term "feminotopia," which was coined in scholarship on

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similarity and dissimilarity of the past. Anagnorisis depends on a degree of anamnesis, but distinctly envisions a way in which the past contributes to the future without putting limits on it.

[38] In a 2006 edition of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* devoted to utopia, only one article focuses on a woman writer, and she is post-medieval. Constance M. Furey, "Utopia of Desire: The Real and Ideal in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36. 3 (2006): 561-584.

[39] Lochrie, *Nowhere,* 6.

eighteenth-century travel literature by Mary Louise Pratt to describe idealized worlds of female autonomy that embody women's "quests for self-realization and fantasies of social harmony."[40] Traditionally, feminotopias are exclusively female spaces in which women live in harmony without men: Frances Bartkowski defines a feminist utopia as "concerned with the rift between women and men."[41] I have, however, expanded this term to include societies in which men live alongside women and female communities whose relationships incorporate animosity alongside amity, but in which female autonomy and collective agency, nonetheless, are defining features.

While my project diverges from an emphasis on a separatist, ideal women's society, my findings accord with some of what scholars of women's utopias in later periods have observed about the tactics women used to craft utopian societies. A key word in Pratt's definition is "quest." The communities I consider are not perfectly harmonious, equitable or virtuous, but they aspire to be; they thus embody a process-model of utopia, which Alessa Johns has identified as a hallmark of women's utopias.[42] Johns argues that the process-oriented feminist utopianism is "not merely the product of what is called the first-, second- and third-wave feminism of the nineteenth, twentieth

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[40] Mary Louis Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 166-67. Pratt writes specifically in reference to Lady Mary Wortley Monatagu, who depicts what Pratt calls an "orientialist feminotopia," which celebrates pleasure and homoeroticism among women.

[41] Felicity Nussbaum describes feminotopia as community "in which women thrive without men and find pleasure in living together without rancor." "Feminotopias: The Pleasures of 'Deformity' in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England," in *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability*, ed. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 161. Frances Bartkowski, *Feminist Utopias* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 3.

[42] Studies on women's utopias include Marleen S. Barr and Nicolas D. Smith, eds. *Women and Utopia: Critical Interpretations* (Lanham and New York: University Press of America); Bartkowski, *Feminist Utopias*; and Nan Bowman Albinski, *Women's Utopias in British and American Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988). Proponents of process-oriented, pragmatic feminist utopias include Angelika Bammer Bammer, *Partial Visions: Feminism and Utopianism in the 1970s* (London: Routledge, 1991); Drucilla Cornell, *At the Heart of Freedom: Feminism, Sex, and Equality* (Princeton University Press, 1998); Erin McKenna, *The Task of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Alessa Johns discusses the "reproductive utopian model" in *Women's Utopias of the Eighteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

and twenty-first centuries" but is rather "a large part of feminist utopian writing beginning in the late middle ages and continuing to today."[43] The recurrence of a process model of utopia across women's writing does not imply any essential female psychology; instead, it suggests that patriarchal socio-cultural arrangements produced similar patterns of resistance across time. In addition to their process-oriented nature, Johns identifies five salient features of feminist utopias. First, she writes that "feminist utopias see education and intellectual development as central to the individual and to women's empowerment." Second, "they embrace a view of human nature as malleable and social rather than determined, fallen and individualist." Third, they favor "a gradualist approach to change, a cumulative approach to history and a shared approach to power;" fourth, "they view the non-human natural world as dynamic rather than as an inert receiver of human impulses;" fifth they are usually pragmatic and acknowledge that change needs to be achieved collaboratively.[44]

While the works in my project do not display all of these features, they embody many of them. Moreover, they share a feature that is implicit (but unstated) in John's characteristics: the bricolage of pre-existing cultural 'tools' to create visions that defamiliarize the present. Pohl and Tooley observe this feature in eighteenth-century women writers as who appropriate prescriptive gender constructions to configure a variety of utopian discourses.[45] In the earlier periods I examine, this strategy was especially necessary as there were fewer gynocentric available models and so even more of a need to work within the system to create change. By incorporating pieces of the same discourses they aimed to dismantle, the women in my project held in balance dissonant points of view. As Kate Lilley observes in her work on seventeenth-century women's utopias, "Such writing subverts categories and boundaries: arts and sciences, irrational and rational, fantastic/abnormal and

[43] Johns, 174.

[44] Ibid., 178.

[45] Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tooley eds., introduction to *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 3.

natural/normal."[46] This blurring of boundaries that emerges from bricolage practice manifests on multiple registers in women's utopias. For example, women's utopias often establish intersubjective spaces "in which the self evolves through relationships rather than quests, in which the society recognizes that integrity and individuality stimulate community dependence rather than autonomy nurtures personal integrity."[47] The works in my project also use bricolage to blur boundaries between inner/outer; past/future; secular/religious; public/private; friend/enemy.

The visibility of utopianism in periods usually excluded from histories of utopia attests both to the value of utopian thought for women and the value of women's activities to utopia. Bettina Roß notes in her comparative typology of utopias in utopian writing by both men and women femininity is one of the most important topoi.[48] Bartkowski observes, "Thinking the not-yet is of particular importance for feminists, as it is here that freedom and necessity meet; … the narrative not-yet can rewrite views of the past and present even as it projects possible futures."[49] Feminist fiction and feminist theory are themselves utopian because they look towards the not-yet to imagine gender equality.[50] According to Anne Mellor, "Those seeking a viable model of a non-sexist society

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[46] Kate Lilley, "Seventeenth Century Women's Utopian Writing," in *Women, Texts, and Histories, 1575-1760,* eds. Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (London: Routledge, 1993), 101.

[47] Jean Pfealzer, Jane L. Donawerth and Carol A. Komerten, eds. introduction to *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women: Worlds of Difference* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 4, 5.

[48] Bettina Roß, *Politische Utopien von Frauen: Von Christine de Pizan bis Karin Boye* (Dortmund: Edition Ebersbach, 1998), 283-293.

[49] Bartkowski, 10.

[50] While some feminists have proposed "post-utopian approaches to feminist thought" that favor realism (see Sally Kitch, *Higher Ground: From Utopianism to Realism in American Feminist Thought and Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 12, 176), others like Seyla Benhabib argue feminists' need for utopianism. "Feminism and postmodernism: an uneasy alliance," *Feminist Contentions* (1995), 30.

must … look to the future; their model must be constructed first as a utopia."[51] Moreover, given the limited political and social resources of feminists, artistic and literary representations often prove "the most eligible means of making a different future comprehensible to the largest possible audience."[52] Writing about the late nineteenth century, Darby Lewes supports this conclusion: "the dialectical and ambiguous genre of lost outsiders in disorienting worlds mirrored women's own situation in a society where on the one hand they were told they were central to human existence and morally accountable yet, on the other hand, lived lives in which they were legally without status, politically voiceless and domestically subordinated."[53] While classic works in the utopia genre treat women poorly, utopia (along with dystopia) has nonetheless become a valuable genre for feminist thought that has received increasing attention in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In this project, I aim to open up this history to show how women in much earlier periods also used utopianism to further their own ends. Considering these early women's works together alongside contemporary efforts to forge women's community enables an asynchronous mode of reading that acts as a *mise-en-abye* for the methods of project itself.

Queer Connections

While my project's intervention is in feminist theory, I also open up a dialogue between early female collectivities and queer identities. The communities I examine do not always exhibit same-sex desire (though in many cases they do), but they are all queer in the sense that they question heteronormativity. As Tison Pugh, in his study of queer medieval genres, argues: "Queer is not

[51] Anne Mellor, "On Feminist Utopias," *Women's Studies* 9 (1982): 241–62, 243.

[52] Johns, 175.

[53] Darby Lewes, *Dream Revisionaries: Gender and Genre in Women's Utopian Fiction 1870–1920* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995), 13.

limited to the sexual— [it] also describes relationships of power and includes non sexual affection."[54] In my project, I follow Pugh's understanding of "to queer" as "to disrupt a characters and/or the readers sense of self by undermining his or her sense of heteronormativity inscribed sexuality."[55] I also draw on Eve Sedgwick's notion of the queer as "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically."[56] The individual women and collectives in my project are queer because they challenge heteronormative structures by imagining worlds in which women find fulfillment through each other.[57] Muñoz clarifies a link between the queer and the utopian by associating the former with an unattained future.[58] Queerness enacts utopia, as it is "an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future."[59]

Of particular importance for my argument about women's utopias is the theory of queer temporality. Queer time can be broadly defined as a temporality beyond the linear and conventional notions of familial institutions and biological reproduction that allows for a reinterpretation of family and a radical reformulation of kinship. Key theorists of queer time include Lee Edelman, who

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[54] Tison Pugh, *Sexuality and Its Queer Discontents in Middle English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 5.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Eve Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 8.

[57] Valerie Traub, "The (In)Significance of 'Lesbian' Desire in Early Modern England," in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage,* ed. S. Zimmerman (New York: Routledge, 1992), 150-69.

[58] For this link see also Angela Jones, "Introduction: Queer Utopias, Queer Futurity, and Potentiality in Quotidian Practice," *A Critical Inquiry into Queer Utopias*, ed. Angela Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1-21. Jones, like Muñoz, explores the ways in which identifying the potential for crafting utopia spaces can transform the lives of individuals and society at large and argues that worldmaking is a function of queer utopian memory.

[59] Muñoz, 1.

rejects the temporality of the normative life course—reproductive futurity—along with its investment in the child as its guarantor; Kathryn Bond Stockton, who sees queer time as a turn away from the normative vertical line of growing up to focus on non-linear growth; Muñoz, who opposes dull straight time with its more productive mandate but, unlike Edelmen, argues that queerness is "primarily about futurity and hope;" and Elizabeth Grosz, who argues that the past conditions the future by serving as a "resource for overcoming the present."[60]

Queer temporality has also been applied to the pre-modern. Carla Freccero, in her work on the early modern period, defines queer time as analysis that "proceed otherwise than according to a presumed logic of cause and effect, anticipation and result; and otherwise than according to a presumed logic of the 'done-ness' of the past, since queer time is haunted by the persistence of affect and ethical imperatives in and across time," a haunting that she dubs spectrality.[61] Carolyn Dinshaw juxtaposes literary works from the medieval period with medievalisms from later periods, thinking queer time not in terms of futurity but rather in terms of "the now."[62] Dinshaw and Freccero, along with Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, have catalyzed a queer critique of historicism, chronology and periodization that has implications for my cross-period study of women's utopias. I perform what Sedgwick calls queer reading, "a reading against history…against directional flow of temporality, the notion that time is composed of contiguous and interrelated joined segments that are also sequential."[63] My project not only queers historical eras but also works

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[60] Elizabeth Grosz*, The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution and the Untimely* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 2.

[61] Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 5. See also Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero, "Caxton, Foucault, and the Pleasures of History," *Premodern Sexualities*, ed. Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (New York: Routledge, 1996), xiii-xxiv.

[62] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 1999), 35.

[63] Sedgwick, *Tendencies,* 4.

within the perceived split between queer and feminist theory, wherein the former is perceived to focus on sexuality and the latter on gender.[64] As this dissertation reads proto-feminist works through a queer theory lens, it contends that feminotopian works exemplify a simultaneously ethical and antifoundational impulse that emphasizes the links rather than disjunctions between feminist and queer practice.

Religious & Secular

This project also has implications for the relationship between religion and utopia. As I have mentioned above, Lochrie does not include apocalyptic and religious mysticism within her study of medieval utopias because "those sites represent what we usually consider to be stranded back formations of early modern utopianism" and because "of their failure to imagine utopia in this world."[65] This perception of religion's difference from utopia echoes that of many utopian scholars before her, who often begin with the view of More's utopia as modern and secular.

More's work, however, was deeply indebted to Catholicism. Before he wrote *Utopia,* More lectured on Augustine's *City of God* in a London church, and this work's notion of an ideal city beyond that of man clearly infused his fiction. Based on this connection, as well as More's own religious background, scholars have noted that the communitarianism of his ideal society resonates strongly with the homogeny of the monastic order.[66] Religion continued to undergird the utopia genre after More. For instance, puritan utopias envision the displaced populations of early modern

[64] This binary has resulted in a rift between feminist and queer theories based on assertations that queer theorists avoid ethics while feminists are too invested in moral policing to adequately consider ethics. See Lynne Huffer, *Are the Lips a Grave? A Queer Feminist on the Ethics of Sex* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 13–20. Scholars like Huffer, however, argue that anti-foundational thinking subtends both feminism and queer theory and that "[p]olitically and ethically, queers need feminists and feminists need queers" (9). On the collaboration on feminist and queer theories, see also Mimi Marinucci, *Feminism is Queer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[65] Lochrie, *Nowhere,* 6.

[66] Frank Edward Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 1979), 50.

Europe and North America as the raw materials for an act of millennial poesis and, much later, Octavia Butler's *Parable* series draws on religious culture for its vision of a new world.[67]

Utopia in my project foregrounds a religious culture that is not purely oriented towards an eternal future, but rather is invested in determining how to live a religious life in the world. As these works negotiate between lay and religious life, forming a bricolage of the two as well as of works of male devotional culture, they develop a notion of the secular akin to that described by Augustine. As Robert Markus explains, Augustine envisioned the *saeculum* not as equivalent with the non-religious but as a space shared between the 'sacred,' "the sphere of Christian religious belief, practises, institutions, and cult" and the 'profane,' "what has to be rejected in the surrounding culture, practises, institutions."[68] The *saeculum* is not a third City between the earthly and the heavenly but is constituted of "their mixed inextricably intertwined state in this temporal life."[69] This notion correlates with utopia as a concept that both reflects upon the past and present and looks to the future, blurring binaries in order to make space for something new. By crafting secular spaces, the works in my project, particularly the communities established by Margery Kempe and Mary Ward, find a middle ground between religious life and the demands of the present, revealing the imbrication of religion with histories of feminism, queerness and utopia.

Besideness: Periodization, Interdisciplinarity and Literary History

My project is broadly concerned with the troubling of boundaries. The writers and communities I examine occupy a middle ground between new and old, conformity and subversion, religious and lay, medieval and early modern, past and present, and my methodology is

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[67] James Holstun, *A Rational Millennium Puritan Utopias of Seventeenth-Century England and America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 3.

[68] Robert Markus, *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

[69] Ibid., 39.

interdisciplinary, incorporating images alongside texts, and mixes historical approaches and archival work with critical theory. To characterize this position, I draw on Eve Sedgewick's notion of the *beside*, which she uses to describe a "useful resistance to the ease with which beneath and beyond turn from spatial descriptors into implicit narratives of, respectively, origin and telos."[70] For Sedgwick, "beside" counters "dualistic thinking" and instead "comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping and other relations."[71] Similarly the works in this project resist duality and participate in multiple, at times oppositional discourses.

While I begin with Christine de Pizan and end with a chapter that includes Margaret Cavendish, thereby following a chronological order, I do not posit a chronological causality. Rather, as each chapter includes medieval and early modern examples alongside contemporary theory and my conclusion addresses works by twentieth-century feminists, this dissertation generates a literary history that is not exclusively informed by geography or periodization but focuses on structures of feeling that disparate eras share in their efforts to shape better futures. This literary history of feminotopia, following the work of scholars such as James Simpson, Jennifer Summit and David Wallace, contests period divides between the medieval and early modern. As Simpson writes, "wherever we draw the line, we are already falling victim to the logic of the revolutionary moment…the wholeness of the world demarcated by that line is already informed by inevitable consciousness of what's on the other side." Periodization is partly to blame for the lack of attention to utopia in the Middle Ages as well for the failure to incorporate Catholic thought into the history of English utopianism. By tracking utopianism across periods—from Christine de Pizan's original

[70] Sedgwick argues that "[b]eside permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking: non-contradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause versus effect, subject versus object." Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 8.

[71] Ibid., 8.

The Book of the City of Ladies to Anslay's translation; from Syon's medieval foundations to its early modern relocation; from medieval religious mystic Margery Kempe to Mary Ward; and from medieval and early modern pastoral romance to Cavendish's *Blazing World*—my project fosters conversation across periods that align with the utopian aims of the works themselves.

My project deliberately blurs borders between disciplines. While primarily textual, each of my chapters includes visual analysis, considering how visual rhetorical strategies speak with and complicate those of written texts. My project equally pairs 'literary' texts with 'historical' ones, analyzing fictional utopias by Christine and Cavendish alongside letters and religious rules. The literary and the 'real' have often been separate in utopia studies. Jameson writes, "It has often been observed that we need to distinguish between the utopian form and the utopian wish: between the written text or genre and something like a utopian impulse detectable in daily life and its practices by a specialized hermeneutic or interpretive method."[72] As if following this distinction, scholars of eighteenth- through twentieth-century women's utopias generally consider only literary texts. My project instead aligns itself with recent modes of historical criticism that follow a more interactive model of how literary and historical texts relate, wherein "instead of being a reflector of objective and quantifiable facts, literature becomes part of history and an agent in constructing culture."[73] By placing 'literary' feminotopias into dialogue with the records of aspirational female-led communities, I suggest that the lines between different genres of utopia are not fixed; 'fiction' can create realities, and 'history' necessarily partakes in fictionality.

Through myriad juxtapositions, my project generates a literary genealogy that is not based on influence. In a surprising number of cases, the works and women I examine seem to have known

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[72] Jameson, *Archaeologies,* 1.

[73] This is how J.A. Roberts describes her methodology in her introduction to *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania,* ed. Josephine Roberts (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), lxx.

about each other—Cavendish may have read Christine's *City of Lady*; Saint Bridget, Syon's patron saint, was Margery Kempe's devotional model; Wroth's *Urania* inserts an account of famous women deceived by men that echoes Christine's stories of wronged women; and Cavendish refers to Wroth as "the lady that wrote the romancy." These connections are, however, incidental to my larger argument that, whether they knew of each other or not, these women participated in a shared tradition that imagined alternatives to current social, political, religious and economic systems.

Moreover, these historical works draw on frameworks to express selfhood and gender in relation to aspirational community that recur in contemporary theories of gender and sexuality. Just as Augustine's notion of the secular surfaces in the operations of female aspirational communities, the ideal of a shared, communal space in an indeterminate time appears in feminist and queer theory. Moreover, the collective production of self that I observe in utopian women's communities has been an important topic in feminist philosophy. For instance, theorists like Nancy Chodorow and Julia Kristeva have challenged sharp self-other boundaries and instead argue that the self is relational.[74] Queer space, what Carla Freccero calls "an interstitial space between binary opposites," and queer time, which proceeds "otherwise than according to a presumed logic of the 'done-ness' of the past," equally share a common tactic of binary blurring with the feminotopian communities in my study.[75] Premodern female same-sex utopias and contemporary theorists of identity thus marshal many of the same tropes to imagine the world as otherwise. The similarities between these fields of discourse do not suggest a teleological progression from one to the other but rather show that similar modes of oppression produce similar means of resistance across centuries.

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[74] Nancy Chodorow, "Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective," in *The Future of Difference,* ed. Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1980); Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columba University Press, 1982).

[75] Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*, 18; 5.

By proposing an anti-influence, anti-chronological literary history, I echo Lochrie's call for "a different methodology for literary history" that "argues from the principle of texts as imaginative projects whose circulation resists our tendency to assign them to moments of composition and publication."[76] However, where Lochrie's proposed "methodology of forward reading" is directed at expanding "the historical optic for reading More," this dissertation's literary history, though it does shed light on Cavendish's motivations, is more invested in how communities are built and imagined across time. I seek to reveal not lines but networks that, like Deleuze's and Guattari's rhizomes, "ceaselessly establish connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles."[77] This literary history stretches back to the Middle Ages but also includes women's writings about utopia in the twentieth century.

Chapter Summaries

This dissertation's four chapters and conclusion treat both exemplary and anomalous forms of utopia as case studies in feminotopia. Moving between well-known and more obscure works of medieval and early modern women's literature, I propose a rhizome that shows writers and communities responding in similar ways to the challenge of creating a women's history and future. At the same time, I keep critical track of the ways in which each work uses bricolage to develop its own historically-situated utopia, characterized by queer, secular and self-critical dimensions. My goal is to recover the polyvalence of feminotopian itself as it offers different resources to different groups while also using utopias more generalizable forms to reveal premodern women's vital role within aesthetic, ethical, political and religious thought.

My first chapter, "'Diving into the Wreck:' Bricolage Feminotopia in Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*" reads *The City of Ladies* as an early instance of Claude Lévi-Strauss's notion of bricolage,

[76] Lochrie, *Nowhere,* 7.

[77] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Berg Pub Ltd, 2013), 7.

spotlighting Christine's destruction and reuse of the cultural constructions of femininity. By repurposing pieces of dissonant discourses, Christine imagines feminotopia as an interstitial space that brings together seemingly disparate or incommensurable elements. Christine's book generates dialogic models of gender and political community that at once remain within the status quo and challenge it. By identifying this bricolage practice in Christine's writing, I align her strategy with the parodic resistance to gender norms explored by Judith Butler thus clarifying bricolage's role as a tactic of resistance in contemporary feminist and queer discourse. I further apply the theory of bricolage to argue that the merger of Christine's ideas with the aspirations of English courtiers in Brian Anslay's sixteenth-century English translation of *The City* created a polyphonous text that unwittingly destabilized the Renaissance English masculinity it sought to instantiate. Christine's text, both in its original form and in its early modern translation, foregrounds bricolage as a key strategy for the feminotopian writer.

Finding a utopian strain that is surprisingly resonant with Christine's, my second chapter, "Subversion and Utopia in Syon Abbey's Female Alliances," turns to a historical women's community. I use Syon Abbey, an English offshoot of the Bridgettine order founded by King Henry V in 1415, to investigate the engagement of convents in political thought. I argue that a latent women's utopian tradition exists in Syon's early male-authored devotional texts, which while inciting the sisters towards solipsism and passivity also figure them as representatives of a communitarian spiritual ideal. I then show how, after the Reformation, when Syon was exiled to Portugal, the nuns mobilized the figure of women's spiritual utopia to mold themselves into symbols of an embattled English Catholicism, using their status as exiles to promote their own survival. This chapter makes a case for the vitality of utopian thought within historical women's communities and shows how bricolating the 'weak' position of religious women within Church hierarchy rendered Syon's nuns

vehicles of utopianism. While utopia is often understood as a static ideal, Syon's utopianism instead entails the upholding of ideals amidst continual failure.

My history of early women's utopias continues with two religious women who operated outside ecclesiastical institutions. "Not Yet: Queering Economy, History and Nation in the Utopian Worlds of Margery Kempe and Mary Ward" investigates how Kempe and Ward used female collectivity to challenge dominant notions of political community as based on sameness—of class, of belief system and of geographical locus. I argue first that the fifteenth-century mystic Margery Kempe, in her spiritual autobiography, diverges from classical friendship's insistence on likeness and instead forges bonds that rely on donative communal reciprocities with women from diverse backgrounds. Margery's exchanges with women intermingle the spiritual and the mercantile and in this way enact an asynchronic time that places eternal and worldly time on the same plane. A similar untimeliness informs the spiritual program of Mary Ward, a recusant Catholic who founded an institute for the education of girls. Ward's records, which include a biography, autobiography, letters and a series of paintings, gesture to an at once lost and future English Catholicism. As such, they deploy a queer approach to time that eschews linear or chronological progressions and so paves the way for a notion of the secular, which, in Augustine's terms, is a neutral, shared space for different beliefs. Through their visions, Ward and Kempe anticipated the secularization and attendant forms of global identity towards which Britain was moving and reveal the under-recognized and far-reaching potential of feminotopias to use bricolage to reimagine the political future.

My final chapter traces how the utopianism of women's Catholic communities surfaces in a different but familiar form in late medieval and early modern laywomen's literary fictions. "'We Are All Picturd in that Piece:' Women's Friendship and Critical Utopias" argues that women's friendships serve as sites of speculative thinking within the romance genre. While this speculative function is apparent in the canonical early modern romances of Spenser and Sideny, it becomes

overtly romances by women. The first original prose romance by an English woman, Lady Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621), figures women's friendships as microcosmic utopias that blur boundaries—between genres as well as between self and other; inner and outer; past and future; humans and nature. While these relationships aspire to harmony, they also encode jealousy and rivalry and so constitute "critical utopias," as they register skepticism about the possibility of attaining the very ideals they represent. I show that women's friendships similar to those in Wroth's work also appeared in the fifteenth-century anonymous Middle English romances *The Floure and the Leafe* and *The Assembly of Ladies* (both c. 1470) not due to direct influence but rather as the result of a shared effort to make women's friendships the subjects of genres that had historical excluded them. I conclude this chapter by arguing for a more direct line of influence between Wroth and Cavendish in whose *Blazing World* women's friendship plays a pivotal and under-recognized role. Together, these works chart a utopia that could have been—one that draws on the forms of romance to represent individual friendships rather than the homogenized ideal communities found in women's utopias of the eighteenth century and beyond. While Cavendish's utopia is typically seen a lone feminist response to androcentric utopias, this chapter offers new avenues for considering the emergence of the genre of women's utopia as an exchange between women writers.

My conclusion follows the strategies of premodern feminotopianism to feminist utopias of the twentieth century. By examining the recurrence of bricolage as a strategy across the utopian works of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain, Ursula LeGuin, Octavia Butler and Margaret Atwood, I identify resultant asynchrony, queering, self-criticism and failure that parallel the forms found in women's writings of the fifteenth-seventeenth twentieth-century works. I thus review the dissertation's findings in a different light, as a collection of strategies for working forward.

Chapter 1
"Diving into the Wreck:" Bricolage Feminotopia in Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies*

Introduction

First having read the book of myths,
and loaded the camera,
and checked the edge of the knife-blade,
I put on
the body-armor of black rubber
the absurd flippers
the grave and awkward mask.

In "Diving into the Wreck" (1973), Adrienne Rich allegorizes the search for a woman's history through the figure of deep-sea exploration. An ambiguously gendered diver ("I am she: I am he") "carrying a knife, a camera/[and] a book of myths in which our names do not appear" descends into the ocean to search for "the wreck and not the story of the wreck/the thing itself and not the myth."[78] This poem characterizes the search for a woman's history as an inevitably murky one. In 1974, when the book, of which this poem is the titular work, received the National Book Award, Rich refused to accept as an individual but instead read a statement prepared by each of the three women who had been nominated: "We, Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, and Alice Walker, together accept this award in the name of all the women whose voices have gone and still go unheard in a patriarchal world, and in the name of those who, like us, have been tolerated as token women in this culture, often at great cost and in great pain."[79] The poem along with this collaborative public address, in which three women speak as one, is indicative both of the challenges to establishing a

[78] Adrienne Rich, "Diving into the Wreck," in *Diving into the Wreck: Poems, 1971-1972* (New York: Norton, 1994). A comparison of Rich's poem and Christine's book may be found in Judith Kellogg, "Christine de Pizan and Boccaccio: Rewriting Classical Mythic Tradition," in *Comparative Literature East and West: Traditions and Trends,* ed. Cornelia N. Moore and Raymond A. Moody (Honolulu: College of Languages, 1989), 124-131.

[79] "National Book Awards Acceptance Speeches," *National Book Foundation*, http://www.nationalbook.org/nbaacceptspeech_arich_74.html.

women's literary culture and of the ways the execution of such efforts rewrite assumed codes of identity and authority.

While grounded in second-wave feminism, Rich's poem and speech engage with the transhistorical problem of locating a women's history in a historical record that has been written and maintained by men. One of the earliest western women known to have engaged in such an effort is French author Christine de Pizan (1364-c.1430). The daughter of Tommaso di Benvenuto da Pizzano, who became court astrologer to Charles V, Christine was born in Venice but lived most of her life in France. When she was widowed at a young age with three children, she used the education her father had given her to make her living as a writer. By producing works for French patrons such as Queen Isabeau and the Duke of Berry and participating in the famous *Rose* Debate, Christine formed part of the mainstream literary world of her time.[80] However, she was also what Jacqueline Cerquigilina calls a triple exile— as a woman, an Italian in France and a member of the scribal class.[81] Positioned *beside* the center and the margin, Christine both drew on and critiqued dominant modes of thought, a vantage point from which she conceptualized one of the earliest feminotopias: *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* (*The Book of the City of Ladies,* finished in 1405).

La Cité, which was not, so far as we know, designated for a specific patron, begins as a dream vision in which the author-persona, Christine, discovers a book by the thirteenth-century poet Matheolus containing "escrips tant de diableries et de vitupere" ["writings full of evil and reproachful things"] about women. She subsequently despairs of her gender and is consoled by three allegorical female figures—Reason, Rectitude and Justice—, who tell her stories of virtuous women

[80] On the *Rose* debate, see *The Debate of the Romance of the Rose,* ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[81] Jacqueline Cerquigilina, "L'étrangère," *Revue des Langues Romanes: Christine de Pizan* 92 (1988): 239-91. For a description of Christine's alien position, see also Ferguson, *Dido's Daughter's.* For biographies of Christine, see Charity Cannon Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea, 1984) and, more recently, Franciose Autrand, *Christine de Pizan: Une Femme en politique* (Paris: Fayard, 2009).

from myth, scripture and history that disprove anti-feminist clichés.[82] Over the course of the narrative, these women's histories function allegorically as the foundation, walls and population of a city in which women will forever be safe from the insults and abuses of men. Like Rich's poem, Christine's allegory establishes a women's cultural and political space; however, where Rich's speaker seeks to jettison myth altogether to locate "the thing itself," Christine repurposes misogynistic discourse to establish her feminotopia. In the following chapter, I examine Christine's conception of women's utopia in the *Cité* and argue that she uses the strategoy of bricolage to imagine an ideal women's space that reshapes traditional notions of authority and gender.

To clarify the method by which Christine fashioned her ideal women's city, I apply Claude Lévi-Strauss's theory of *bricolage,* as explained in my introduction.[83] Christine's architectural project exemplifies this notion of the necessity of cultural borrowing since in order to 'construct' her City of Ladies, she broke apart and reused myths about women created by male-authors. While her work imagines an unprecedented female utopia, Lévi-Strauss's theory helps us see how, by using pieces of pre-existing androcentric discourse, it also retains traces of perspectives that run counter to those

[82] The latest edition of the City of Ladies is *La città delle dame,* ed. Earl Jeffrey Richards and trans. Patrizia Caraffi (Milan: Luni Editrice, 2001). This contains a face-page Italian translation of Christine's Middle French text. For an English translation, see *The Book of the City of Ladies,* rev. ed., trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea, 1998). Both editions are based on British Library, Harley 4431. There is also an earlier edition of the original text in *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames: A Critical Edition*, ed. Maureen Cheney Curnow (PhD. Diss, Vanderbilt University, 1975), which is based on the manuscript copy presented in 1407-1408 by Christine to Duke Jean de Berry (Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, MS Fonds Français 607). Bnf FR. 607 and Harley 4431 are virtually identical aside from orthography. See Earl Jeffrey Richards, "Editing the *Livre de la Cité des dames:* New Insights, Problems and Challenges," in *Au Champ des scriptures: III Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan,* ed. Eric Hicks, Diego Gonzalez and Philippe Simon (Paris: Champion, 2000), 789-816.

[83] The term "bricolage" has been applied in passing to describe Christine's writing. Marilyn Desmond and Pamela Sheingorn write that "as bricolage, the formal structure of the *Epistre Othéa* enabled Christine to revise myths without reinscribing them as master narratives," and Sheila Delany calls the *Cité* "an audacious imposing piece of bricolage, architectonically planned and painstakingly built from materials gathered during years of study." "Introduction," 5; Sheila Delany, *Writing Women: Sex, Class and Literature, Medieval and Modern* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1983), 184. The present study is, however, the only examination of Christine's *Cité* that makes bricolage central to its argument.

that motivate her work. While every literary work certainly engages in the practice of borrowing from the past, Christine's work, through its metaphor of building a city, registers awareness of its engagement in this practice and acknowledges that any attempt to undo a concept is likely to become caught up in the terms on which that concept depends. In this, the *Cité* imagines a space of what Derrida would call free-play, a zone of replacable signifiers that dissolves difference and embraces ambiguity, characteristics that this dissertation will argue are foundational to the genre of feminotopia as a whole.

To show how self-conscious bricolage informs Christine's utopia, this chapter is divided into four sections. In the first, I argue that through its metaphor of city-building the *Cité* frames allegory as a practice of bricolage and shows how allegory can be used for subversive, utopian purposes even as it gestures to more conservative agendas. In the second section, I demonstrate how Christine uses allegory to portray both a collaborative view of literary authority and to claim individual authorship, a juxtaposition that results in a theory of communal female readership. In the third section, I show how her bricolage practice enables Christine to articulate a theory of gender that gains ground for women as it embraces essentialist and constructionist perspectives at once. In this, her portrayal of femininity anticipates and gives new context for Judith Butler's theory gender performativity as well as more recent transgender theory. In the final section, I build on these earlier points to show how Christine's work was subject to further bricolage by its male English translator Brian Anslay in the sixteenth century. Here, despite Anslay's male-courtier-centered adaptation, traces of Christine's authorial voice within the work have the unintended effect of calling attention to gaps or disjunctures within the image of the male courtier that Anslay's text promulgated.

This chapter intervenes in a history of critical reactions to Christine de Pizan's work that has long been split. Beginning in the 1960s, feminists praised Christine for challenging the dominant misogny of her era and viewed the *Cité* in particular as a window onto a forgotten history of

women's agency.[84] However, Christine has also been criticized for not going far enough. Sheila Delany argues that *La Cité* is a conservative text, citing its support of the monarchy, opposition to peasants' interests and omission of working women from her own time (with only one exception).[85] Reconciling these two positions, Maureen Quilligan argues that as there was no available model for contesting royal authority in late medieval France, it would not have been reasonable for Christine to do so and that "the only language available to a proto-feminist writer in this time period was the language of loyalist faithfulness to patriarchal rule."[86] The present chapter equally charts a middle ground between divergent stances on Christine by showing how the bricolage within her feminotopia juxtaposes dicotomous positions. I argue that her book grapples with the necessity of borrowing the language of misogyny to create a 'new' identity for women and regisers the challenges to this endeavor.

By placing divergent positions beside each other, Christine's book becomes a form of what Mary Louis Pratt calls a "contact zone," a "social space[] where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination-like

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[84] For instance, Joan Kelly tied the feminist movement to the communal efforts of women in early Europe, citing a "long line of pro-women writers that runs from Christine de Pizan to Mary Wollstonecraft." *Women, History, Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 66.

[85] Sheila Delany, "Mothers to Think Back Through': Who Are They? The Ambiguous Example of Christine de Pizan," in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, ed. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Schichtman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 177-79.

[86] Maureen Quilligan, *The Allegory of Female Authority: Christine De Pizan's Cité des Dames* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 268. To make this argument, Quilligan draws from Catherine Gallagher's work on seventeenth-century English absolutism and female subjectivity. See Gallagher, "Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England," *Genders* (1988), 24-39. Many other scholars have engaged in the debate surrounding Christine's 'feminism.' See, for instance: Christine M. Reno, "Christine de Pizan: 'At Best a Contradictory Figure?'" in *Politics, Gender, and Genre,* ed. Margaret Brabant (Westview Press, 1992), 171-91; Susan Scibanoff, "Taking the Gold out of Egypt: the Art of Reading as a Woman," in *Gender and Reading,* ed. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocinio P. Schweikart (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 83-106.

colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today."[87] To exemplify this kind "transculturation," a term that ethnographers have used "to describe the process whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant metropolitan culture," Pratt describes an early seventeenth-century manuscript written to King Phillip III of Spain by an Andean man, Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala detailing the Spanish conquest in South America.[88] Pratt writes, "Guaman Poma's New Chronicle is an instance of what I have proposed to call an authethnographic text, by which I mean a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them."[89] Pratt uses this manuscript, which ends with a revisionist account of the Spanish Conquest, as an example of how an oppressed person or group can resist hegemony, and she connects the practices of authoethnography, critique and resistance to the creation of contact zones. This chapter, by showing how Christine uses the methods of bricolage to formulate revisionist models of genre, authorship and gender, argues that women's utopia is itself a contact zone.

The Words are Maps: De/Reconstructing Allegory

Allegory is etymologically derived from the Greek *allos* (other) and *agorein* (to speak in the open square or agora) and, therefore, literally means, "to speak otherwise in public." Crucial to Christine's intervention in this generic tradition is the way the female body often served as a figure for such otherwise speech. Women were frequently figured as allegorical virtues, such as Chastity and Wisdom, and the allegorical text itself was often represented as a veiled or clothed woman with "various literary acts—reading, translating, glossing, creating a literary tradition—as masculine acts

[87] Pratt*, Imperial Eyes,* 4.

[88] Mary Louis Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," in *Ways of Reading*, 5th edition, ed. David Bartholomae and Anthony Petroksky (New York Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), 36. This article was originally a keynote address at the second Mondern Language Association's Literacy Conference in 1990.

[89] Ibid., 35.

performed on this feminine body."[90] As the author of an allegory, Christine reversed the generic division between woman as allegory and man as allegorical reader. She further subverts allegorical conventions by depicting two competing ways of reading allegory that resemble what Maureen Quilligan has characterized as "vertical" and "horizontal" allegory. In vertical allegory, a concrete symbol corresponds to a transcendent value. For instance, a rose might symbolize female sexuality. By contrast, in horizontal allegory, "meaning accretes serially, interconnecting and criss-crossing the verbal surface long before one can accurately speak of moving to another level 'beyond' the literal."[91] This level of allegory, therefore, "is not above the literal one in a vertically organized fictional space, but is located in the self-consciousness of the reader who gradually becomes aware, as he reads, of the way he creates the meaning of the text."[92] While Quilligan characterizes the 'vertical' mode as an "erroneous definition" in contrast to the more correct horizontal allegory, Christine encourages both types of reading as a means of claiming female authority.[93] Just as Guaman, in Pratt's assessment, used Spanish accounts of Andeans to create his New Chronicle, Christine's allegory uses representations of women by men that assumed one-to-one vertical readings. However, she also encourages 'horizontal' allegorical readings, allowing meanings to cross-fertilize. In bricolating these two interpretations of allegory to build her city of women, Christine juxtaposes two ways of approaching utopia: vertical allegory evokes the blueprint model of utopian, whereby the ideal world claims to act as an exact model for the future while horizontal model enacts

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[90] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Politics* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1989). For the association between women and allegory, see also Barbara Johnson, "Women and Allegory," in *The Wake of Deconstruction* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Press, 1994), 52–75 and Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (New York: Athenum, 1985).

[91] Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 28.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 29.

a more flexible notion utopia in which there is no single ideal. Christine's book thus presents allegory as a genre that embeds resistance within tradition, a possibility that utopia itself claims.

The *Cité* opens by reproducing standard, 'vertical' allegorical conventions. The author-persona alone in her study, as protagonists in dream visions often are, is visited by three allegorical virtues. This episode recalls the opening of Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* when the narrator is comforted as he sees "the clear sky, and regain[s] the power to recognise the face of [his] physician," Lady Philosophy.[94] Similarly, Christine, having read Matheolius's negative account of women, sees a ray of light fall into her lap and looks up to find "iij dames couronnees de tres souveraine reverence, desqulles la resplandeur de leurs cleres faces enluminoit moy mesmes et toute la place" (1.2, 46) [three ladies, crowned and of majestic appearance, whose faces shone with a brightness that light up me [her] and everything else in the place" (1.2)].[95] As these ladies describe Christine's dilemma, they speak in allegorical terms:

> Les…dames on par si longctemps esté delaissees, descloses comme champ sanz haye, sanz trouver champion aucun qui pour leur deffence comparust souffisemment, nonobstant les nobles homes qui par ordenance de droit deffendre les deussent, qui par negligence et nochaloir les ont souffertes fouler, part quoy n'est merveille se leur envieux ennemis et l'oultrage des villains, qui par divers dars les on assaillies, ont eu contre ells victoire de leur guerre par faulte de defence. (54)
>
> [… women have been left defenceless for a long time now, like a field without a surrounding hedge, without finding a champion to afford them an adequate defense, notwithstanding those noble men who are required by order of law to protect them, who by negligence and apathy have allowed them to be mistreated. It is no wonder then that their jealous enemies, those outrageous villains who have assailed them with various missile weapons, have been victorious over women because of their lack of defense].

The opening comparison of "dames" to "champ" extends into an allegory in which masculinity is associated with agency, as champions and "nobles homes" are equated with writers who might

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[94] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy,* trans. David R. Slavitt (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 3.

[95] French quotations are from Richards' and Caraffi's edition and will be noted parenthetically by book, chapter and page number. Translations are my own in consultation with Richards' translation.

defend women. Moreover, the implicit comparison of words to "dars" (a pointed missile weapon thrown by the hand including javelin, throwing spear, arrow, etc.) puts writing within a masculine world of weaponry.[96] This opening extended metaphor, therefore, uses what Quilligan calls vertical allegory to convey a worldview in which men are writers and women, like unenclosed fields, are left defenseless to whatever insults might be leveled at them.

The Virtues continue to invoke vertical allegory by stressing that there is a 'correct' interpretation of their allegorical speech. This self-construction is reinforced by the mirror that Reaon holds, which represents her duty "radrecier les hommes et les femmes quant ilz son desvoyez et de les rememttre en droite voye" (1.3, 52) ["to straighten out men and women when they go astray and to set them on the right path" (9)], suggesting that divergences from the program she recommends will not be tolerated. Reason also endorses a 'correct' allegorical reading in favor of women when she describes women's equality to men before God:

> aucuns sont si folz que ilz cuident quant ilz oyent parler que Dieu fist home a son ymage que ce soit a dire du corps materiel. Mais non est, car Dieu n'avoit pas lors pris corps humain, ains est a entendre de l'ame qui est esperit intellectual et qui durera sanz fin a la semblance de la deité, laquelle ame Dieu crea et mist aussi bonne, aussi noble en toute pareille en corps femenin comme ou masculine (78)
>
> [some are foolish enough to maintain that when God made man in his image, this means his physical body. Yet this is not the case, for at that time God had not yet adopted a human form, so it has to be understood to mean the soul, which is immaterial intellect and which will resemble God until the end of time.]

Differently from the first metaphor, Reason marshals vertical allegory to advance women's standing. She disparages literal readers who suppose that the biblical account of God's creation of man in his image means that woman did not received God's form. Instead, Reason recommends read allegorically—what St. Paul and Augustine would call spiritually— and so to understand image as soul, an equation that would make available the possibility that woman too inherited God's form.

[96] "Dars," William Rothwell, ed. *The Anglo-Norman Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed. (London: Modern Humanities Research Association in conjunction with the Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2006), http://www.anglo-norman.net/gate.

Reason thus uses an allegorical mode that had historically been used to denigrate women to make a case for women's equal standing to men.

While Reason promulgates a view of allegory in which a concrete symbol corresponds to a singular abstract value, because these women are themselves allegories, they enact a horizontal form of allegory that disrupts the hierarchy between signifier and signified. Reason does this when, challenging her own earlier metaphor of women to a defenseless orchard, she instructs Christine to construct "un certain edifice en maniere de closture d'une cite fort maçonnee et bien ediffiee" ["a building in the shape of a walled city, sturdy and well fortified"](1.3), where only women of good reputation will be admitted. In this metaphor, Reason evokes the trope of the female body as an enclosure, but whereas in traditional allegory in the style of Jean de Meun, this wall would be passively subject to male penetration, here a woman is its agent. Moreover, this wall at once represents the stories of the virtuous women in Christine's book and is constituted by these stories, further blurring the distinction between subject and object.

The traditional way of understanding allegory, as Barbara Johnson writes, is as "the recognition of the difference between signifier and signified, of the relation between any use of language and its linguistic or cultural past, and of the difference between self and other."[97] Christine's book distrupts the equivalence between signified and signifier: because her allegory at once absorbs the trope of women as symbols for higher values and creates an allegory in which those values signifiy the importance of women, women are at once signified and signifiers. While the enclosed city wall signifies women's bodies, women also create the wall, blurring the difference between self

[97] Johnson, "Women and Allegory," 67. This separation between self and other also underlies Paul De Man's theory of allegory, as he writes that while the symbol denies difference between self and non-self, "allegory is the recognition of difference between signifier and signified, of the relation between any use of language and its linguistic or cultural past and of the difference between self and other." As such, allegories "are always allegories of the impossibility of reading." Paul De Man, "the Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Interpretation: Theory and Practice,* ed. Charles S. Singleton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1969), 67.

and other that the signified/signifier divide instatiates. Similarly, the Virtues (Reason, Rectitude and Justice), because they are women in a story about women's virtues, evade the distance between concrete signifier and abstract signified, and Christine is both a character in the story and a figure for its author. By figuring women as allegories in a story about women, Christine relies on the 'vertical' assumptions of allegory to extend her allegory onto a 'horizontal' plane.

The figures in the allegory continue to cross-polinate in stories of women that the virtues tell, many of whom serve as additional figures for the author, fracturing and multiplying her identity. For example, Reason's stories of women who are inventors and creators, including Minerva, Ceres and Sappho, shadow the author's own innovations. A section dedicated to widows and another to daughters who were educated by their fathers equally echoes Christine's own childhood. In one particularly striking story, Rectitude tells Christine about Giovanni Andrea of Bologna, who gave his daughter Novella a good education and a detailed knowledge of law. During his lectures, "affin que la beaute d'elle n'empeschast la pensee des oyans, elle avoit une petite courtine au devant elle, et par celle maniere suppleoit et alegioit aucunefoiz les occupacions de son pere, lequel l'ama tant que pour mettre le nom d'elle en memoire, fist une notable lecture d'un livre de lois que il nomme du nom de sa fille La Nouvelle" ["in order not to distract the audience by her beauty, she [Novella] had a little curtain put up in front of her and in this way didn't at all disturb the work of her father who loved her so much that to put her name in memory, gave a famous lecture on a book of laws that he named after his daughter 'the Novella'" (2.36)]. In this description, the daughter is both like a book, being placed behind a curtain like an object, and literally becomes a book, since one is named after her. While this narrative initially seems to operate as a 'vertical allegory,' with the daughter as a symbol for higher learning, Novella's status as a woman educated by her father also makes her a figure for the realworld female author and so complicates singular interpretation. While this 'horizontalization' of allegorical figures equally occurs male-authored narrative—for instance,

Langland's *Piers Plowman* mingles the allegorical and the real with his personfications that signify not just abstract ideas but the polysemous function of particular words in society—; however, Christine makes this point about allegory through her portrayal of gender and thus fashions allegory into a model of "collusive resistance" to patriarchal institutions.[98]

Allegory's function as mode of resistance for the female reader manifests at the very beginning of the *Cité* when Reason recommends allegorical reading as a way out of the problem of an anti-woman literary history by saying that poets' words can be read counter to what they literally say: "les peut on prendre pra une figure de grammaire qui se nomme antifrasis qui s'entent si comme to scenz si comme on diroit tel est mauvais c'est a dire il est bon, aussi a l'opposite" (1.2, 48) [one can read such texts according to the grammatical rule of antiphrasis, which consists of interpreting something that is negative in a positive light, or vice versa]. By reading misognystic texts antiphrasitically, Reason explains that Christine can, "faces ton prouffit de leur dis et que l'entendes ainsis, quelque fust leur entente" (1.2, 48) [turn their words to your advantage no matter what their original intention was]. She further explains Matheolus may not even have intended what he said literally because there are "maintes choses y a lesquelles ui a la letre tenir les vouldroit, ce seroit pure heresie" (1.2., 48) [some passages in his book which, if taken literally, are just out and out heresy]. Likewise, the *Romance of the Rose* should not be read literally since its claim that women make marriage insufferable can not possibly be true, for "ou fu onques trouvé le mari qui tel maistrise souffrist avoir a sa femme que elle eust loy de tant lui dire de villenies et d'injures comme yceulx mettent que femmes dient?"(1.2, 50) [Where is the husband who ever allowed his wife the power to utter the kind of insults and obsenities that these [authors] claim that women say?].[99] Reason thus

[98] "Colusive resistance" is a term used by Toni Bowers in *Force or Fraud: British Seducation Stories and the Problem of Resistance, 1660-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[99] Lady Nature uses a similar argument in Alain de Lille's *De planctu Naturae* (c. 1160s). See Quilligan, *Allegory of Female Authority,* 56.

positions allegorical reading, a way of seeing something otherwise from how it appears, as a defense mechanism for women.

Christine frequently takes this approach when she uses the narratives of male authors but reinterprets their significance. For instance, Reason rereads Eve's eating of the apple not as a sin but as the prelude to Christ's birth: "Si se doit louer homme et femme de celle meprison par laquelle tele honneur lui est ensuivie. Car de tant que nature humaine trebuchet plus bas par createur, a elle esté relevee plus hault par createur" (1.9,80) [both men and women should praise this fault (of Eve's) through which such an honor has come. If human nature is fallen due to the actions of woman, it is lifted higher by woman]. Here, Reason uses the antiphrastic strategy she herself recommends to rework a story generally used to signify woman's sinful nature into a lesson about woman's role in Christ's redemption of humanity. In Book 2, Rectitude rereads Lucrece's rape not as symbolic of the foundation of the Roman Republic, as Livy famously figured it, but as proof that rape is unlawful: "Et a cause de cel outrage fait a Lucrece, comme dient aucuns, vint la loy qu home mouroit pour prendre femme a force laquelle loy est conenable, just et sainte" (2.44) [some say that because of the outrage done to Lucrece, a law was passed which sentenced to death any man who raped a woman, a law which is moral and fitting and just].[100]

The women within Christine's stories exhibit a capacity to read otherwise. The Queen of Sheba, for instance, as she walks through Solomon's temple sees "une longue aiz plate qui estoit couchee au travers d'un fengias et d'une boue" [a long wooden beam laid across a dirty puddle which was being guised as a plank to step over the mud], but she realizes that this beam "tel temp vendra, honoree sur tous les fusts du monde et aournee de pierres preciouses es traesor des princes. Et dessus le fust de cette planche mourra cellui par qui sera anientie la loy des Juifs" (2.4, 230) [will one day be honored above all trees in the world and will be adorned with priceless stones from the

[100] Quilligan makes this point about the distinction between the classical sources of Lucrece's story and Christine's. Ibid., 159.

treasures of princes. On the wood of this tree will die the man by whose hand the Jewish faith will be destroyed]. She exercises the kind of biblical allegorical reading recommended by the Church, as she sees literal objects as symbols of Christ, but in this case her allegorical reading serves to champion woman's intelligence.

Christine's allegory is utopian as it views the world as otherwise in order to read women into history. As it juxtaposes vertical allegory with a more horizontal method in which significations multiply, Christine's book frames allegory as a mode of resistance within hegemonic structures. In this, she reveals allegory as a genre that is allied with utopia. As John Whitman writes, "Allegory tends to be at odds with itself, tending to undermine itself by the very process that sustains it" as apparent and actual meanings must at once diverge and correspond.[101] Similarly, utopia at once imagines an ideal and is predicated on the very impossibility of reaching that ideal. Allegory thus offers Christine an ideal form to imagine a utopia that is constituted of women. While Christine's metaphor of city-building self-consciously frames allegory as a form of bricolage that recycles preexisting concepts retaining their residue even as it tries to create something new, she suggests that rather than undoing her argument for women's agency, the 'freeplay' that allegory enables makes female utopia possible and creates space for the female author.

"Diving into the Wreck:" a Hybrid Model of Female Authorship

Scholars have long drawn attention to the multifaceted authorial persona that Christine develops in the *Cité des Dames*. Quilligan writes that by using the narratives of canonical male authors like Giovanni Boccaccio but revising them according to 'experience,' "Christine represents her activities as a complicated amalgam of compilators' written practice and authors' responsibility to

[101] John Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1987), 2.

both a lived experience and oral tradition of communal female speakers."[102] Jennifer Summit has equally contributed to understandings of Christine's authorial practice by examining the reception of her work in England, contending that Christine "departs from medieval theories of communal authorship" but also that "the female author is a site of resistance to the very notion of the individuated authorship that she, in her modernity, embodied."[103] As both Quilligan and Summit observe, Christine departs from yet reaffirms a collective notion of authorship that was ubiquitous in the Middle Ages. My intervention is that she does so through the bricolage technique that underlays her work and, through her bricolating of theories of authorship, arrives at a theory of active readership.

The medieval collective notion of authorship is explained by Mary Carruthers when she writes:

> *Auctortas* derived from *auctor,* and was defined by Hugutio of Pisa in about 1200 as 'sententia digne imitatione,' 'a saying worthy of imitation.' Thus, both 'authority' and 'author' were conceived of in entirely textual terms, for an 'auctor' is simply one whose writings are full of 'authorities.' And an 'author' acquires 'authority' only by virtue of having his works retained 'sententialiter' in the memories of subsequent generations.

Literary authority was seen to derive "not from originality but from an affiliation with the past that renders individual authors virtually indistinct from one another."[104] *Inventio*, in this period, was largerly understood as the process whereby a narrative was recreated by the author of a text for transmission to an audience. As Summit writes, "No medieval writer could unilaterally declare him- or herself- to be an auctor without the support of the multiple agents and acts of textual

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[102] Quilligan, *Allegory of Female Authority*, 37.

[103] Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380-1589* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 66.

[104] Jennifer Summit, "Women and Authorship," in *Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing,* ed. Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 92.

transmission through which writing gained cultural authority."[105] In bricolating this traditional theory of authorship and using it to form a model of individual authority, Christine produces tension between disparate theories of literary authority that creates within her work a contact zone in which a theory of female authorship emerges. Moreover, by entertaining multiple theories of female authorship at once, the *Cité* also opens up a space of free-play that invites the female reader to participate in the production of meaning.

La Cité des Dames foregrounds the double nature of literary authority in its very title, which alludes to Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (*City of God*, AD 413-436).[106] Christine at once pays homage to Augustine's work and revises it by replacing "God" with "dames," implicitly critiquing Augustine's neglect of women in his magnum opus. To populate her city, moreover, Christine borrows from and revises stories about virtuous women written by men, primarily Boccaccio's *De claribus mulieribus* for the first and second parts and Vincent de Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale* for the third.[107] A view of

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[105] Ibid., 93.

[106] Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei,* trans. Marcus Dods (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1887; New Advent, 2009). For the connection between the *Cité* and Augustine's *civitate Dei*, see Lori J. Walters "La réécriture de saint Augustin par Christine de Pizan: *De la Cité de Dieu* à *la Cité des dames*," in *Au champ des escriptures: IIIe Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan*, ed. Eric Hicks, Etudes Christiniennes 6 (Paris: Champion 2000), 197-215; Charity Cannon Willard, "Raoul de Presles's Translation of Saint Augustine's *De civitate Dei*," in *Medieval Translators and Their Craft*, ed. Jeanette Beer (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1989), 329-46.

[107] Three fourths of Christine's examples can be traced to Boccaccio's *Concerning Famous Women* (begun around 1361 and revised in nine editorial phases until 1375). See Judith L. Kellogg, "Christine de Pizan and Boccaccio: Rewriting Classical Mythic Tradition," in *Comparative Literature East and West: Traditions and Trends*, ed. Cornelia N. Moore and Raymond A. Moody (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1989), 125. Curnow argues that Christine used the 1401 French translation of Boccaccio's text, which has been doubtfully attributed to Laurent de Premierfait and would have been available to her in the library of Jean de Berry (*Le Livre*, 139). For a contrary view, see Carla Bozzolo, "Manuscrits des traductions françaises (XVe s.) d'œuvres de Boccace dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et des États-Unis," *École pratique des hautes études. 4e section, Sciences historiques et philologiques* 104 (1972): 753-760. Quilligan agrees with Curnow that there are direct verbal parallels between the 1401 *Cleres femmes* and the *Cite* but maintains that Christine also draws on the Latin text. For other discussions of Christine's use of *De claris mulieribus*, see: G. Angeli, "Encore sure Boccace et Christine de Pizan: Remarques sure le De *mulieribut claris* et *Le Livre de la cité des Dames*," *Moyen*

literary tradition as amalgammation of voices is more concretely visualized at the opening of the dream vision when Christine sits in her study and contemplates "philosophes, poetes, tous orateurs desquieulx les noms dire seroit longue chose, semble que tous parlent par une mesmes bouche et tous accordent une semblable conclusion, determinant les meurs femenins enclins et plains de tous les vices" (1.1,42) [philosophers, poets and all orators too numerous to mention, who all seem to speak with one mouth and are unanimous in their view that female nature is wholly given to vice.] In her vision of "un moult grant foyson de auteur[s]" [a great series of authors] who appear to her "comme se fust une fontaine resourdant" [like a gushing fountain], Chiristine at once evokes the common medieval portrayal of a literary tradition that is communal and collaborative and shows how she, as a woman, is excluded from it. She, therefore, establishes the necessity for the female author to work like a bricoleur, to break apart literary tradition and use its pieces to build something new. Her work must at once dismiss what Foucault calls "the author function" and create a new

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Francais 50 (2002): 115-25; Kevin Brownlee, "Christine de Pizan's Canonical authors: the Special Case of Boccaccio," *Comparative literature Studies* 32 (1995): 244-61; R. Brown-Grant, "Décadence our progrès? Christine de Pizan, Boccace et la question de l'âge d'or," *Revue des Langues Romanes* 92 (1988): 287-306 and "Des hommes et des femmes illustrés: modalités narratives et transformation générqiue chez Pétrarque, Boccace, et Christine de Pizan" in *Une Femme des lettres,* ed. Liliane Dulac and Bernard Ribémont (Orléans: Medievalia, 1995), 469-80; Patrizia Caraffi, "Silence des femmes et cruauté des hommes: Christine de Pizan et Boccaccio," in Angus J. Kennedy et al., *Contexts and Continuities: Proceedings of the IVth International Colloquium on Christine de Pizan* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 2002), 175-186; Karen Casebier, "Re-Writing Lucretia: Christine de Pizan's Response to Boccaccio's 'De Mulieribus Claris,'" *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 32 (2007): 35-52; Liliane Dulac, "Un mythe didactique chez Christine de Pizan: Semiramis ou la veuve heroique," in *Melanges de philologie romane offerts a C. Camproux* ed. Robert Lafont. 2 vols. (Montpellier: Centre d'Estudis Occitans, 1978); Margaret Franklin, *Boccaccio's Heroines: Power and Virtue in Renaissance Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Stephen D. Kolsky, T*he Genealogy of Women: Studies in Boccaccios De mulieribus claris*, Studies in the Humanities 62 (New York and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2003); Patricia A. Phillipy, "Establishing Authority: Boccaccio's De Claris Mulieribus and Christine de Pizan's Le Livre de la Cité des Dames," *Romanic Review* 77 (1986): 167-194; Maureen Quilligan, "Translating dismemberment," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 20 (1991-1992): 253-66; Susan Schibanoff, "Taking the Gold Out of Egypt: the Art of Reading as a Woman," in *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts,* ed. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocino P. Schweikart (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 99-100. Ferguson also argues that the third part of Christine's book also borrows from female mystics like Marguerite Porete and Marie d'Oignt. *Dido's Daughter's*, 179-224, esp. 207-224.

version of it to establish her own authority.[108]

Christine uses allegory to portray the way in which she mines male literary tradition to build a new tradition of women's writing. Describing the foundation of the city of ladies, she writes "je pris a fossoier et fouyer selon son signe a tout la pioche d'inquisicion" (1.8,66) [I began to excavate and dig out the earth with the spade of my intelligence, just as she directed me to do]. Here, Christine digs out the earth, implying pre-existing cultural discourse, but by using "fouyer" to describe her actions, she implies that she is also looking for elements that she will keep and incorporate into her city. The female inventors engage in similar bricolage work, as Carmentis's, Ceres's and Minerva's inventions of writing, armor and farming are characterized with the verb "trouva," which means "to invent" but also "to find." The double meaning of this verb conveys how these inventors, like Christine, built their concepts from ready-made pieces.

This image of the female creator as excavator who works from the wreckage of androcentric cultural heritage is clearest in the story of Proba, who is famous for writing the Bible using the verses of Virgil:

> d'une partie les vers tout entiers prenoit et maintenant de l'autre aucunes petites parties touchoit. Par merveilleux artifice et soubtivieté a son propos ordeneement vers entiers faisoit et les petites parties ensemble mettoit et coupploit et lyoit en regardant la loy, l'art et les mesures des piez et conjunctions des vers" (1.29, 156)
>
> [in one part she would take several entire verses unchanged and in another borrow small snatches of verse. With marvelous craftsmanship and subtlety she composed entire verses in good order. She put together small pieces and paired and joined them while respecting the rules, craft, and measures of the feet and the joining together of verses].

While for Boccaccio, Proba's bricolage of pagan verse into scripture allegorizes his own practice of compilation, for Christine, this act signifies more directly since she like Proba, is a woman

[108] Michel Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?," *Bulletin de la Societe francaise de Philosophie* 63 (1969): 73-104. On medieval theories of authorship, see Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* (London: Scolar Press, 1984).

repurposing a man's words.[109] By depicting a woman who uses the words of men to create her own work, Christine allegorizes her own literary practice.

It is in her account of Proba that Christine, for the second time, names her source in a way that both shadows and undermines medieval notion of paying deference to an auctor. While feigning deference to Boccaccio, she also mis-cites his words, performing a premodern exercise in mimicry, an act, which, in postcolonial theory, consists of the colonized's performance according to the protocol of the colonizer.[110] Mimicry unsettles the power of the colonizer since at the same time that the colonized subject appears to participate in the imperialistic regime, he or she also misappropriates and misrepresents colonial discourse. In the story of Proba, Christine mis-cites Boccaccio by changing his emphasis on Proba as an exceptional example of woman who contrasts with the gender's overall idleness.[111] He writes:

> Si femineos consideremus mores—colus et acus atque textrina, si, more plurium, torpor voluisset; sed quoniam sedula studiis sacris ab ingenio segniciei rubiginem absterxit omnen, in lumen evasit eternum. Quod utinam bono intuerentur animo voluptatibus obsequentes et ocio, quibus pregrande est cubiculo insider, fabellis frivolis irreparabile tempus terere et a summon diei mane in noctem usque totam persepe sermons aut nucuos aut inanes blaterando deducere, seu sibi tantum lasciviendo vacere!

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[109] Constance Jordan criticizes Boccaccio's praise of Proba for implying that women were incapable of original work, ("Boccaccio's In-famous Women: Gender and Civid Virtue in the *De mulieribus claris*," in *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Carole Levin, Jeanie Watson [Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1987] 30), but Quilligan argues that that Proba, in fact, provides a mode for Boccaccio's own practice of compilation (*Allegory of Female Authority,* 97).

[110] On mimicry and postcolonialism, see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967) and Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). More synchronically, this mimicry resembles the echo effect in Renaissance theatre, particularly in the plays of John Webster. For example, Ralph Berry discusses how the echo scene in *The Duchess of Malfi* serves to parallel the body and a ruined building. Berry, *The Art of John Webster* Routledge Revivals (New York: Routledge, 2016), 33; 64. Echo in early modern literature as a model of female authorship is explored in Danielle Clarke, "'Speaking Women: Rhetoric and the Construction of Female Talk,'" *Renaissance Rhetoric, Gender and Politics,* ed. Alison Thorne and Jennifer Richards (New York: Routledge, 2007), 70-88.

[111] Ferguson also discusses Christine's deviations from Boccaccio's account of Cornificia (*Dido's Daughters,* 190-191).

> [If we reflect on normal female practice, the distaff, the need and the loom would have been sufficient for Proba had she wanted to lead an idle life like the majority of her sex. But she achieved eternal fame by taking her sacred studies seriously and scraping off the rust of intellectual sloth. Would that her example was favorably regarded by those women who yield to pleasure and idleness!].[112]

Boccaccio uses Proba's apparent exceptionality to draw attention to the 'normal' slothful practices of women and to call his imagined female readers to follow her example. Christine, though she directly cites Boccaccio as her source, mis-cites his account of Proba and instead proclaims: "De laquelle femme et de ses choses, ce dit Bocace, doivent estre en grant plaisir d'ouyr aux femmes" (1.29,158) [as Boccaccio himself asserts, it should give women great delight to hear about Proba and her achievements]. Christine thus tacitly omits Boccaccio' admonishing of women and instead frames Proba as a source of celebration for women. By adjusting this detail but nonetheless seeming to defer to her male source, Christine engages in a form of subversive mimicry.

This practice of mimicry also appears in Christine's rhetoric. At the opening of the narrative, Christine ventriloquizes misogynistic rhetoric, which, she says, describes the female body "retrait" and "herberge" of sin. In these comparisons, the despairing Christine summons a tradition in which men compared the female body, particular the religious female body, to a container.[113] Christine later applies these same nouns to describe the city that she creates. For instance, Reason tells Christine that the new city with its "grant largesce et long circuite de la closture et de la muraille" [great size and long circuit from the cloister and the all] will contain "belles et fortes mensions and *herberges*" (634) [beautiful and strong houses and refuges]. Christine further recycles the language of feminine containment at the end of her text when she addresses her readers, "vous toutes celles qui amez vertus, gloire et loz povez" [you all who love virtue, glory and power] "estre hebergees" (1031) [are

[112] Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women,* ed. and trans. Virginia Brown (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 414; 417. All subsequent citations and translation from this dual-language edition will be cited within the text.

[113] See Shari Homer, *The Discourse of Enclosure: Representing Women in Old English Literature* (Albany: State University of New York, 2001), 16.

to be lodged]. Her allegorical city, she continues, will be a "reffuge" (1032) ["refuge"] for all women. In her use of "herberge" and "reffuge" to describe this ideal city for women, Christine mimics the vocabulary and imagery of a male tradition of portraying women, but she repurposes this rhetoric to imagine a feminotopian space. Christine's mimicry thus at once sets her within an already established authorial tradition that objectifies women's bodies, enacting a collective theory of authorship, and enables her to carve out space for what had to be an individual female voice.

Christine's adherence to standard medieval theories of authority is further conveyed through the premise of the narrative itself as Reason, Rectitude and Justice help Christine to construct the city of ladies. However, this representation of literary authority as an amalgamation of voices later gives way to a more singular notion of authorship. As the text progresses, Christine begins to use the phrase, "Je, Christine," and increasingly asserts her own opinion based on her embodied experience. For instance, when Rectitude tells her about virtuous wives, Christine adds, "mesmes en mon temps l'ay assez veu que ama tres parfaictement son seigneur et loyale amour lui porta tant qu'il vesqui" (2.22) [in my own lifetime, I've seen plenty of women who cherished their lords and were loyal and loving towards them for their whole loves]. Later, in response to stories about women who stay with their leprous husbands, she recounts, "Et si cuide aujourd'uy congoistre tele qui est jeune et bonne et belle, de laquelle le mari est moult souspeçonné d'avoir tel maladie" (2.23, 278)[I know of one woman, a kind, young and lovely person, whose husband is suspected of having this illness]. By inserting her own experiences into the text, Christine asserts her individual authority in opposition to that of the male scholarly sources to whom she seems to defer.[114]

In addition to changing her source's words, Christine often eliminates Boccaccio's concessions to contradictory or incomplete sources, thus establishing an individual authorial presence that asserts originality and singularity. This erasure is prominent in Reason's story of

[114] Kevin Brownlee has drawn attention to tensions in Christine's use of the authorial "je." See "Discourses of the self: Christine de Pizan and the Rose," *Romanic Review* 59 (1988): 213-21.

Semiramis, who serves as the first brick of the city. Boccaccio states that Semiramis was the queen of the Assyrians but that "annositas abstulit" (16) ["[t]ime has obliterated any knowledge of her parents" (17)] except for "fabulosum…antiquis" (16) ["the legend of the ancients" (17)] that falsely states that she was the daughter of Neptune. Christine, however, removes uncertainty about Semiramis's parentage by simply claiming that Semiramis was a woman of "grant puissance" [great strength] so much that "les gens de lors…elle estoit seur du grand dieu Jupiter et fille de l'ancian dieu Saturnus que ilz disoient estre dieux de terre et de la mer" (1.15, 106) [people of that time used to say that she was the sister of the great god Jupiter and daughter of the ancient god Saturn who they believed were the gods of earth and the sea]. Christine's omission of the "legend of the ancients" in her source suggests her appeal to what Quilligan calls "an unscripted tradition of oral wisdom."[115] One effect of this tactic is that here, and in several other cases, she eliminates the sutures that Boccaccio leaves visible. Whereas he introduces conflicted and discredited sources that trouble a singular narrative, she asserts her own totalizing authorial control.

Reason's subsequent defense of Semiramis against accusations of incest further asserts Christine's singular control over the story. In her portrayal of the queen, she differs from Boccaccio who gives several different perspectives on what happened to Semiramis: "Alii tamen scribunt quod, cum in desiderium incidisset filii eumque iam etate provectum in suos provocasset amplexus, ab eodem, cum annis iam duobus et triginta regnasset, occisam" [some write that Semiramis was stirred with desire for her son when he was already an adult and that he killed her when she summoned him to her bed] (22, 23). Another version, he writes, "eam libidini miscuisse sevitiam solitamque, qos ad explendum sue uredines votum advocasset, ut occultaretur facinus, continuo post coitum iubere necari" [claims that she mixed cruelty with lust and ordered the death of men she slept with] (22, 23); "aliquando concepisset, adulteria prodidisse partu; ad que excusanda legam illam egregiam, cuius

[115]Quilligan, *Allegory of Female Authority*, 145.

Paulo ante mentio facta est proditam aiunt" [some say she became pregnant and her adultery was revealed through childbirth] (23, 25). Finally, he suggests that her son killed her "seu quod suum tantum arbitrabatur cum aliis comunicatum incestum cerneret minusque equo animo ferret, seu quod in ruborem suum matris luxuriam duceret aut forsan prolem in ["either because he could not bear to see others share in that incest which he thought to be his alone or because his mother's excesses brought him shame, or perhaps because he feared the birth of children who would succeed to the throne" (23-24, 25)]. By offering these diverse possibilities for Semiramis's deeds and ultimate fate, Boccaccio undercuts the truth-claim of any one and entertains the accounts of multiple sources at once. Christine uses a different tactic, excusing Semiramis because at this time "n'estoit ancores point de loy ascripte" (1.15, 108) [there was still no written law] against incest and asserting definitively that there are two reasons that Semiramis took her son as husband: "l'une qu'elle ne vouloit mie que en son empire eust autre dame couronnee que elle, la quelle chose eust esté se son filz eust espouse autre dame; l'autre estoit qu'il lui sembloit que nul autre home n'estoit digne de l'avoir a femme fors son proper fiz" (1.15, 108) [first she wanted no other crowned lady in her empire besides herself, which would have happened if her son had married another lady; and second, it seemed to her that no other man was worthy to have her as a wife except her own son]. By eliminating the incest taboo, Christine makes Semiramis, as Quilligan writes, representive of "a freedom which is unscripted and unbound by law," but she also supresses Boccaccio's competing accountss and instead asserts a singular version, even claiming insight into what the queen was thinking: [there's no doubt that if she had thought she was doing anything wrong or that she might be subject to criticism for her actions, she would have refrained from doing as she did.] [116] Thus, the

[116] Ibid., 85.

gap between within Christine's bricolage between her source text and her own version makes visible a mode of singular authorship that denies rival claims to truth.[117]

This individuated authorship does not, however, envision a solipsistic literary creator unconcerned with the interests of her readers. In the story of St. Christine, the author's namesake, the reader's role in the *Cité* becomes explicit.[118] Describing how Jesus baptized St. Christine with his own name after her father had thrown her out to sea, Christine emphasizes the connection between her name and this holy woman's.[119] The author persona relies on this bond when, breaking out of the allegory at the end of the section, she prays to the saint directly:

> O benoite Christine, vierge digne et beneuree de Dieu, tres elitte martire glorieuse, vueilles par la sainteté dont Dieux t'a faitte digne prier pour moy pecharresce, nommee par ton nom, et me soyes propise et piteuse marraine. Si voir que je m'esjoys de avoir cause de enexer et mettre ta sainte legend en mes scriptures, laquelle pour ta reverence ay recordee assez au

[117] Another prominent example of this technique occurs in the story of Artimisia, whose identity Boccaccio problematizes at the end of his narrative: "sources report that this was not Artemisia but Artemidora, another queen of Halicarnassus…But I agree with those who believe that Artemisia and Artemidora were one and the same person…Whoever my readers are, let them believe what they prefer. Whether one or two women were involved, each undertaking was still that of a woman" (ch. lvii). Christine entirely eliminates these musings about Artimisia's identity and instead begins by stating that she was "the most noble and virtuos queen of Caria" and ends by celebrating her "glorious crown of victory" in battle with Xeres (1.21).

[118] For this story, Christine relies primarily on Vincent de Beauvais, whose hagiographies she would have encountered through the French translation by Jean de Vignay (*Miroir historial*, Paris Bibliothèque de France, MS fr. 313). This text is edited in *Speculum historiale*, vol. 4 of *Speculum quadruplex* (Douai, 1624; rpl. Graz: Akademische Druck & Verlagsanstalt, 1965), book XIII, ch. iiiixx.vj-iiiixx.ix. 28 other manuscripts of Jean de Vignay's work have survived. On manuscripts and editions of the *Miroir*, see *Arlima* (archives de littérature du Moyen Âge), http://www.arlima.net/il/jean_de_vignay.html. This legend of Saint Christine is also found in the *Légende dorée,* ch. xciij. A comparison of these two sources with Christine's text convinces Curnow that Christine is following the *Miroir historial.* See Curnow, *Livre,* 1122.

[119] The baptismal naming of Christine's patron saint recalls the central episode of Canto XV of the *paradiso* in which Dante comes upon his great grandfather Cacciguida, which, in turn, is in the imitation of the *Aeneid*'s portrayal of Aeneas's meeting with his grandfather (Quilligan, *Allegory of Female Authority,* 242). Here, Christine adds to her source, which does not mention that Christine's name comes from Christ (fol. lxxiii). For other ways in which Christine establishes her relation to her patron saint, see Kevin Brownlee, "Matryrdom and the Female Voice: Saint Christine in the *Cite des dames*," in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe,* ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Klara Szell (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

> long. Ce te soit aggreable, pries pour toutes femmes, auxquelles ta sainte vie soit cause de bon exemple de bien finer leur vie Amen." (1009-1010)[120]
>
> [Oh blessed Christine, worthy virgin favored of God, pray for me, a sinner, named with your name, and be my kind and merciful guardian. Behold my joy at being able to make use of your holy legend and to include it in my writings, which I have recorded here at such length out of reverence for you. May this be ever pleasing to you! Pray for all women, for whom your holy life may serve as an example for ending their lives well. Amen.] (3.10.1)

Christine initially emphasizes the difference between the "vierge digne" and herself, a "pecharresce." However, by adding that she is "nommee par ton nom," Christine draws attention to their ressemblence on a linguistic level. She further incorporates the saint's identity into her own by stating that she has put "ta sainte legend en mes scriptures." Christine then extends this relationship from herself to an imagined group of readers by asking that the saint pray for all the women for whom the saint's life may serve as an example. As these women are called to use the saint's example, they are also asked to follow the example of Christine the author.

This shift to the reader in the central hagiography of Part 3 anticipates the ending of the *Cité*. Following Justice's hagiographies, Christine concludes with the pronouncement: "[now our City is entirely finished and completed, where all of you who love glory, virtue, and praise may be lodged in great honor]" (3.19). In this pronouncement, "you" includes both the ladies within the narrative and any female reader who deems herself a lover of virtue. This inclusion of the reader continues in the author's final address to "Mes tres redoubtee Dames" (3.19,496) [my very venerable ladies], as Christine describes the city, "vous povez veoir que la matiere dont elle est faite est toute de vertu, voire si reluisant que toutes vous y povez mirer, et par especial es comes de ceste derreniere partie, et semblablement en ce qui vous peut toucher des autres" (3.19,498) [you can see that it is made of

[120] Harley expands on Royal's ending, adding "Que t'en diroye, belle amie, pour emplir nostre cité de tel mesgniee plus à grant flotte, vienge saint Ourse à tout ses .xi.m vierges benoites martires, pour le nom de Jhesucrist toutes decolees, que, comme ells fussent envoyees pour estre mariees et elles s'embatissent en terre de mescreans et on les voulsist contraindre de renoncier à la foy de Dieu, plus tos esleurent la mort que renoncier à Jhesucrist, leur Sauaveur."

virtuous material which shines so brightly that you can gaze at your reflection in it, especially the lofty turrets that were build in this final part of the book, as well as the passages which are relevant to you in the other two parts]. In this image of the city as a mirror, a trope that recurs at multiple points in this dissertation, Christine suggests that her future readers will be able to see themselves in her, creating meaning for themselves by finding passages that are "semblablement" to their own experiences. Christine, having mimicked the paradigm of medieval auctoritas to assert her authorial independence, now cedes some of this control to her readers, as long as they are female and virtuous.

Christine's interest in the reader-patron as collaborator in the authoring process, and hence her interest in female community, is evident in the illuminated manuscript that she dedicated to Queen Isabeau of Bavaria, London, British Library MS Harley 4431 (1410-1414), which contains 30 of the author's works, including *La Cité des Dames*.[121] Her opening dedication, for instance, even

[121] There are 25 manuscripts of *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames,* several of which were executed during Christine's lifetime. The most significant of these are Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Fonds Français 607 (1407-1408), the edition Curnow uses; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Fonds Francais 1179 (1407-1410); Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale MS 9393 (prior to 1410), probably for the dukes of Burgundy; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Fonds Français 1178 (1410-1418); London, British Library, Harley 4431 (1410-1415) (for Isabeau of Bavaria); London, British Library MS Royal 19.A.xix (copied from an early version of the work originally written in 1405). Curnow and Monika Lange each provide discussions of these manuscripts but arrive at different conclusions. Curnow divides the manuscripts into four groups based on their perceived authority, and she bases her text on MS Fonds Français 607 from group 1. Lange, on the other hand, interprets variations as signs of authorial revision over time. From this view, the lacunae in Royal 19 and Brian Anslay's English translation are not omissions but passages yet to be written. Lange, therefore, places Royal 19 in the same phase as Arsenal 2686 and MS Bibl nat. Fr. 24293. See Monika Lange, *Christine de Pisan: Livre de la Cité des Dames: kritische Textedition auf Grund der sieben üiberliefenen "manuscrits oiginaux" des Textes* (unpublished dissertation: Universität Hamburg, 1974), xxxix, lx. For discussions of the manuscripts and of the evidence that Christine herself copied portions of the early illustrated "presentation" manuscripts, see Eric Hicks and Gilbert Ouy, "The Second 'Autograph' Edition of Christine de Pizan's Lesser Poetical Works," *Manuscripta* 20 (1976): 14-15; and Lucie Schaefer, "Die Illustrationen zu den Handschriften der Christine de Pizan," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 10 (1937): 119–208. A digitized version of the Harley manuscript is available through the British Library: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Harley_MS_4431. For scholarship on Harley, see Chastity Willard, "An Autograph Manuscript of Christine de Pizan?," *Studi Francesi*, 27 (1965): 452-57; Sandra Hindman, "The Composition of the Manuscript of Christine de Pizan's Collected

while asserting her own invention cites the queen's defining role in the project.[122] Adressing Isabeau a "very excellent princess," Christine portrays herself at first as a humble compiler: "Si l'ay fait, ma dame, ordener/Depuis que je schuss qu'assener…" [I had (this book) compiled my lady as soon as I knew that I was to address it to you…]. Christine draws further attention to the ways in which her writing can be adapted for different readers when she continues "Et sont oû volume compris/ Plusieurs livres èsquieulx j'ay pris/A parler en maintes manieres Differens…" (ll. 25-28) [In this volume are included many books in which I endeavored to speak in many different ways]. Christine would indeed have had to 'speak' in different ways for the queen, since all of the works in the Harley manuscript had already been written and offered to other patrons prior to 1411.[123] Reminding the queen that she, Christine, could "speak in many different ways" at once foregrounds her own skills as an author while also showing how readers play a role in textual construction.

Works in the British Library: A Reassessment," *British Library Journal* 9 (1983): 93-123 and "With Ink and Mortar: Christine de Pizan's *Cité des Dames*," *Feminist Studies* 10.3 (1984): 457-483; James Laidlaw, "Christine and the Manuscript Tradition," in *Christine de Pizan: a Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (New York: Routledge, 2003), 231-49.

[122] On Christine's relationship with the queen, see Tracy Adams, "Christine de Pizan, Isabeau of Bavaria and Female Regency," *French Historical Studies* 32 (2009): 1-32 and "Recovering Queen Isabeau of France: a Re-Reading of Christine de Pizan's Letters to the Queen," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 33 (2008): 35-54.

[123] Even the layout of the manuscript was most likely based on an earlier collection prepared around 1408 for Louis of Orleans (Biblothèque National de France, MSS fr. 835, 606, 836, 605 and 607, or MS D). Deborah McGrady, "What is a Patron? Benefactors and Authorship in Harley 4431, Christine de Pizan's Collected Works," in *Christine de Pizan: Texts/intertexts/contexts*, ed. Marilynn Desmond (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 195. Sandra Hindman questions Christine's claim that the queen's request launched the collection's fabrication though she maintains that it was, in fact, presented to the queen, suggesting that the Harley frontispiece may depict the presentation scene as it actually occurred. Sandra Hindman, "The Iconography of Queen Isabeau de Bavière (1410-1415): An Essay in Method," *Gazette Des Beaux-Arts*, 102 (1983): 102-10. Gilbert Ouy and Christine Reno designate Christine as scribe of the entire anthology, arguing that she transcribed the texts, added the rubies and even corrected mistakes in the margins. Gilbert Ouy and Christine M. Reno, "Identification des autographes de Christine de Pizan," *Scriptorium* 34 (1980): 221-38.

The revisions made to Royal 19.A.xix (one of the earliest versions of the *Cité*) in this more recent manuscript for Queen Isabeau, reflect Christine's awareness of her designated reader.[124] For instance, Harley expands on Royal's advice for wives, adding, "et celles qui on maris paysibles bons et discrés et a elles de grant amout loient Dieu de ce benefice…Et soient diligentes de les servir amer et cherir en la loyaute de leur cuer, si que elles doivent, gardant leur paix et priant Dieu qu'il leur maintienge et sauve" (3.19.2) [and those who have peacable, good and discreet husbands and a great love ought to praise God for this service…let them be diligent in them serving, loving and cherishing in the loyalty of their heart, so that they must keep their peace and praying to God that he maintain and keep them safe]. Though Isabeau had arguably not been blessed with such a husband, she might nonetheless have appreciated this attention to wives. This advice is followed by an expanded warning against flatters of the court that might equally have appealed to Isabeau:

> Voyez, mes dames, comment ces hommes vous accusent de tant de vices et de toutes pars. Faites les tous menteurs par monstre vostre vertu, et prouvez mencongeurs ceulx qui vous blasment *par bien faire, en telle maierer que vous puissies dire avec le psalmiste, "la felonnie des mauvais cherra sur leur teste' si* deboutez arrier les losangeurs decevables qui par divers attrais tachent *par main tours* a soubtraire ce que tant *souverainement* devez garde, c'est a savoir voz honneurs *et la beaute de vostre loz. O mes dames* fuyez, fuyez la fole amour dont ilz vous damonnestent! Fuyez la, pour Dieux, fuyez! (3.19)[125]
>
> Look, my ladies, how these men accuse you of so many vices everywhere. Make them all liars by showing your virtue, and prove liars those who blaspheme you by doing well, in such a manner that you might be able to say with the psalmist "the felony of the wicked will be on their head if you push back the deceitful flatters who by various appeals attempt by hand to undermine all that which so sovereignly you must keep, that is to say your honors and the beauty of your law. Oh my ladies, flee, flee the foolish love they urge on you! Flee it, for God's sake, flee!

This advice against the plots of "menteurs" and "losangeurs" reflects the difficulties that the real-world Isabeau had in managing the court in the frequent absences of her mentally unstable husband. The addition of the allusion to King David, the psalmist, sets this advice in a specifically royal

[124] Lange, *Christine de Pisan*.

[125] The Harley manuscript's additions to Royals text are marked in italics.

context. Moreover, Christine's appeal to women— "O Dames"—to flee such flatterers draws her readers more actively into the text.

Christine's revisions of the Royal manuscript in her anthology for Queen Isabeau manifest on a linguistic level through her addition of doublets. As Margaret Ferguson explains, Christine appropriated the clerkly style of adding synonyms through which "conceptual alternatives can be slipped into the discursive arena under the guise of synonyms."[126] Examples of such revisions include Christine's revision of "redargue" to "redargue et repent" [argue and repent]; "parfaire" to "parfaire et achiever" [to perfect and achieve]; "les voies to "les voies et les manieres" [ways and manners]; "de prouce" to "de vaillance et de prouece" [valiances and prowess]; "la plus noble" to "la plus riche et la plus noble" [the most rich and noble].[127] Through these changes, Christine broadens the potential meanings of her text and, in doing, affords her readers greater interpretive agency, as, like the women who can seem themselves in her city, they are given the opportunity to choose the word that best fits their own reading. In this sense Christine's compilation acts as a bricolage of her previous writings, which coalesce with her present mindset to produce more polyvalent results.

Christine's invitation to her royal patron to participate in the construction of meaning is visually encapsulated in the illumination that accompanies the *Cité* in Harley (figure 1). This image is broken into two panels: on the left, Christine stands in her library with Rectitude, Reason and Justice and, on the right, she and Reason begin building the city's wall. This image clearly foregrounds Christine, who is dressed in vibrant blue with a widow's headdress. However, the image also asserts the importance of female community by depicting the virtues, who advise Christine in the study and on whom she gazes intently, and Reason, who helps Christine lay the city's foundation on the right.

[126] Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters,* 186.

[127] This is a list compiled by Ferguson. Ibid.

Figure 1. Christine de Pizan before the personifications of Rectitude, Reason, and Justice in her study, while, outside, Christine and Reason build the city. London, British Library, MS Harley 4431 (ca. 1410–1414), fol. 290r. Courtesy of the British Library.

These paired scenes create an effect not unlike Christine's verbal doublets: by showing two separate narrative moments in one frame and visually substituting the books in Christine's study on the left for stones on the right, this image visualizes the translation of thought into action, laying bare the artistic process. It asks its viewers to be in two places at once, to engage in multiple temporalities and systems of meaning production. Even as the reader sees the author, she also sees that this author is a construct and so is invited to impose her own meaning onto the image and text. Christine's theory of authorship, which at once engages with and contests medieval modes of auctoritas, thus adumbrates a paradoxical theory of reader-as-author that is rooted in female community.

"I am She: I am He:" Performing Gender in the City of Ladies

By using bricolage to make a case for female authorship and readership, Christine's utopian allegory posits a theory of gender that diverges from the dominant discourse of her day. Since women were generally excluded from the world of letters, imagining a female author meant not only reimagining authorship but also reconceiving gender. Christine does this by cooping and subverting an essentialist view of gender to make a case for the virtue of women. Through this practice of reciting gender norms, her bricolage draws attention to gender's constructed nature, making a case for women's agency and anticipating postmodern theories of gender performativity as articulated by Judith Butler. As this recasting of gender identity is achieved through the stories of multiple women, Christine frames it as a communal act.

Christine's refutation of men's insults of women often ironically affirms gender stereotypes. At the beginning of the *Cité*, for instance, Reason refutes the proverb that women are made solely for "talking, crying and spinning." However, she does so not by disputing the centrality of these acts to female identity but rather by applying allegorical rereading to argue that these activities should be understood positively: tears are signs not of helplessness but of piety, speech is not associated with

gossip but rather is revelatory of woman's proximity to Christ; and spinning is not idle labor but "necessaire au service divin" (90) ["necessary for the divine service"(1.10, 30)].[128] While Reason denies the negative connotations of these activities, she nonetheless upholds the notion of 'women's work,' which, notably, does not include writing. Later, when replying to the stereotype that women have weak, feeble bodies, Reason retorts: "Mais quant a la hardiece et tele force de corps, Dieux (et Nature) a assez fait pour les femmes qui leur en a donné impotence, car a tout le moins sont ells par cellui agreeable default excuse de non fiare les cruaultez orribles" (1.14,104) [As far as bravery and physical strength are concerned, God and Nature have done enough for women by giving the weakness, because they are at least by this agreeable fault spared from committing horrible crimes]. Though she is quick to add that some women have physical strength and daring, this comment accepts weakness as 'natural' to women. Reason's subsequent remark that God created men and women for "divers offices" (1.11,92) [different offices] further differentiates the sexes. In challenging women's negative reputations, the *Cité* does not refute the notion of an essential, God-assigned female nature but rather shows that this nature is inherently good.

Christine's work thus creates a bricolage of essentializing discourse about women, but it also draws attention to the performative nature of gender. For instance, when the author-persona despairs in reaction to the misogyny of textual authorities, she describes: "je pris a examiner moy mesmes et mes meurs comme femme naturelle" (1.142) [I began to examine myself and my own behavior as an example of womankind] and exclaims, "me tenoie tres malcontente de ce que en corps feminine m'ot fait Dieux estre au monde" (1.1) [I thought myself very unfortunate that he had given me a female form]. Here, Christine's "je" separates her inner self ("moy mesmes") from her "corps feminin," rendering her inner person separate from the gender she has been assigned. Reason's subsequent effort to propel Christine out of this despair with the story of a man who

[128] The Latin proverb is "faller, flere, nere, statuit deus in muliere."

dresses as a woman further depicts gender as outer clothing separate from a 'true self.' Reason admonishes Christine, "Tu ressembles le fol, dont la truffe parle, qui en dormant au molin fu revestu de la robe d'une femme et au resveiller, pour ce que ceulz qui le moquoyent lui tesmoignoient femme estoit, crut mieulx leur faux dis que la certaineté de son estre" (1.1, 46) ["you're acting like that fool in the joke who falls asleep in the mill and whose friends play a trick on him by dressing him up in women's clothing. When he wakes up, they manage to convince him that he is a woman despite all evidence to the contrary!" (78)].[129] While this story portrays the idea of a man dressing as a woman as laughable, it nonetheless raises the possibility of gender fluidity.

The notion of nature as mutable was not, in fact, alien to the medieval mindset. While in a modern philosophical and scientific perspective, "Nature is always the same, everywhere and at any time," in a medieval worldview, nature was a creation dependent on its Creator.[130] In Christian thought, the 'natural' world was determined by an immanent causality: God could transform the functions of his artifact. For instance, to explain the phenomenon that fire make salt melt while water makes it crackle, Augustine writes, "it was not impossible for God to create such natures as He pleased, so it is not impossible for Him to change these natures."[131] Thus, for medieval Christian thinkers, nature was a set of habits, of regular behaviors that tolerate exceptions on a natural level, a

[129] Mary Anne Case refers this parable in her discussion of the *querelle des femmes* and legal academics. While she recognizes that in a postmodern context this example would be read "as evidence above all for the constructed nature of gender," she is more inclined to read it as proof of "an essential nature." Mary Anne Case, "From the Mirror of Reason to the Measure of Jutice," *Yale Journal of Law and Humanities* 5 (1993): 130.

[130] Benedictus Spinoza, *The Collected Writings of Spinoza*, trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), vol. 1, III. Kant echoes this thought: "Nature is the existence of things as determined by universal laws." *The Philosophy of Material Nature,* trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985), section 14, 38.

[131] *City of God*, book 21, ch. 8.

view summed up by Alan of Lille's *Rules of Theology*: "Nature of nothing but a custom."[132] Given the medieval belief in the possibility of miracles, the notion that a gendered subject could deviate from the 'custom' of its nature might not, therefore, have been unimaginable. What is, however, radical in Christine's text, is the way that women subvert 'natural' gender roles to claim their own agency.

We can better understand the *Cité*'s deconstruction of gender in context of bricolage by looking at Judith Butler's work on performativity.[133] In *Gender Trouble*, Butler writes that "[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."[134] While this metaphor seems to suggest the presence of an actor whose identity pre-exists the performance, Butler distinguishes between performativity and performance, contending that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" and that "the gendered body… has no ontological status

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[132] Alan de Lille, Prologue in *Archives d'Histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, ed. NM Haring 48 (1981), 122. The same view appears in the second preface of Gerald of Wales's *Topographia hibernica. Giraldus Cambrensis: the Topography of Ireland,* trans. Thomas Forester, rev. and ed. Thomas Wright (Cambridge, On: In parentheses Publications, 2000), 6. The notion that there is no absolute law in nature is confirmed by Peter Damian (11th c), who wrote in his *Letter on the Divine Almightiness*: "the one who founded Nature is the one who changes it" (naturae conditor naturae est etiam inmutator), cited in *The Concept of Nature in Science and Theology*, Part 1, ed. Niels H. Gregersen, Michael W. S. Parsons, Christoph Wassermann et al. (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1995), 41.

[133] While Butler mostly detaches hers work from anthropology and so is not often compared to Lévi-Strauss, I find this comparison useful for understanding Christine's reworking gender. Quilligan also links Christine to contemporary theory drawing links between the *Cité* and 1980s feminism, particularly the work of Nancy Chodorow, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray. In my analysis, I adopt Quilligan's stance when she notes, "The point is not so much that Christine has anticipated feminist theorists like Chodorow as that, in being one of the first female writers to articulate what is specifically gendered about the female experience in history—what is in fact gendered differently from males—she comes up with a description strikingly similar to that of a later female thinker considering the same issues" (*Allegory of Female Authority*, 131).

[134] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990, Anniversity Edition, 1999).

apart from the various acts which constitute its reality."[135] Performatively constituted gender identity is not formed through a subject's freewill; rather, the "repeated acts" that constitute gender occur "within a highly rigid regulatory frame."[136]

Christine's work resonates with Butler's both in its awareness of the construction of gender and its use of bricolage to subvert gender norms. By opening with an author-persona troubled by insults against women that contradict her own experiences, Christine draws attention femininity's construction by repressive systems of power. While her recovery of an essential virtuous womanhood is at odds with Butler's formulations, Christine's reconstruction of the category of woman from misogynistic tradition is not. Christine's citing and mis-citing ontological norms subverts them, coinciding strikingly with Butler's views.[137] As Butler, echoing Lévi-Strauss, puts it, "[t]here is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking' up is enabled by the tool lying there."[138] Indeed, Butler performs a similar bricolage of male-authored texts in her use of Freud, whom she deploys to construct a postmodern theory of gender and so to question the very premises about subject formation on which his oeuvre was founded.

While bricolage assumes more agency than the constrained and regularized repetition of norms that constitutes Butler's gendered subjects, Christine's mode of subversion nonetheless speaks to Butler's notion of parody. In response to critics who have suggested that her theory of

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[135] Ibid., 25; 136.

[136] This point is further clarified in Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Here, Butler emphasizes the Derridean and Austinian foundations of performativity that are only implicit in *Gender Trouble.*

[137] Butler uses "citation" in a Derridean sense to describe the ways in which ontological norms are deployed in discourse sometimes forcibly and sometimes not. Derrida asserts that all linguistic signs are vulnerable to appropriation, reiteration and re-citiation. Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context" ("Signature Evénement Contexte"), in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds,* ed. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 80–111.

[138] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 145.

pre-determined gender acts limits the possibility of agency, in *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that there need not be a "doer behind the deed;" rather, agency is invariably constructed in and through action.[139] Butler further posits that gender can subverted through the repetition of parodic acts: "just as bodily surfaces are enacted as the natural, so these surfaces can become the site of a dissonant and denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself."[140] The principle example that Butler cites of parody as resistance is drag performance, which, by destabilizing the "truth" of sexual and gender identity, can expose the social coercion at the base of the performative nature of identity.[141] Christine's 'dressing' in the rhetoric of male authors deconstructs gender norms and the examples in her text of women dressed as men evoke Butler's notion of drag and its attendant possibilities for resistance, spotlighting the ways in which women's utopianism often exists both within and outside conventional gender norms.[142]

There are many examples of cross-dressing women in the *Cité*, including in a story adapted from Boccaccio's *Decameron* about the merchant Bernabo's wife and the tales of women in battle such as Queen Hypsicratea and Empress Triaria. The two most extended examples of women who

[139] For instance, in a written exchange with Butler, which took place in 1991 and was published in 1995, the political philosopher Seyla Benhabib asks if there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender, then how can women change the "expressions" by which they are constituted? *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 21.

[140] Ibid., 146.

[141] Butler distinguishes, however, between drag that is subversive and that which becomes an instrument of cultural hegemony. This account of agency is resonate though not identical with that of practice theory, in which theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu treat the human body as the nexus of practical engagements with the world, recognizing the internalization of the social order in the human but also allowing for "the agent's practice, his or her capacity for invention and improvisation." Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 13.

[142] In *L'avision*, Christine says she herself had turned into a man when widowed and remained so to brave the elements of the world. Her reading of the early Church fathers may have fostered this recurring image in her oeuvre since they used the term *virago* to characterize women who achieved the virtue of men. *The Vision of Christine de Pizan* (London: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2005).

pose as men, however, appear in Justice's stories of saints.[143] The first of these is Marina, who dresses "comme un petit moine" (474) ["like a little monk"] and assumes the name of brother Marinus so that she can accompany her father to live in a monastery (3.12). Subsequent descriptions use masculine pronouns when describing Marina/Marinus's encounters with others. For instance, after the local innkeeper's daughter accuses "Frere Marin" (476) ["brother Marinus"] of impregnating her, Justice recounts that the abbot "*le* fist appeller" (476) ["had him called"] and was so angry that he "*le* fist batre durement et *le* mist hors du moustier et deffendi l'entree" (476) ["had him thrown out of the monastery, forbidding him ever to return"].[144] After a time, "les frères, meus de pitié, prierent l'abbe que il receust *Frere Marin* a misericorde et a peines lui condescendirent" (476) ["the monks took pity on Marinus and begged the abbot to show mercy on him and allow him back in"], and "quant *il* fu entrez ou moustier, l'abbe lui commanda a faire tous les or et vilz offices de leens et que *il* apportast l'eau a nettoyer tous leurs necessaires, et que il servist a tous" ["when he returned to the monastery, the abbot gave Marinus all the dirtiest and most unpleasant tasks to do that he bring the water to wash all their things and that he serve everyone"]. All these descriptions written from the omniscient viewpoint of the narrator refer to Marina/Marinus as "il," giving the impression that the narrator, along with those in the monastery, has come to see Marina as a man, embracing a notion of gender fluidity. This presentation of gender as a construct speaks to the more radical side of Christine's utopian as tactic whereby she defamiliarizes assumed categories.

At the same time, Christine (and her scribes) does not altogether jettison gender as a construct: rather, her utopianism relies on a process of working within while challenging

[143] Perpetua is the bestknown example of a cross-dressing saint, but her life does not figure in Christine's source, the *Miroir historial*.

[144] The Latin source similarly refers to Marina as male: "Quod cum retulissent Abbati, requisites Marinus, utrum hoc scelus perpetrasset, ingemiscens ait, preccaui pater, poenitentiam agam, ora pro me" (ch). "Tunc iratus Abbas eum contundi & affligi issit ipsumque de moansterio eiecit…Pandochis vero filia peperit filium & albaccauit, quen mater puellae secum ad Marinum ante monasterium adduxit, ibi reliquit eum & abijt " (Vincent de Beauvais, ch. 75).

preconceived categories. When referring to Marina's interiority, Justice uses feminine pronouns and noun forms, suggesting a more essential view of gender. For instance, describing the innkeeper's daughter's accusation, Justice says, "*la sainte vierge* ot plus cher prendre la coulpe sur *elle* que manifester que *elle* fust feme" (3.12, 476) ["this holy virgin preferred to accept blame on herself rather than reveal that *she* was a woman"]. Later, Justice describes how "*la vierge* le cecet et de ce morel de pain que les entrans lui donnoient nourrissoit cel enfant comme se il fust sien proper" (3.12, 476) ["the *virgin* took the child and fed him with the pieces of bread that people entering gave her, bringing this boy up as if he were her own son"]. Justice further explains how when allotted the lowliest jobs, "*la sainte vierge* le faisoit humblement et voulentiers" (3.12, 476) ["*the holy virgin* carried them out most humbly and willing"]. When writing of Marina/Marinus's solitary death, Justice equally uses the pronoun "elle:" "et pou de temps après, *elle* s'endormi a Nostre Seigneur" (3.12, 476) ["sometime later *she* fell asleep in Jesus Christ"]. However, once members of the convent, who belive Marina/Marinus is a man, enter, Justice switches pronouns: "Et si comme ilz *l'*orent despoullie et ilz virent que *c'*estoit une femme…" ["once they undressed him and discovered that this was in fact a woman"]. After this climatic discovery, Marina/Marinus shifts from a "he" or "she" to a gender-neutral "corps." While the final revelation of Marina's femininity conveys a belief in an essential gender identity, the use of pronouns at other points in the narrative conveys a view of gender as based on the perspective of the observer, a point emphasized by Marina's finally transformation in a genderless "corps," which turns her into an empty sign. This view of gender as a contextual construct is accidently witnessed by manuscript L of the *Cité,* in which the scribe confuses indefinite articles, referring to Marina's father Eugenius as "une homme" and his daughter as "*un* seulle fille," reflecting the blurring of gender categories in the story itself.[145]

[145] Noted by Johnston, 582.

The juxtaposition of Marina's life with the story of another cross-dressing virgin, Eufrasyne, creates a play between sameness and difference that mirrors the double portrayal of gender identity in the stories themselves. The narrative arc of Eufrasyne's story parallels Marina's: the saint enters a monastery disguised as "un jovencel de la court de l'empereur" (478) [a young man from the court of the emperor] and takes the name "Smargus." Like Marina, Euphrosyne/Smargus remains in disguise until death when her 'true' gender is revealed. While this plot structure is the same, in its details, Euphrosyne's story is an inverse mirror of Marina's: while Marina enters the monastery to join her father, Euphrosyne becomes a monk to hide from a father who wants to marry her off. This sense of inversion, of sameness but not quite, invokes a queer sensibility that emphasizes the gender fluidity these stories make possible.

This pattern of inversion persists in the narrator's use of gendered pronouns. Describing Euphrosyne's entrance to the monastery, Justice tells how "L'abbé, qui vit sa grant affection, la receut voulentiers" (3.13, 478) [the abbot, who saw her great affection received her voluntarily]. Justice, therefore, refers to Euphrosyne as a man when describing the perspective of someone who believes her to be one. However, Justice uses feminine pronouns when Euphroysne's/Smargus's father arrives although he is also unaware of his daughter's identity: "après, elle parla a son pere et le reconforta moult et lui acertena que sa fille estoit en bon lieu, our service de Dieu, et que, ains que il mourust, que la verroit et que ancore aroit grant joye d'elle" (3.13, 480) [she spoke to her father and cheered him immensely by saying that his daughter was serving God and living in a safe place. She also reassured him that before he died, he would definitely see her again and would once more delight in her company.] This deviation from the pronoun pattern in Marina's story increases the emotional intensity of the moment, emphasizing Euphrosyne's identity as the lost daughter she describes. After the father and daughter speak, Justice returns to referring to Euphrosyne as male when speaking about the father's feelings and experiences, saying: "le pere, qui cuida que il le sceust

part vertu divine, s'en parti moult consolez et dit a l'abbé que oncques, puis que il avoit perdu sa fille, n'avoit trouvé en son cuer autant de repos" (3.13, 480) [thinking that the boy knew all this thanks to divine inspiration, the father felt much better] and "ne tenoit mie de souvent venir visiter le saint frère" (3.13, 480) [it wasn't long before he started to come back time and time again to visit the holy brother]. In her solitary death, like Marina/Marinus, Eurphrosyne/Smargus is portrayed as a woman: "Adonc *la* voult Dieux appeller a soy, si *la* prist maladie" (480) ["God chose to call her to Himself, and she was taken ill"]. Euphrosyne assumes her public role as woman only after her father receives a posthumous letter from her and reads "dedens comment *elle* estoit [est] sa fille" (3.13,480) [within how she was [is] his daughter].[146] Here, the letter operates performatively, transforming the monk into a daughter and so presenting gender change as a kind of miracle.[147] Euphrosyne's life, through its correspondences and divergences from Saint Marina's, conveys the complexity of gender in Christine's work. While these stories relate how those who are born women can assume the identities of men, they also convey the impossibility, as noted by Butler, of leaving behind the discourse through which they are constituted. However, the relationship between the hagiographies, as the second doubles and inverts the first, also evokes Butler's observation that repetition can itself serve as a form of subversion.

While Christine's portrayals of gender identity resonate with arguments made centuries later in Butler's feminist theory, they also align with contemporary transgender studies. Prominent theorists of transgender draw implicitly on the notion of bricolage. For instance, Donna Haraway's

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[146] The Latin source says "Qua postulante ut defiderium fuum adimpleret, facta oration, abscidit comam eius, induens eam tunicam schematis & imposuit et nomen Smaragdus, oransque pro ea difcessit. Illa vero cogitans in semetipsa ait: Si intrauero monasterium puellarum, pater meus requires inveniet me & violeter me trahet inde propter" (Vincent de Beauvais, ch. 76).

[147] This letter evokes the function of the performative function of a letter in the life of Saint Alexis. *The Life of St. Alexius in the Old French Version of the Hildesheim Manuscript: The Original Text Reviewed, with Comparative Greek and Latin Versions*, ed. Carl J. Odenkirchen (Brookline, MA: Classical Folia Editions, 1978).

notion of the cyborg, like the bricolage creation, is a collection of disparate, incongruent parts, each of which contains multiple elements of oppressor and oppressed. Christine's multifarious work offers a site of possible meeting for feminist and trans studies, which, despite many similar investments, have a fraught relationship.[148] This is not to say that Christine anticipated the transgender movement. Rather, I argue that Christine's at once essentialist and constructionist view of womanhood can be set into mutually illuminating dialogue with the tension between transgender studies and gender performativity. Christine's sense of being in the wrong body at the beginning of her text and her appeal to womanhood as a source of identity align her with a notion of gender as a stable identity, according with certain transgender perspectives. At the same time, her accounts of cross-dressing saints and her bricolage method more broadly voice a view of gender as social construction. Christine's double perspective reveals the utility of preserving seemingly incommensurate views. Reading her work suggests that the differences between transgender and feminist studies can, in fact, become sites of collaboration: transgender studies can remind feminist and queer scholars of the value of identity as a category of resistance even as feminist and queer studies maintains an awareness of gender's instability. The communal aspect of Christine's work as she juxtaposes different women's experiences further makes this point: Christine shows how women with disparate experiences can come together to reach a kind of consensus, to build something new. Christine's feminotopia, therefore, offers a model of resistance that may still have relevance today.

"The Book of Myths": Translating the City of Ladies

During Christine's lifetime, deluxe manuscripts of her writings came, often as the spoils of war, into possession of French-speaking English aristocrats and acted as the basis for later English translations. Harley 4431, for instance was taken by to England by John, duke of Bedford for his

[148] Many of the earliest feminist perspectives on transsexuals were marked by hostility. Janice Raymond, for instance, contended, "all transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves." Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1979), 104.

French wife Jacquetta of Luxembourg.[149] In being repurposed for an English audience, Christine's identity underwent a surprising transformation: she was represented as a cloistered nun, a portrayal that distanced her from the creation of her work and instead emphasized the authority of her male editors, translators and readers.[150] Between 1450-1550, at least nine English translations of her work appeared. *The City of Ladies,* in particular, became widely known in England.[151] Cristina Malcolmson has recently presented evidence that manuscript copies of the *Cité*'s original French text were available to educated English women in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Among the *Cité*'s possible early female readers was Margaret Cavendish, author of the *Blazing World,* who may, with her husband, have owned the Harley manuscript in the mid-seventeenth century.[152] English

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[149] Important French manuscripts of Christine's work—including London, British Library, MS Harley 219; London, British Library, MS Royal 19B XVIII; and London, British Library, MS Royal EV—show signs of having been copied for English owners. Sir John Fastolf was one of the principle figures associated with the introduction of Christine's manuscript works to England. Between 1450 and 1550, nine different English translations of her work appeared in English. On the circulation of Christine's writing in England during her life and in the decades after her death, see P.G.C. Campbell, "Christine de Pisan en Angleterre," *Revue de Literature Comparee* 5 (1925): 659-70 and Carol Meale "Patrons, Buyers and Owners: Book Production and Social Status" in *Books Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475,* in *Books Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 201-38; Stephanie Downes, "A Frenche Booke Called the Pistill of Othea': Christine de Pizan's French in England" in *Language and Culture in medieval Britain: the French of England c. 1100-1500*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2009), 457-68; James C. Laidlaw, "Christine de Pizan, the Earl of Salisbury and Henry IV," *French Studies* 36 (1982): 129-43. For a discussion of the book's contemporary context, see Robert Costomiris "Christine de Pisan's Boke of the Cyte of Ladyes in its Henrican Setting," *Medieval Perspectives* 18 (2003 [2011]): 79-93, and Mary Beth Long, "A Medieval French Book in an Early Modern English World: Christine de Pisan's *Livre de la Cite des Dames* and Women Readers in the Age of Print," *Literature Compass* 9 (2010): 521-37.

[150] On this transformation of Christine de Pizan's identity, see Summit, *Lost Property* and Nancy Bradley Warren, *Women of God and Arms: Female Spirituality and Political Conflict, 1380-1600* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 69. Due to Fastolf's connections with Scrope and Worcester, who translated *l'Epistre d'othea* and *le Livre des Faits d'Armes*, it has been argued that he was behind the transformation of Christine into a nun in these editions (Campbell, 669).

[151] The text was also translated into Flemish in 1475.

[152] Cristina Malcolmson, "Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies* in Early Modern England," in *Debating Gender in Early Modern England, 1700,* ed. Cristina Malcolmson and Mihoko Suzuki (New York:

aristocrats at the Tudor and Stuart courts may also have been familiar with visual representations of Christine's feminotopia since tapestries (now lost) illustrating this story were presented to Margaret of Austria in 1523.[153] These tapestries immediately followed Brian Anslay's (d. 1536) translation of the *Cité,* published as *the boke of the Cyte of Ladyes*, which was put into print in 1521 by Henry Pepwell and became the first and only English translation of the work before the twentieth century.[154]

Anslay's translation of the *Cité* adds another level of bricolage.[155] As Jennifer Summit has shown, Anslay intended his translation for an audience of male courtiers seeking advancement, and so his translation and accompanying prologue marginalize the female author.[156] Just as Christine

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Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 15-35. Malcolmson has recently discussed evidence that manuscript copies of the original French text were available to educated English women in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.

[153] See Susan Groag Bell, "A Lost Tapestry: Margaret of Austria's *Cité des Dames*," *Une femme de lettres au Moyen Âge: Etudes author de Christine de Pizan,* ed. Liliane Dulac and Bernard Ribémont (Orléans: Paradigme, 1995), 449-67. Other records of the *City* in England include a copy that became part of the Thynne family library by the 1540s. A reference to the "castle of Ladiez" appears in an account of royal festivities held at Kenilworth Castle during reign of Elizabeth I in 1575 as one of the books belonging to the guest Captain Cox (Hope Johnston, introduction to *the Boke of the Citye of Ladyes by Christine de Pizan,* xliii).

[154] Only five copies of the English *Cyte* remain intact, plus a fragment in the Bagford Ballad collection, a far smaller number than the 27 surviving manuscript copies of the French *Cité.* These copies are held at The British Library; Kings College, Cambridge University; Longleat House, Warminster England; Corpus Christi College, Oxford University; and the Folger Shakespeare Library. This small number is misleading, however, since there were 600 copies or more per edition by 1521. Recently a full edition of the translation was published: *The Boke of the Citye of Ladyes by Christine de Pizan,* ed. Hope Johnston (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2014). Before this, Anslay's text was available in its facsimile in *Distaves and Dames: Renaissance Treatises for and about Women,* ed. Diane Bornstein (Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1978).

[155] Not much is known about Anslay's background, aside from the fact that he was probably the son of William Robert Annesley and Mabel Anne English and born near Nottingham. He first appears in Tudor records among attendants at Henry VII's funeral on May 11, 1509 listed among a group of attendants assigned to Catherine of Aragon's chamber (Johnston, xxxix-xliii).

[156] Summit, *Lost Property.* Summit's view is seconded by Stephanie Downes, "Fashioning Christine de Pizan in Tudor Defences of Women," *Parergon* 23, no. 1, (2006): 71-92; and Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters,* 222-23. Anne E. Coldiron, however, writes, "in any languages, the City of Ladies directly

used misogynistic texts to create her feminotopia, Anslay deployed proto-feminist rhetoric as the basis for his androcentric literary creation.[157] But equally, just as Christine's utopia retained traces of its source texts, Anslay's male narratorial voice is undermined by the original text itself.[158] This afterlife of Christine's text, therefore, further underscores the force of bricolage as a cultural tool.

The resignification of Christine's authorial persona in Pepwell's edition is manifest in its prologue, which, as Summit explains, "renders the female author marginal to the lines of masculine textual exchange deemed central to the book's production."[159] This prologue opens, like Christine's dream vision, with an illusion to literary tradition, but it concerns men's rather than women's reading:

The kyndly entente of every gentylman

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challenges aspects of patriarchy and their literary and social consequences." *English Printing Verse Translation and the Battle of the Sexes* (London: Routledge, 2009), 36.

[157] On Pepwell's edition of the *Cyte* see: Maureen Cheney Curnow, "The Boke of the Cyte of Ladyes," *Les Bonnes Feiulles* 3 (1974): 116-37; Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

[158] On Christine's identity in later English versions of her books, see John Rooks, "Boke of the Cyte of Ladyes and Its Sixteenth-Century Readership," in *The Reception of Christine de Pizan from the Fifteenth through Nineteenth Century: Visitors to the City,* ed. Glenda McCleod (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1991), 101-126. See also Diane Bornstein, "Anti-feminism in Thomas Hoccleve's Translation of Christine de Pizan's *Epistre au Dieu d'amour*," *English Language Notes* 19 (1981): 7-14; Cynthia J. Brown, "The Reconstruction of an Author in Print: Christine de Pizan in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilyn Desmond, Medieval Cultures 14 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Jane Chance, "Christine de Pizan as Literary Mother: Women's Authority and Subjectivity in 'The Floure and the Leafe' and 'The Assembly of Ladies,'" in *The City of Scholars: New Approaches to Christine de Pizan*, ed. Margarete Zimmermann and Dina de Rentiis (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994) and "Gender Subversion and Linguistic Castration in Fifteenth-Century English Translations of Christine de Pizan," in *Violence against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. Anna Walecka Roberts (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998), 161-94; Dhira Mahoney, "Middle English Regenderings of Christine de Pizan," in *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting and Transmission in the French Tradition,* ed. Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam: Editions Rodolphi, 1995), 405-427.

[159] Summit, *Lost Property*, 95. Anslay's translation shares structural similarities with MS Royal 19.A, which scholars believe a scribe copied from an early version of the work, and it seems plausible that Anslay consulted this manuscript given its provenance as part of the royal collection after ca. 1461 and his administrative position in the royal household (Johnston, xxv).

Is the furtheraunce of all gentylnesse,
And to procure in all that ever he can
For to renewe all noble worthynesse.
This dayly is sene at our eye expresse
Of noble men that do endyte and rede
In bokes olde, theyr worthy myndes to fede. (ll. 1-7)

Here, as Summit notes, Pepwell positions the City of Ladies as educative reading in gentility for a new breed of laymen who had assumed administrative roles in the Tudor court.[160] He thus refigures a book whose premise is the advancement of women's reputations as a tool for the social advancement of men. Pepwell goes on to describe how this book about gentlewomen by "Bryan Anslay,/ Yoman of the seller with the eyght Kynge Henry," has lately come into his "custodye," emphasizing his views of the woman author's book as his possession. He says that he delayed printing the book until "the gentyll Erle of Kente" requested that he do so in his name (l.18), adding another layer of masculine ownership to Christine's literary work. Pepwell thus removes Christine and instead imagines a network of men behind this book's production.

While the content of the prologue conveys male literary authority, it relies on a female author's paradigms to create this image. By referring to the "kyndly entente" or "natural goal" of every gentleman, Pepwell recalls Christine's opening evocation of the feminized figure of Nature as "the chambermaid of God" to reframe woman's nature as good. Moreover, by saying gentleness can be observed "at our eye expresse," Pepwell evokes Christine's reliance on her own experiences to prove the true virtue of women. However, his placement of gentliness at the end of the line highlights its etymological connection with gentleman. Finally, as Pepwell asks "his lordship,/ with others that shall chaunce/ On it to rede,/ the fautes to amende," he rehearses Christine's invocation to her readers when she calls to them, "My ladies see how these men accuse you of so many vices from all sides; make liars of them all by showing your virtue and prove your good actions." Thus,

[160] Summit, *Lost Property*, 97. This mode of social climbing through study rather than inherited virtue, Summit argues, responds to a crisis of "biosocial reproduction" that both Henry VIII and Pepwell's patron the Earl of Kent were undergoing (99).

even though Pepwell omitted Christine from his prologue, the text retains its female author's spectral presence.

While Anslay's translation itself adheres closely to the original text and so retains its female narrator's voice, occasional deviations in plot, combined with the necessary changes that accompany translation, offer glimpses of the translator's perspective.[161] The *Cyte* interpolates a male literary presence into a woman's authorial voice and, therefore, reminds the reader that the narrator is a man speaking with the words of a woman. Some of these revisions consist of omissions from the source. For instance, when Reason posits that women possess sufficient intelligence to rule, Anslay narrows the assertion by omitting her subsequent comment "et moult grant de telles y a" [there are many such women]. In other cases, Anslay narrows the semantic range of Christine's words to reveal his masculinist position. When he translates a passage that describes how some men pursue women romantically for "le grant bien d'elles," "bien," which can mean "good" or "material good," becomes "grete welthe" (II.64), eliminating the double entendre on virtue, which, is so important for Christine. In a more direct erasure of female agency, Anslay changes the story of Florence of Rome from a tale in which a wife imprisons her husband's brother when he makes sexual advances towards her into a story in which she is prisoned.[162] While small, this change gains significance in light of the preface's negation of female authority.

Other changes even more directly insert Anslay's own persona. For instance, when Reason promises that she and her sisters will refresh Christine with water from a pure well-spring, Anslay

[161] Anslay's faithfulness to Christine's text accords with the Humanists' desire for exact translations. See *Tudor Translation in Theory and Practice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). Earl Jeffrey Richards argues that Anslay's fidelity to Christine's text itself constitutes a literary problem, since this faithfulness results in awkward grammar ("Finding the 'Authentic' Text: Editing and Translation Medieval and Modern Works as Comparable Interpretive Exercises," *L'Esprit Createur* 27 (1987): 111-21 at 116-17). Johnston divides Anslay's changes to the *Cité* text into three categories: 1. Instances where he deliberately alters the source for his own purposes; 2. Decision made by him as a translator and editor; 3. Unintentional, misreading of minims, misunderstanding vocabulary, losing track of syntax.

[162] Johnston lists these changes in her introduction (xliv-l).

adds "thou shalf receive of us *thre wyne* and water" (I.4), with the addition of wine emphasizing his own identity as yeoman of the cellar. Another self-insertion happens when Rectitude (Ryghtwynesse) refutes the claim that it is better to hire a male servant than marry a wife. Whereas, in Christine's original work, there are no servants who surpass a wife—"Je croy que on ne trouveroit point de tel serviteur" (II.13)—, Anslay translates this as "one shal not fynde but fewe suche servauntes." This change from none to few suggests that there are men, including himself, who might surpass a wife. Anslay thus subtly inserts himself into Christine's text in a way that undermines the female author's authority but is also dependent on that author.

Anslay likewise inserts a male reader into the narrative. For instance, he changes Christine's chastisement of knights for failing to uphold the good name of women into an appeal addressed to noble men: "Yet what shall these nobles and knyghtes say to this thynge, so moche agaynst ryght that saythe evyll generally of all women" (I.38). In another case, he extends the argument that women can be discreet into a moral lesson also applicable to men: "for dycrecyon and secretenesse are to be commended in ony person" (II.25). In Ch. 11, he translates the original text's gender netural "nature humaine" as "mannes nature." Just as Christine's use of pronouns of the stories of Marina and Euphrosyne conveyed her position on the story, Anslay changes pronouns from his scourse when he changes Christine's description of her reaction to the misogyny she encounters in Matheolus's book, it was "si comme personne en letargie" [as if I were in a stupor (4)], to "as a persone halfe from hymselfe" (1.2). In the story of St Christine, Anslay's subtle deviations enforce a hierarchy of genders. For instance, as he does elsewhere in the text, he translates "parens" (450) as "fader and moder" (451), placing the male parent firsts.[163] He also translates, "Et tousjours luy demandoit le pere se elle s'aviseroit"(her father always asked if she would reconsider) (452) as "And she asked her father alwaye yf he advysed her not" (453). What is likely a misreading of pronouns

[163] He also does this in the story of Marina (466/467).

rather than a deliberate distortion nonetheless results in a diminishment of female agency, since in the French text, the father asks Christine to reconsider her position while, in the English, the daughter pays deference to her father. While Christine directs her text clearly to an audience of virtuous women, Anslay's changes redirect the text to a male audience.

The destabilizing of gender categories emerges more sharply in the stories of the cross-dressing saints, in which the translation contributes to the blurring of gender boundaries. In Justice's tale of Marina, Christine's pronoun-based distinction between the perceptions of those who believe Marina/Marinus to be a man and the omniscient narrator falls part. Whereas Christine consistently refers to Marina/Marinus as "il" when describing situations from the perspective of those in monastery, Anslay's translation more often refers to the saint in feminine pronouns. In contrast to Christine's text, in which the father lies and says that "sa pensee estoit moult durement occuppee pour un petit filz que il avoit laissié au siecle" [his thought was very sorely occupied with a little boy whom he had lost to the world] (466), Anslay writes that the father tells the abbot that "all his thought was upon a doughter of his which he had left in the world" (467). Subsequently Anslay translates Christine's sentence "L'abbé luy dist que il l'alast querre et le meist en la religion avec luy" as "the abbot bad hym (the father) that he shoulde go retche *her* and that *she* myght be put into relygon with ym" (467). Later, however, when Marina/Marinus is brought to the monastery "clothed as a lytell monk," "the abbot and all other praysed her holy conversacyon, and wyst none other but that she was a man" (582). While this introduction to the saint refers to her "true" gender, Anslay later translates Christine's pronouns correctly, writing, for instance, that after the girl of the innkeeper accuses the saint of having fathered her child, "the abbot beynge right wrothe made *hym* to be beaten and tourmented, and put *hym* out of the monastery" (469). In other cases, Anslay's translation creates even further gender confusion, as, for instance, while Christine says that Marina/Marinus cares for the innkeeper's daughter's child "comme se il fust sien proper" (468) [as if

he was his own], a case in which the masculine "sien" agrees with the gender of the child not the saint, Anslay writes that "the holy mayden" nourishes this child "as thoughe it had been his owne" (469).

In the Life of Euphrosyne, Anslay makes similar mistakes. He misses the French text's irony when the father speaks to his daughter, whom he believes to be a monk. Having received consolation from her/him, the father in Anslay's translation says, "I am…fulfilled with the grace of God syth that I shall have tydynges of my doughter." In the French text, however, the father says, "je suis…lié en la grace de Dieu que se je eusse trouvee ma fille" [I am filled with the grace of God as if I had found my daughter], which conveys a sense of dramatic irony since the father has, in fact, found his daughter (582). Anslay's translation unwittingly avoids this emphasis on Euphrosyne/Smyrgdas's "true gender" and thus, in a sense, preserves the gender that the saint has chosen. In bricolage fashion, gender fluidity that the translation unwittingly creates have the unintended effect of paralleling Anslay's own circumstances, as he himself engaged in a kind of cross-dressing as a man speaking in a woman's words. The bricolage practice of translation produces new possibilities for reflecting on the construction of gender. This emphasis on gender as a construct, in turn, foregrounds the feminotopian aspect of Christine's original work: by rethinking gender, Christine's text offers a space in which women can collectively imagine new possibilities.

A reading the *Cyte of Ladyes* through the lens of bricolage shows how, even as this work may be designed to subvert female literary authority, it also draws attention to necessity of female authority to the male narrator's voice. In one striking case, Anslay's voice and that of the female narrator Christine seem to collaborate. While the Royal manuscript reads, "Christine: Et je dis adonc a elle: 'Ha dame or aperçoy!" (fol.58r) I.38, Anslay translates this as: "Christine and I sayd to her. Ha madame…" (sig. Nn1v). This is likely an error based on confusion between the narrator's voice and the dialogue, but its effect is to create an impression of the translator standing by Christine speaking

with her.[164] Anslay's own voice thus joins with that of the female author. Elsewhere, he changes references to Christine to "my lady Christine," inserting, with this addition of the first-person pronoun, his own presence into the text, but, in doing so, makes himself beholden to the female author.

The meeting of Anslay's masculine identity with that of the female author creates a sense of gender fluidity. In chapter four, his translation of a military metaphor weaves inconsistently between masculine and feminine pronouns, replacing Christine's feminine noun with "maulgre all his envyous enemyes" but concluding with a feminine one: "so she shal never be taken ne overcome."[165] Occasionally, in contrast with his tendency to render the generic person masculine, Anslay uses "her" as a third person plural pronoun, writing, for instance, "And made her waye towards the cyte" in an episode in which a group of male invaders not Artemisia, the subject of the story, made their way [leur chemin] to the city. Finally, there are instances when due to the English lack of differentiation between the third person plural feminine and masculine pronouns, Anslays's translation leaves unclear whether a pronoun refers to a group of men or women. For instance, concerning slothful husbands and nagging wives, he writes "Grete annoyance to them that they busy them so moche" (Ch. 41), leaving it unclear whether the second "them" refers to the wives or husbands. Many of these pronoun variations are due the circumstances of translation from French to English or to mistranslations, but they denote the instability of gender and the fallacy of the exclusively masculine world of letters that Pepwell's prologue lays out. Christine's text thus tacitly subverts the identity of the masculine courtier that it was being used to support.

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[164] The F manuscript reads: Christine: "Et e diz a celle dame "Or appercoy…" (fol. 29r).

[165] Rosalind Brown-Grant discusses Christine's pronoun use in "Christine de Pizan: Feminist Linguist Avant la Lettre?" in *Christine de Pizan 2000: Studies on Christine de Pizan in Honour of Angus J. Kennedy,* ed. John Campbell and Nadia Margolis (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), and "Writing Beyond Gender: Christine de Pizan's Linguistic Strategies in the Defence of Women," in *Contexts and Continuities: Proceedings of the IVth International Colloquium on Christine de Pizan* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 2002), 355-69.

The female author's at once suppressed and subversive presence is visualized in the woodcut (figure 2) that accompanies Pepwell's edition. Portraying the opening scene of the City of Ladies, this image, on the one hand, participates in this 'cloistering' of Christine by depicting her in clothing akin to a nun's habit and setting her within a cloister-like structure that separates her with a dark line from the three female virtues who approach her.[166] The flat rendering of the architectural elements (as opposed to the fore-shortening in the Harley Manuscript) prevents the viewer from imaginatively entering the scene and creates a flat vertical patterning that subsumes the women into the architecture. This woodcut, however, also stages a key moment of female discovery in Christine's story, a point that Christine's glance behind her at the three women approaching emphasizes. Christine's head is turned away from the Matholeus's book in front of her and away from the fountain-like jumble of male-authored books in her library. She instead looks at the women who will validate her own embodied experience. This woodcut thus visually enacts the bricolage both of Christine's original text and Anslay's translation. It registers the presence of the men's books that Christine dismantles to build her city while also foregrounding the female author whom Pepwell aimed to erase in his prologue. The disparate shapes in the disjointed architectural scenes come together to visualize a female community that emerges through efforts to suppress it, a pattern the next chapter of this dissertation will also identify at England's Syon Abbey.

[166] As Martha Driver notes, this image closely resembles the iconography of religious women from woodcuts that Pepwell had previously printed of Saints Bridget and Catherine of Siena, who are likewise depicted in solitary scenes with books, dressed similarly in veils. *The Image in Print: Book Illustration in Late Medieval England* (London and Toronto: British Library Publications and University of Toronto, 2004), 72.

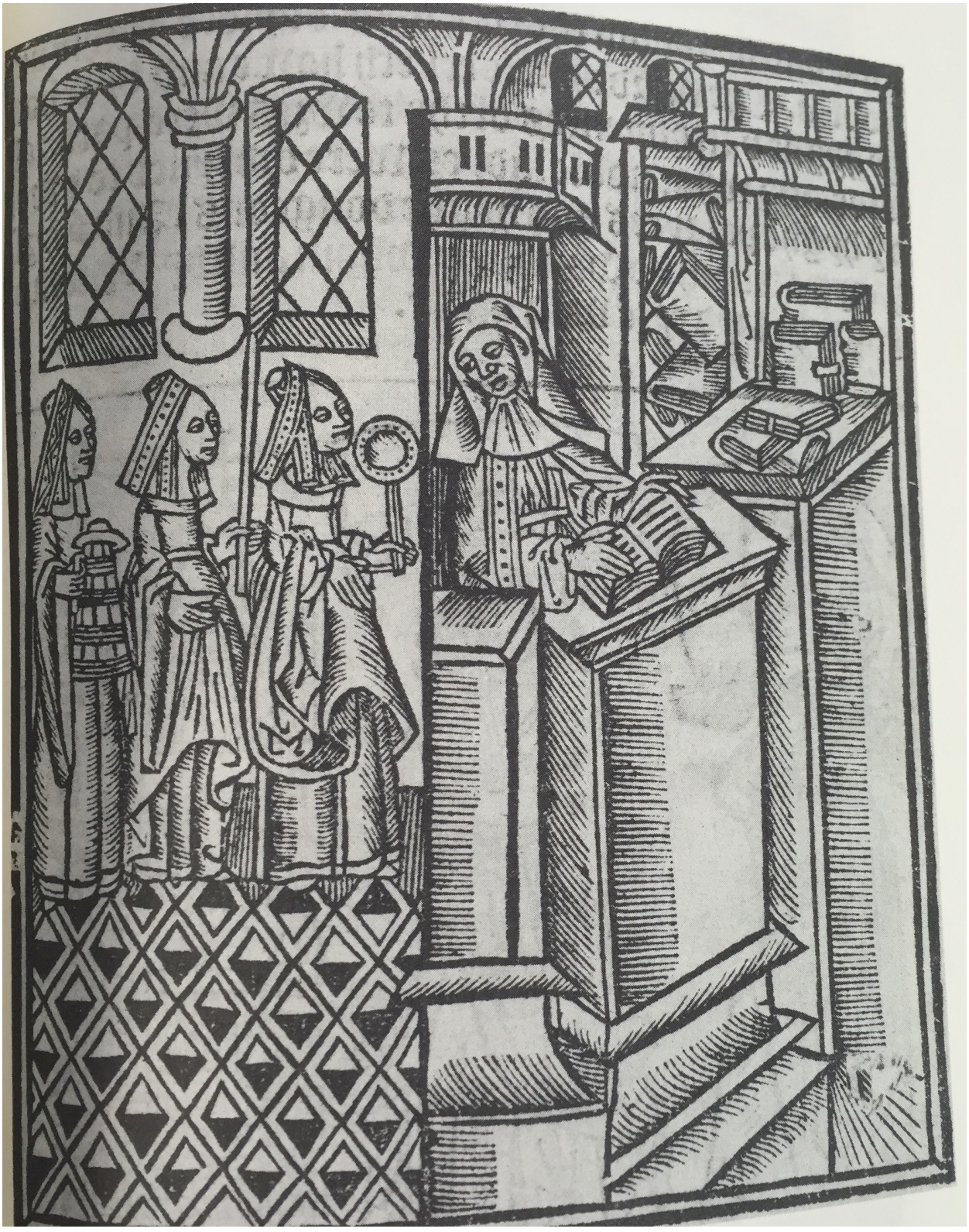

Figure 2. Christine de Pizan in her Study, from *The Boke of the Cyte of Ladyes* (London: Henry Pepwell, 1521), C.13.a.18. From: Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380-1589* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 94.

Conclusion

As she dives into "the wreck" of the history to build a City of Ladies, Christine emerges not with "the thing itself" but with something new. Using a methodology of bricolage, her *City of Ladies* proleptically stages the recognition that the language of oppression is integral to subversion.[167] Christine draws attention to her use of bricolage through her allegory of city building, which she characterizes as an ideal mode for female resistance. She uses the mechanism of allegory to cultivate a female authorial persona that at once draws on established male literary authorities and creates a theory of individual female authorship and active readership. To imagine a female author also entails reimagining gender itself: to do this, rather than proposing something entirely "new," Christine juxtaposes an essentialist notions of gender with a more radical constructionist thus coopting the benefits of both perspectives and anticipating a collaboration of feminism and transgender studies. The bricolage of *The City of Ladies* extends beyond its author's original composition to Anslay's English translation. Engaging in a similar practice to *The City of Ladies*'s original author, Anslay and Pepwell break apart the authority of the female author in service of another identity, in this case a male courtly one. However, just as the pieces of 'ready-made' discourse continue to signify in Christine's feminotopia, the juxtaposition of the female author's voice with a new male authorial identity in the English translation reveals the instability of the very authority it seeks to establish.

By self-consciously employing bricolage to 'build' the female author as a collaborative effort between women, Christine's feminotopia displays a profound form of pragmatism. Rather than jettisoning the past, Christine relies on its authority to create her own. She thus models women's utopia as flexible, dynamic and practical in contradistinction to utopia's conventional definition as an impossible idea. Her work shares with worlds created before and after her by Plato and Augustine,

[167] In this sense, Christine also anticipates Judith Butler's argument that censorship is productive: "Censorship is a productive form of power: it is not merely privative, but formative as well." Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 133.

Thomas More and Francis Bacon an interest in critiquing the present and a recognition of the impossibility of perfection—as Fredric Jameson argues, a utopian text serves "to bring home, in local and determinate ways, and with a fullness of concrete detail, our constitutional inability to imagine Utopia itself."[168] However, Christine's work and its English afterlife also redefine utopia as a form of imperfection, as what Derrida calls "free-play" between antithetical positions that results in a position not of synthesis but of "besideness." In her establishment of an experimental form of female community that relies on (even as it transforms) the literary and political procedures of men, Christine recognizes the necessity and challenges to establishing community amid difference, creating a textual space in which multiple meanings collide "making any single unified meaning in any given context impossible and resulting in an acceptance of the ambiguities and inconsistencies of human existence."[169] By self-consciously using bricolage, Christine shows that utopia is neither abstract nor impossible but rather can operate as a heuristic to achieve results in the material world.

Christine's interest in the imperfect and the pragmatic is further realized in her sequel to the *Cité des Dames, Le Livre des Trois Vertus* (completed between 1405 and 1435), also known as the *Tresor de la Cite des Dames*. In this conduct book for women, Raison, Droiture, and Justice reappear and demand that Christine record their instructions so that women in the real world may cultivate the same virtues exhibited by the women in the city of ladies. By adapting the genre of the courtesy book, Christine joins idealism with practical instructions.[170] The Book itself enacts this pragmatism as, despite its reorientation of the Mirror for Princes genre for women, it reaffirms socially sanctioned forms of femininity. Moreover, as the *Tresor* conveys instructions first for princesses,

[168] Jameson, *Archaeologies*, 153. Catherine Bates made this point about More's *Utopia* in "Less is More: Sidney's Reading of the Utopia," paper presented at On the Peripheries of the Reformation, the University of Toronto, October 2016.

[169] Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play."

[170] See Diane Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983).

then for noblewomen and finally for women of all classes it reinforces social hierarchy. It thus couches its more radical claims within a framework of social conservatism.

However, the book also uses these 'ready-made' conservative structures to assert a radical form of female literary authority. Summarizing the import of this second book, Christine proclaims:

> ...je, Cristine, demouray, auques lassee pour la longue scripture, mai tes resjoye regardans la tres belle oeuvre de leurs dignes leçons; lesquelles, de moy recapitulees, veues et reveues, mapparoient de mieulx en mieulx estre tres prouffitables au bien et augmentacion de meurs vertueux en accroissement d'onneur aux dames, et a toute l'université des femmes presens et a venir, la ou se pourroit ceste dicte oeuvre estendre et estre veue. Et pour ce, moy, leur servant…me pensay que ceste noble oeuvre multiplieroye par le monde en pluseurs copies, quell qu'en fust le coust: seroit presentee en divers lieux a roynes, a princepces et haultes dames,…Si la verront et orront maintes vaillans dames et femmes d'auctorité ou temps present et en cil a venir…"
>
> […I , Christine, remained almost exhausted from writing for so long, but very happy, looking at the beautiful work of their worthy lessons, which I have recapitulated. The more I look at them the better they seem: very profitable for the good, the improvement of virtuous habits, and the increase of honor of ladies and the whole world of women, present and future, wherever this book can reach and be seen. And therefore, I, their servant…thought I would multiply this work throughout the world in various copies, whatever the cost might be, and present it in particular places to queens, princesses, and noble ladies…this work will not remain unknown. It will endure in many copies all over the world without falling into disuse, and many valiant ladies and women of authority will see and hear it now and in time to come].[171]

In this pronouncement, Christine frames her courtesy book as both process-based and future-oriented. In this sense, her work accords with Bakhtin's notion of dialogic expression as never complete: "There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and boundless future). Even past meanings, that is those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) - they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue."[172] Bakhtin's

[171] For the French text, see: *Le Livre des trois vertus: Edition critique,* ed. Charity Cannon Willard in collaboration with Eric Hicks (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1989), 225. For a translation, see *The Treasure of the City of Ladies: Or the Book of the Three Virtues,* trans. Sarah Lawson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, 2003).

words clarify the polysemous, slippery nature of Christine's utopia, which seeks to better women's lives in both the present and the future through a constant process of improvement and multiplication. This notion of continuing improvement both asserts the female author's importance but also implicates her future readers in its legacy since the reputation of the book relies on the "many valiant ladies and women of authority [who] will see and hear it now and in time to come."

Christine's work looked to the future even as it revised the past, and *The City of Ladies* anticipates the emergence of utopian writing as a vital domain of political and aesthetic thought for women. Her work is in conversation at a distance with feminist writers like Adrienne Rich who sought to locate women within history and thus to imagine a new path for women authors and readers. As Frances Bartkowski states, "The feminist utopian novel is a place where theories of power can be addressed through the construction of narratives that test and stretch the boundaries of power in its operational details."[173] Such works, as Annette Keinhorst argues, often operate as "critical utopian narratives," which "offer possible historical alternatives to the present" that are rooted in a "flexible and alterable" now rather than a "predetermined" future.[174] The critical utopia differs from the traditional utopia in that it is "the vision of a future way of life… which presently carries the seed of potential historical reality."[175] Christine's work reveals a longer history of feminist utopia, and her self-conscious bricolage renders visible the formal technique that underlies this kind of writing. She shows that women's utopian thought did not have to be marginalized, idealistic or abstract. As I will argue in the following chapters, Christine's model of feminotopia as a genre that demonstrates how to use limitations tactically to enact resistance would resurface in a wide range of

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[172] M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays,* ed. Caryl Emerson and Micahel Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Text Press, 1986), 170.

[173] Bartkowski, 5.

[174] Annette Keinhorst, "Emancipatory Projection: An Introduction to Women's Critical Utopias," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 14.2 (1987): 91, 96.
[175] Ibid., 98.

women's literary works and historical practices, which collectively constitute a history of women's utopia that stands outside canonical histories of literature and politics, offering women an alternative to what Rich calls the "book of myths/ in which/ our names do no appear."

Chapter 2

"My Cloister shall not be a Cloister of restraint but a place of freedom": Restraint and Utopia at Syon Abbey

Introduction

If the cloistering of Christine signified her removal from active literary life, by contrast, convents could also represent radical freedom for women. Ever polyvalent signifiers, convents could at once presage the delimiting of female agency and act as liberating utopias in which women evaded masculine control. This double imaginative potential of the convent emerges in utopian author Margaret Cavendish's closet drama *The Convent of Pleasures* (1668), which depicts the adventures of Lady Happy after she founds a convent with "many Noble Persons of [her] own sex," which, she declares, "shall not be a Cloister of restraint but a place of freedom."[176] Though this all female-community eventually dissolves when Lady Happy leaves to marry a man who entered the convent disguised as a nun, the specter of the play's vision of the convent as a feminotopian space lingers.[177] Cavendish's play with its conventional ending suggests how convents could, like Christine's bricolage city, entertain radical utopian visions within a traditionalist framework. This utopianism allowed the female author imaginatively to evade patriarchal norms while using the tools of the very discourse she were challenging. But what about the real-world women who lived within such spaces? How did they metabolize external perceptions of their identities, and were they afforded the same imaginative possibilities as the laywomen who wrote about them?

I use written documents and visual records produced for and by the nuns of England's Syon

[176] Margaret Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*, ed. Anne Shaver (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999).

[177] On convents as utopias, see: Horacio Sierra, "Convents as Feminist Utopias: Margaret Cavendish's The Convent of Pleasure and the Potential of Closeted Dramas and Communities," *Women's Studies* 38.6 (2009): 647-669.

Abbey to explore how religious women fashioned utopian visions. I argue that Syon Abbey is an ideal focus for an exploration of female spiritual utopia because of its unique mixed-sex environment, its prominence during the Middle Ages and its resilience afterwards. Syon was the only English house of the Bridgettine Order, which was founded by Saint Bridget of Sweden (c.1303-73). Bridger's order unusually included both women and men, recommending as a ratio of 60 nuns and 25 religious men (13 priests, 4 deacons and 8 lay brothers), who were to be kept separate but co-governed by an abbess and a confessor. The order was likely brought to England when Henry, 3rd baron of Fitzhugh, who had learned about the Bridgettines after a trip with Philippa, the daughter of Henry IV, to Sweden for her marriage to Eric XIII in 1406, suggested a foundation to King Henry V.[178] After several years of delay, Henry V, in part, as a strategy for legitimizing the Lancastrian regime, established Syon Abbey at Twickenham in 1415. Shortly after, in 1431, the order relocated to Isleworth. Endowed by influential secular figures and enjoying special privileges, Syon became one of the wealthiest abbeys in England and has more surviving records than any other convent from the period.[179] After the Dissolution of the monasteries, the English Bridgettines migrated to the Netherlands, returning briefly to England under Queen Mary. They soon fled, however, with the succession of Elizabeth and the reestablishment of a Protestant regime, eventually settling in Lisbon where they remained until 1861, carrying on the traditions of their English past. This community, which, as its name suggests, aspired to be a New Jerusalem, offers an ideal site at which to examine

[178] G.J. Aungier, *The History and Antiquities of Syon Monastery, the Parish of Isleworth and the Cheapelry of Hounslow* (London, 1840) is still the standard history of Syon. See also John Rory Fletcher, *The Story of the English Bridgettines of Syon Abbey* (South Brent, Devon: Syon Abbey, 1933).

[179] These privileges included the *Mare Anglicanum*, which established Syon's independence within the Bridgettine order and a 1425 a papal bull granting the *vincula* indulgence to pilgrims visiting Syon. Edward Alexander Jones and Alexandra Walsham, introduction to *Syon Abbey and Its Books: Reading, Writing and Religion, C.1400-1700* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 4.

female utopia across time and under difficult circumstances.[180]

In this chapter, I integrate historical archives with critical theory to argue that the rhetoric designed to restrain the nuns of Syon Abbey, in fact, in bricolage-fashion, created avenues of agency. I contend that the nuns mobilized this strength within weakness to develop a model of spiritual feminotopia. This chapter is divided into three chronological sections that explore this central contention. In the first, I argue that while the late-fifteenth-century devotional works produced by male clerics for the Syon sisters portray the sisters as passive vessels of prayer, the polyvocal and performative aspects of these documents foreground the sisters' authority as containers of the abbey's spirituality. As in Michel Foucault's theory of biopower, the tools of oppression at Syon made available a means of resistance and resulted in a utopianism that, like Christine's city, drew on the past to build a future that is rooted in female community. In the second section, I show how, after the Reformation, the sisters appropriated this rhetoric of strength within weakness to their own purposes to fashion their exile into a sign of spiritual exceptionalism. Finally, in the third section, I examine textual and visual works from Syon's resettlement in Lisbon. I argue that in this period the sisters further repurposed their double identity as vessels and spiritual paragons into an argument for political agency. Through the figure of female community—both as a type of the Old Testament Israelites and an agent of political action—, Syon juxtaposed an older eschatological view of time with one that sees the future as an uncertain temporality that can be manipulated by human effort. I track this double approach to the future and its connection to the simultaneous strength and precarity of female community in literary and artistic works ranging from a seventeenth-century illuminated manuscript addressed to the Spanish royal family to a printed response to an attack on the abbey to book inscriptions and a liturgical treatise written for and possibly the nuns. In this chapter, the fragmentary historical record of Syon's medieval and early modern nuns, adapted for

[180] The name Syon alludes to a hill in Jerusalem and is a synonym for Jerusalem.

and by various users over time, offers a view into the meeting of a theological utopia and one that more closely resembles the way human-made utopias we find today. This chapter both expands knowledge of Syon's specific female community and opens possibilities for utopia studies more broadly.

Incarnations of Feminotopia at Islesworth

Research on Syon Abbey, which began in the mid-nineteenth century, initially focused on the smaller yet more extensively documented group of brothers.[181] In recent years, however, multiple studies have turned to the abbey's sisters examining texts addressed to them by male clerics. While such scholarship has shed light on the sisters' individual reading practices, it has generally ignored or discounted relationships between the sisters that emerge tacitly through these texts.[182] By close-reading devotional treatises and liturgical scripts produced for the sisters, I argue bonds between them become visible through the very rhetoric aimed at delimiting them and that these bonds act as

[181] *The Angel of Syon,* the only full-length biography of a member of the house, focused on the brother St Richard Reynolds. There has also been a lack of scholarship on medieval English nuns in general. The work of Eileen Power from the 1920s, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275-1535* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1922) was the only comprehensive work on English medieval nuns until the 1990s. For two studies that represent a new wave of scholarship on English medieval nuns, see Marilyn Oliva, *The Convent and the Community in Late Medieval England: Female Monasteries in the Dioceses of Norwich 1350-1540* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1998); Sally Thompson, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[182] For work on Syon and women's reading, see C. Annette Grisé, "Syon Abbey in Late-Medieval England: Gender and Reading, Bodies and Communities, Piety and Politics" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1998) and "Women's Devotional Reading in Late-Medieval England and the Gendered Reader," *Medium Aevum* 71(2002): 209-25; Mary Erler, "Syon Abbey's Care for Books," *Scriptorium* 39 (1987): 293-307; Ann M. Hutchison, "What the Nuns Read: Literary Evidence from the English Bridgettine House, Syon Abbey," *Medieval Studies* 57 (1995): 202-22. On the perceived lack of visible interpersonal relationships, Rebecca Krug writes, "Bridgettine communities although composed of 'daughters' were to be little concerned with relations among siblings..." Rebecca Krug, *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 182. Elizabeth Schirmer comes to similar conclusions in her analysis of the *Myroure of Oure Ladye*. See Schirmer, "Reading Lessons at Syon Abbey: The Myoure of Oure Ladye and the Mandates of Vernacular Theology," in *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Linda Olsen and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), esp. 355.

figures for a process-based spiritual utopia.

Nascent Feminotopia in Religious Rules

While no texts composed by the medieval nuns of Syon survive, several guides and liturgical works written for them by male clerics offer a sense of how Syon's sisters might have understood and enacted their assigned roles. These works aim to instill a passive homogeneity in the nuns, but, I argue, in doing so also figure the nuns as exemplars of ideal spirituality. The most important of these is *the Myroure of Oure Ladye* (MS Aberdeen Univ. MS. W.P.R.4.18), a fifteenth-century Middle English translation of the fourteenth-century Latin Office of the Blessed Virgin accompanied by a Middle English life of Saint Bridget.[183] While the precise identity of this book's composer is unknown, it was likely the work of a male cleric at Syon sometime during the later fifteenth century.[184]

The manuscript opens with a prologue by the clerical translator, which emphasizes the sisters' meekness, obedience and passive homogeneity. He writes, "ye owe to be doughters of commaundment by meke and redy obedience to the byddynges of god and of your rewel. "(4).[185]

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[183] No complete manuscript of this text survives, but it is split between MS Aberdeen Univ. MS. W.P.R.4.18 and Oxford Bodleian MS Rawlinson C. 941, which are composed in a hand from the late fifteenth century or early sixteenth century. John Henry Blunt's edition is based on the printed text (STC 17542, Fawkes, 1530), which first appeared in 1530. Seven other partial manuscript copies exist, only three of which have the third part bound with them. The translation of the office is likely based on Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawl. MS. C. 781. Like the Bridgettine Rule, the Office was claimed to have been dictated to Bridget by God in the vernacular (Swedish) but then translated into Latin by a group of clerics.

[184] Blunt tentatively attributed the work to Thomas Gascoigne, Chancellor of Oxford (1442-5) and a friend of Syon. This suggestion, like the early suggestion of Richard Whytforde, a Syon brother, has been discredited. Opinion is currently divided between Thomas Fishbourne, the first confessor-general of Syon and Syon deacon Clement Maydeston. Ann M. Hutchison dates the *Myroure* either to late in the first quarter or before the end of the second quarter of the fifteenth century and so suggests Fishbourne as author. See Hutchison, "What the Nuns Read," 209. For an overview of the text, see Ann Hutchison, "Devotional Reading in the Monastery and the Medieval Household," in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England,* ed. M.G. Sargent (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 215-227.

[185] *The Myroure of oure Ladye, containing a Devotional Treatise on Divine Service. With a Translation of the Offices used by the Sisters of the Brigittine Monastery of Syon, at Isleworth, during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*,

Asserting his own superior intellectual capacity in opposition to their weaker minds, he explains his additions to the text as necessary for the sisters' comprehension as he writes: "in many places where the nakyd letter, thoughe yt be set in englyshe, ys not easy for some symple soulles to understonde; I expounde it and declare yt more openly" (3). The narrator here positions himself as a guide, charged with the task of showing the sisters the meaning of their office. The office itself assigns a passive mode of imitation to the sisters, whom the translation describes as wax impressions identically "reformed to the lykenesse of God" and as "pennies" that are "impressed" with God's and Bridget's image (98). Such idealized homogeneity was not just integral to the *Myroure*'s image of the Bridgettine sisters but also manifest in their daily lives, as they wore the same habit of white linen with small pieces of red cloth in the pattern of a cross, a copy of Bridget's own clothing.

The threat of individuality to this idealized homogeny is manifest in warnings against communal disruption in a range of devotional works produced for Syon's women. The *Myroure,* for instance, as a caution to those who are vain in their singing "or delyte them in the swetnes or plesaunce of theyr owne voice" (57), invokes the devil Titivillus, who appears as a Cistercian abbot and collects all the non-conforming letters and words performed by the members of the order at the communal singing (54). This image portrays liturgical performance as a singular voice, from which any sign of difference must be eradicated, an image that is further communicated in the subsequent comparison of the nuns' singing to Aaron's sacrifice of a calf in the Old Testament, which relates performance to one sound, just as the calf is one sacrifice.[186] This negation of difference equally appears in the original *Rule of Seynt Saviour*, which was read once a week, and in Syon's Middle

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ed. John Henry Blunt. EETS, Extra Ser. 19 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1873). Subsequent quotations from this edition will be cited parenthetically within the text.

[186] See Krug, *Reading Families,* 172.

English additions to this Rule, of which sections were read during meals.[187] The *Additions* emphasize the nuns' consistent wearing of the habit, threatening punishment "If any come to dyuyne seruyse, or to Indulgete, seuen psalmes, confession, procession, conynge, chapter, De profundis, or collacion or generally to any conuentual acte vsed in the monastery without her holle habit" (2). Such concern with the disruption of communal homogeneity is also manifest in warnings against those who "in the quyer in tyme of dyuyne seruyse, or in tyme of the chapter or collaction, or in the freytour in tyme of redyng, conuentual refeccion, or drnkyng, or in the dortour in tyme of reste, make any noyce of vnreste" (1-2). By regulating how the sisters dressed and behaved and when they could talk, the *Myroure* and the *Additions* aspire to a highly restrictive and ordered spiritual community, one that, like Thomas Mores' *Utopia*, is disinterested in individual expression.

This totalizing communal identity exists in tandem and tension with an individual spirituality that discouraged collaboration or bonding between the sisters. In his prologue, the *Myroure* narrator writes that the sisters ought to praise our Lady by "inward understanding" (2), conveying a readerly self that is cut off from the outside world. This kind of intellectual isolation is further recommended in the section "On Readynge," where the narrator advises: "Therfore when ye rede by your self alone ye oughte not to be hasty to rede moche at ones but ye oughte to abyde therupon & som tyme rede a thynge ageyne twyes or thryes or oftener tyl ye understonde yt clerely…When ye rede these bokes ye oughte to laboure in your self inwardly to sturre up your affeccyons accordingly to the

[187] Bridget's *Constitutions of the Order of the Holy Saviour*, which was composed sometime between 1344 and 1349, presented as long revelation, which directed the creation of a new order and laid down rules for its government. For a modern edition, see *Den Heliga Birgitta Opera Minora I: Regula Salvatoris,* ed. S. Eklund SFSS ser. 2, VIII: 1 (Stockholm, 1975). Bridget had specified that new additions be drawn up for each new foundation. The additional rules for the sisters are grouped together in fifty-nine chapters and contain elaborate directions not only as to the occupation, behavior and special duties of the various inmates of the convent but for exigencies of every kind. The Syon sisters' additions have been edited by Hogg, ed. *The Rewyll of Seynt Sauioure,* vol. 4 *The Syon Additions for the Sisters from the British Library MS Arundel 146* (Salzburg, Austria: the Institut Für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universitat Salzburg, 1980). Only a fragment of the additions for the brothers survives. This is included in Hogg, *Rewyll.*

matter that ye rede" (69). By emphasizing reading "by your self alone" and the inward nature of the "affeccyons" that books can "sturre," this passage portrays the separation of self from community as essential to devotion. The *Additions* also encourage such spiritual individuality by forbidding the sisters from speaking with each other except in cases of necessity.[188] Syon's devotional texts thus aimed at establishing, as Krug summarizes, "a collective, visual identity, but that identity was in singular presence before God" imagining a 'perfect' monastic community that saw female bonding as a threat.[189]

The historical records of the abbey reflect this interest in regulating and separating the Syon sisters and hence in diminishing their collective agency as the majority group on the abbey.[190] While the Syon *Rule* originally given by St Bridget specifies that the abbess, who was elected by the sisters, was to govern the temporal affairs of the monastery and the male general confessor, who was elected by both the sisters and brothers, was to concern himself with spiritual matters (RS 167), the delineation of these roles was far from straightforward. Diverging from the original Swedish rule, Syon's charter of 1415 declared that the abbess was to rule over *both* spiritual and temporal affairs, which caused Syon's first abbess, Matilda, to argue that she was to be obeyed by the general

[188] This textually-constructed communal yet individual homogeneity emerges from longstanding monastic tradition. From the earliest religious rules, in the east, by Pachomius and Basil of Caesaria in the fourth century and, in the west, by Benedict in the sixth century, monastic life was structured around a seemingly paradoxical commitment to community and solitude. For an overview of western monastic rules, see Adalbert de Vogüé, ed., *Les règles monastiques anciennes 400-700, Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental* 46 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985).

[189] Krug, *Reading Families,* 182.

[190] For a discussion of the power balance at Syon Abbey later on in the community's history, see Claire Walker, "Continuity and Isolation: the Bridgettines of Syon in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Syon Abbey and Its Books: Reading, Writing and Religion, C.1400-1700*, ed. Edward Alexander Jones and Alexandra Walsham (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 166-7.

confessor and the brothers of the abbey.[191] The sisters supported Matilda's position, but, in 1416, after a meeting arranged by King Henry V and a council of clerics, Matilda was removed from the abbey. Given this unwelcome assertion of female authority several decades before the composition of the *Myroure* and the *Additions*, it seems possible that these texts may give voice to a male clerical desire to suppress further claims of independence from the sisters.

The way in which these rules regulate the nuns' bodies can both be informed by and shed new light on what Michel Foucault theorizes as biopower, a technology of power that controls human bodies through state discipline.[192] Initially imposed from outside, biopower becomes internalized as human subjects comply with the regulations. While for Foucault biopower was a mark of the modern state, Giorgio Agamben finds this form of control in earlier periods, arguing that sovereignty and the control of the body are in fact fundamentally integrated.[193] Agamben made a study of religious rules in *The Highest Poverty* (2013), but, in this work, was more interested in the inseparability of the monastic rule and life rather than in the power of the rule over life.[194] I argue, however, that, Syon's religious rules enact both a form of biopower and a means of resistance to this control, since such rules were generally written by men and often enforced a passivity that differed from the material circumstances of these women's lives, in which they were given opportunities to direct the life of their community. Such rules, therefore, enact a separation of rule and life rather

[191] Aungier, 28-29; Margaret Deanesly*, Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, iii, cited in Krug, *Reading Families,* 164.

[192] See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012); *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76* (New York: Picador, 2003); *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave, 2007), 175-7.

[193] Agamben writes, "it can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power." *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 6.

[194] Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life,* trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

than inseparability, and the visibility of this gap acts as a mode of resistance. Including women's religious rules within the scope of consideration can thus nuance Agamben's theory of religious rules.

Reading Syon's rules as mechanisms of biopower, moreover, offers a concrete example for how biopower can provide a means of resistance to its own forms of control. As Foucault writes:

> Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. Should it be said that one is always inside power, there is no escaping it, there is no absolute outside where it is concerned, because one is subject to the law in any case…This would be to misunderstand the strictly relational character of power relationships. Their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. (95)

Foucault posits that resistance is part of power itself because power is inherently relational. He suggests that resistance is not a singular revolution or movement but rather occurs at multiple points across time and space within structures of power.[195] This correlates with what Agamben has proposed as a new form of agency of the non-subject, a paradoxical form of resistance in which distinctions are rejected and naked life is accepted as a form of life or as "being thus."[196] Where Agamben leaves unanswered what form this resistance or agency within non-agency might, it becomes more tangible in feminist theory. Kathryn Abrams, for instance, has dissociated agency from autonomy and instead found agency exercised "through collective action as well as individual self-reflection."[197] Feminist arguments for relational autonomy, which address the challenge of balancing agency with social embeddedness, are contemporary responses to a dilemma similar to

[195] For a consideration of freedom from control in Foucault's larger oeuvre, see John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

[196] Giorgio Agamben*, Sovereignty and Life*, ed. Matthew Calarco (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 69.

[197] Kathryn Abrams, "From Autonomy to Agency: Feminist Perspectives on Self-Direction," *William & Mary Law Review* 40.3 (1999): 807. See also Patricia Collins, who discusses such collective agency in terms of black feminism. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

that which the Syon sisters found themselves in.[198] As "bare life" operating within a network of power relations, Syon's nuns are not external to male clerical constraints. Rather, these very restraints allow for the possibility of resistance and collective female agency, paving the way for the way for a discourse not of power but of utopian possibility that is articulated through a network of women across time and space.

Possibilities for resistance, for a reading-otherwise akin to that which Christine performs in *The Book of the City of Ladies* through her bricolage practice that combined radical revisions of gender with strategic essentialism, are available within Syon's rules themselves. For instance, even as the prescribed mirroring of the office endorses passivity, it also constitutes an active process of mimesis for the nuns, calling the sisters to fashion themselves as images of the Virgin. Moreover, when the narrator explains that he calls his book the "myroure of oure ladye…Not that oure lady shulde se herself therin, but that ye shulde se her therin as in a myroure, and so be styred the more deuoutly to prayse her" (4), these instructions are given in the authoritarian tone that characterizes much of the prologue, but the chiasmic structure of the phrases also elevates the sisters: "ye," implying the female reader, occupies the same position before "shulde" as "oure ladye" does in the previous line. This substitution syntactically likens the sisters to the Virgin Mary. The narrator's subsequent conclusion—that the sight of this mirror will "styre" the sisters to praise the Virgin— uses the active middle English verb "stiren," meaning to "move," "get into action" or "enter into fighting." Mirroring thus becomes an active effort of quasi-militaristic valor even as it is couched in the rhetoric of feminized obedience.

The utopian tenor of this call to the sisters to mirror the Virgin Mary, as it consists of shaping an ideal future, is accentuated by the significance of mirrors for utopian thought. In a lecture

[198] Jennifer Nedelsky, "Reconceiving Autonomy: Sources, Thoughts and Possibilities," *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism* 1.1 (1989), article 5; Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, eds. *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Automony, Agency, and the Social Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

originally delivered to a group of architects in 1967, Foucault argues that the mirror offers an intermediary point between utopia and what he calls heterotopia, spaces of otherness and difference that exist in the 'real' world. He writes, "The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface."[199] But, he continues, a mirror "is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there."[200] *The Myroure of our ladye* constructs a similar continuum to the one that Foucault describes: the sisters in this treatise occupy a placeless place, that of a male clerical ideal of passive femininity. But they also exert an active, material influence on the abbey, constituting the 'there' of Syon's self-image. Removed from the world in a way that the abbey's monks were not, the sisters acted as a site of otherness, drawing attention to absences or deficiencies within the larger abbey while also announcing their own embodied presence in their liturgical performances. This doubleness, between a "not yet" and a "now," between utopia and heterotopia is what, I argue, characterizes women's utopia or "feminotopia."

By portraying the sisters as an embodied utopia, the *Myroure* narrator unwittingly imbues them with political agency. In one striking passage that he adds to the original office, the narrator compares the sisters to knights, writing, "we ar closed in thys holy Monastery as knyghtes in a castell where we ar beseged wyth greate multytude of fendes that nyght and daye laboure to gette gentre and pocessyon in oure soules…" (72). The nuns' singing, he suggests, will act as a "longe spere of fervente desyre of oure hartes stryeng up to god" to draw out "the sharpe swerde of the worde of god" (72). Even as this description imagines the nuns within an enclosed, vulnerable space, it also

[199] Foucault, "Other Spaces," 4.

[200] Ibid.

suggests that their prayer acts as a physical form of defense against the encroachments of the world and creates a direct line to God. The perceived vulnerability of these religious women also enables them, in this narrator's imagination, to defend the abbey.[201]

Syon's devotional texts often authorize the sisters in their very attempts to coercively contain them. For instance, the narrator of the *Myroure* further authorizes the sisters by asking them to pray for him, imploring:

> I pray you hertly and lowly & not only you that ar now, but all that shall com after you & loke in this myrroure: that lyke as trew charyte to your soulles helth & comfort forsothe hathe styred me to thys laboure and none other earthly thynge: so ye vouchesafte of youre tender chartye hartely to prayer for oure right poure & full wretched soulle (7).

While his request for prayers is, on the one hand, coercive, it also imagines a community of sisters across time, both those who "ar now" and those who "shall com" and invites them to a collective act of prayer, granting them agency. *The Orcherd of Syon*, a Middle English translation of the *Dialogues* of St Catherine of Siena, and *a Ryght Profytable Treatyse* (published by Wykyn de Worde in 1500), a treatise for the sisters by deacon and librarian of Syon Thomas Betson (d. 1516), equally open with requests for prayers by male clerics from their female readers.[202] These appeals subtly shift the power dynamic in the narrator/reader relationship and draw on the presumed malleability of the nuns to draw them into imaginative spiritual service that, in fact, authorizes them as spiritual agents.

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[201] This mixing of gender identities was reinforced in the traditions of the abbey. For instance, we know that during silent hours the sign used for "nun" was a combination of the sign for "brother" (the fingers held together) and for "woman" (the fingers drawn across the brow like a veil): to be a nun was thus to be both a woman and a brother veiled together. Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (London: Boydell and Brewer, 2001), 127.

[202] Three manuscript copies of this text survive: London, British Library MS Harley MS 3432; St John's College Cambridge MS C 25; New York, Morgan Library MS 162. *The Orchard* was printed for the sisters in 1519 at the expense of their steward Sir Richard Sutton. It is likely that Sister Magdalena Baptista Boeria (d.1539), a native Italian speaker, helped prepare the edition. Mary Erler, *Women, Reading and Piety in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 141.

This function of feminine weakness to craft positions of strength for religious women is not unique to Syon. Barbara Newman has argued that the eleventh-century German abbess Hildegard of Bingen reconciled her religious authority with her gender by playing on her perceived feminine frailty. As Newman writes, "because the power of God is perfect in weakness, because the humblest shall be the most exalted, human impotence could become the sign and prelude of divine empowerment."[203] As Carolyn Walker Bynum has equally shown, religious women from throughout the Church's history played on the perceived weakness and vulnerability of femininity to carve out positions of strength. While Syon's male clerics may have not have deliberately cultivated this approach, their emphasis on the passivity and nonidentity of the sisters that frames them as spiritual exemplars aligns with these examples of other religious women. Syon's medieval material thus carried on the pattern of bricolage that we find in Christine's work: it drew on tired rhetoric enforcing women's passivity, but by placing these pieces within the context of texts addressed to these women, it had the unintended effect of empowering them. Syon's feminotopianism thus emerges at the juncture of the suppression and potential agency, since it is here that like in literary utopias we find a view of the future that critiques the present.

Crucial to a feminotopian vision whereby feminized passivity translates into potential future agency is female community, which ironically becomes visible at the very textual moments that aim to suppress female alliances. In the *Myroure*'s chapter 8, *On Divine Service*, the narrator inserts the story of Gertrude, a ten-year old girl who reappears after her death to another girl to make amends for whispering "half words" during service. This section's heading, for "them that ar light to speke or to slepe in tyme of goddess seruice" (46), seems intended to warn against talking during service, discouraging interactions between nuns; however, in its condemnation, it also suggests that such exchanges did happen. The degree to which this story suppresses female friendship is made clearer

[203] Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 35.

through a comparison to its source, Caesarius of Heisterbach's (ca. 1180-1240) *Dialogus miraculorum*, a collection of miracle stories told in the form of dialogues between a monk and a novice.[204] In Caesarius's account, the narrator says that he has heard this story directly from the abbess of the monastery, a detail that situates a woman as a source of narrative authority. The abbess gives specific instructions to the sister to whom Gertrude has appeared (an abbess also appears in the *Myroure*'s account but in a much less prominent role), telling her that she must say "Benedicite" and ask Gertrude where she comes from and what she is seeking, emphasizing a woman's guidance that is missing in the *Myroure.* While, in both stories, Gertrude reveals that she has come to make amends for whispering "half words" during service, Caesarius describes Gertrude's subsequent disappearance differently: "And thus it was done. For in the sight of her *friend* she proceeded towards the cemetery, passing over the wall by a miracle." This passage differs starkly from the *Myroure*'s concluding admonishment: "take ye hede" since "this younge mayde ten yere of age was punysshed so for half words; what shall they suffer that are of greater age for hole words spoken" during the time of silence (47). The *Myroure* thus suppresses its source's focus on friendship between women but, in doing so, draws attention to the disruptive potential of such bonds, tacitly investing them with authority.[205]

The *Additions* for the Syon sisters equally draw attention to female bonds as sites of

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[204] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles* vol. 1 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929), 344-5.

[205] The transgressive function of female collusion is in no way unique to the Syon's devotional works though it does gain additional traction here in light of the community's mixed members and its particularly utopian aims. As Karma Lochrie writes, the "official view" of the Middle Ages was that "when women get together in deliberate acts of female fellowship, corruption ensues." Karma Lochrie, "Between Women," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing*, ed. Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 71. Citing works like the *Ancrene Wisse* and Heloise's letters to Abelard, Lochrie is mainly concerned with medieval anxieties that women coming together would lead to their sexual relations with each other. See also Erler, *Women*, *Reading and Piety,* 8; Sherry Velasco, *Lesbians in Early Modern Spain* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), 90.

resistance. In Chapter 35, on "the obseruaunces in pa dortour," for instance, the text warns, "In the dortour none schal beholde other, nor make synge to other withoute a resonable cause: but all schal there kepe hygh silence." This text's threat of punishment implicitly acknowledges that such interactions did indeed happen. Moreover, the punishment for such acts of insubordination, described in the Chapter 7, "of prysoners and of ther delyueraunce," brings the sisters into further contact with each other. To perform penance for a wrongdoing, the guilty sister: "schal lye prostrate at the chirche dore, sayng in a lowe voyce mornyngly to the sustres that come in or oute, ofte rehersying the same, thus: 'Goode sustres pray for me; good sustres pray for me.' Ande eche suster, outetake whan they enter in with graces, schall answer thus a3ene in lyke voyce thos if be tyme: 'Almyghty god haue mercy vpon 3ow'" (26-27). This atonement consists ironically of a performance in which the sisters reassure each other. This double-voiced tactic, whereby the very texts that figure the sisters passive counter this narrative with a form of utopian thinking; they defamiliarize the notion of female disempowerment by rendering it a source of strength.

The collaborative female spiritual identity that these Middle English rules unwittingly put forth is, in fact, present in the foundation of the Bridgettine order itself. Attached to the *Myroure* manuscript is a translation of *The Life of St Bridget* and the *Life* of her daughter Katherine, which include plentiful examples of women engaged in generative relationships. The version of the foundress's *Life* in the *Myroure* manuscript, which was translated from an earlier Latin source, describes Bridget's close relationship with the Virgin Mary, who appears to her at various points, including during her early childhood and a life-threatening childbirth. In these instances, the Virgin acts as Bridget's instructor, intercessor and guide in a way that may have foregrounded the importance of female alliances in her order.[206] The generative nature of same-sex female bonds is

[206] Claire L. Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden and the Voice of Prophesy*, Studies in Medieval Mysticism, vol. 3 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2001), 3.

particularly apparent after Bridget's death as she miraculously cures women who visit her shrine: a woman from Rome named Agnes, who "fro hyr burthe had a greate grosse throte moche foule & dydfformyd," is cured when she touches Bridget's hand with a girdle that she then binds around her neck. Another visitor is a nun from Saint Lawrence, who suffers from "febleness and great sykenes that she had in her stomake," prays at Bridget's shrine "that she myght with hyr Susters be at deuyne seruyce" (lviii) and is miraculously cured of the next morning, an example that conveys the importance of female collective spiritual activity in the convent. The accompanying life of Bridget's daughter Katherine further foregrounds female as Katherine is framed as an "example of good lyving [to] the most honest woman of Rome [who] loved to be in hir company" (l). In one passage, "the moste noble matrones of the Cytie of Rome" ask Katherine "to walk with them for recreacyon without the Walles of the Cytie" (l). When Katherine reaches to gather some grapes, her arms become "apperelled with shyngyng clooth of golde" (l). In this miracle, the women's companionship results in a visible sign of God's presence, endorsing the female collectivity that Syon's rules discourage. Such examples of female alliances from the life of foundress of the abbey and her daughter must surely have resonated with the sisters as they daily used the guide to direct their daily lives. While the rules were intended as instruments of control that negate female agency and collaboration, the wide range of sources that the authors interpolate carry with them possibilities for dissent and separation from the mandates of the rule, and these, combined with the zealousness of the restraints themselves, create space for the sisters to play an active role in the abbey. These openings of possibility are the substance of utopia.

Liturgical Feminotopia

My reading of Syon's religious rules suggest that Agamben's notion of the joining of life and rule may not have been possible for women as it was for men since male clerics at once othered and authorized their cloistered female readers. In Syon's liturgy, on the other hand, women may have

found a way to connect being to praxis to being. The liturgy's capacity to join being and action is clarified in Agamben's work after *Highest Poverty, Opus Dei* (2013). Etymologically, liturgy or *leitourgia* derives from *laos* (people) and *ergon* (work) and, in classical Greece, referred to the obligation that the city imposes on citizens with a certain income to provide services for the common good. Later, *leitorugia* also acquired the characteristics of a stable and lifelong office, and liturgy became "a special activity…a ministry that tends to define a particular subject as entitled to it: the bishop and the presbyters in the letter and later, the priest."[207] Through this transformation, the Church fashioned itself as a political community.[208] What emerges from this notion of the liturgy is "a paradigm of a human activity whose effectiveness does not depend on the subject who sets it to work and nonetheless needs that subject as an 'animate instrument' to be actualized and rendered effective."[209] The liturgy, or the *officium*, as Agamben writes, therefore connects being and praxis: "what a human does and what a human is enter into a zone of indistinction, in which being dissolves into its practical effects and, with a perfect circularity, it is what it has to be and has to be what it is."[210] While as Penelope Deutscher observes, "women's bodies are impressively absent from Agamben's writing," the nuns of Syon show how the interconnection of being and praxis might shed new light on women's roles.[211] As liturgical scripts reveal, English Bridgettine nuns had a central role in their community's religious processions, and thus, the agency inherent in the liturgy would have been infused into their collective identity, making their being and action indistinguishable. The Syon nun's

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[207] Giorgio Agamben, *Opus Dei: An Archaeology of Duty* trans. Adam Kotsko. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 11-12.

[208] Ibid., 35.

[209] Ibid., 28.

[210] Ibid., 43.

[211] Penelope Deutscher, "The Inversion of Exceptionality: Foucault, Agamben, and 'Reproductive Rights,'" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107.1 (2008): 59.

liturgy thus illuminates the gendered dimensions of religious being and praxis that Agamben's account neglects.

The importance of female community to the Syon's liturgy is revealed in a range of documents. According to the Rule, the brothers were expected to provide the necessary sacramental context for the order (Rule 15-17), to embody its commitment to the pursuit of wisdom through study (15, 173) and to represent the order to the outside world. The sisters, on the other hand, were seen as the bearers of tradition: while the men sung their office according to diocesan use (Rule 12,150), the sisters recited the Office of the Virgin and never deviated from it. The distinction between the spirituality of the nuns and that of the monks also appears in an allegorical interpretation of Exodus (25: 3-5) found in the *Extravantes* 18, which describes the nuns as "those who offer a pure heart, removed from all love of the world" as opposed to the monks "who speak and sing words of the divine wisdom which has enflamed them" and the lay brothers "who while scarcely knowing the Our Father offer what little they can with contribute." While the brothers, who were not actually monks, were to be the liaisons to the world, such descriptions suggest that the Syon sisters were considered the abbey's spiritual center.

The sisters' role as models for the ideals of the entire community is manifest in the *Additions*' description of the ceremonial cutting of lay brother candidates' hair, in which sisters are to accompany the abbess to the grate, where the brothers are meant to "be edyfyed by ther [the sisters'] religious behauynge" (S 90/25: cf. S 79/6-7, 84/4-6). The *Myroure* also describes the devotion of each sister as an act that "edyfyeth most all other" (56). This figurative significance of the sisters is further emphasized in the *Myroure*'s opening phrase addressed to: "all chryseten soulles…yet more properly…doughtres of this holy relygion…in this monastery…named Syon" (1). Here, the sisters are equated not just with the whole of Syon but also with the body of the faithful, acting as a

microcosm of a larger Christian community.[212] While the monks acted as links to the world, the sisters become the center of the abbey's utopian vision: they join the abbey's ontology and its praxis, exemplifying the role that Agamben ascribes to the priestly-enacted liturgy.

The liturgy, more explicitly than the rules, emphasizes the importance of collaboration between the sisters. In describing the office, the *Myroure* narrator makes clear that the sisters must rely on each other to understand the Latin text: "yf ye cannot vnderstone what ye rede. Aske of other that can teche you. And they that can oughte not to be lothe to teche other" (67). Similar cooperation is encouraged in scripts for liturgical ceremonies. For instance, in the *Additions*' description of the admission of a novice: "the abbes shal aske of eche suster in order by name, begynnynge at the eldeste, wheyther they wyll haue her admytted, to the 3ere of profe or no" (80). Following this communal decision, on the day of profession, "all schal go to the chapter, procession wyse, the 3ongest before, and the abbes after, with the newe professed sustres folowyng her, the chauntres assygnyng them where they schall knele before the abbes in myddes of the chapter (92). Once in the chapter house, "the chauntres schall lede them to þe abbes to take the token of pees of kysse of charite, and afterwarde to the pryores and to al other sustres, fyrst at once syde and then at other…" (93). These guidelines, in contrast to the rules, emphasize the sisters' determining agency in the abbey.

Syon's processionals, which include Additional MS 8885 (1460-80); Diurnale of Syon, Magdalene College MS F.4.1; and St John's College Cambridge 139; EUL MS 262/1 Processionale Book accentuate the sisters' active role in building and maintaining their community. These liturgical scripts make visible gaps between prescriptions for processions and performances, which create opportunities for improvisation. MS St John's College Cambridge 139 particularly emphasizes the sister's determining role in improvising liturgical performance with red English rubrics that

[212] Such references also appear in the *Myroure* 81, 93, 171.

accompany the Latin script.[213] These vernacular rubrics suggest that the sisters were the intended readers since they would not have been expected to read Latin, and the rubrics visualize a counter voice to the authority of the Latin text. Many of these rubrics convey the flexibility of the performance and thus the sisters' role in shaping it. For instance, one rubric instructs:

> Uppon ester day at procession too sustris the two chauntresses or too othir that the cheef chauntresse allignyth shal in the myddes of the quere bygynne this processions. *Salue festa dies.* And ther stondyng ful shal synge the said use unto the ende whiche use the quere than first goynge forthe and not afor shal repete the two sustres that bygan go yuge in the myddis of the processions and than too aloon shal synge euery vuse of the processsion and rest at euy use eeude and the quere shal at euv use cende. Shal repete the first use. *Salue festa dies.* And this forme is to be kept. (My transcription)

These instructions, on the one hand, insist on exact duplication and precision with the direction to sing the Easter hymn *Salve Festa Dies* and the instruction that "this forme is to be kept." On the other hand, the text leaves room for improvisation. The rubric indicates that the sisters who begin the procession may be two chantresses "*or* too othir that the cheef chauntresse allignyth," leaving the choice of which women would begin the procession up to the sisters. Even as the manuscript offers a set of instructions that joins the sisters' salvific actions with their being, it offers the sisters' distance between their being and the script by allowing them to make determining choices.

Such flexibility is conveyed at many other moments in this manuscript. For instance, on Saint Mark's day, "The too chauntrelles in the myddes of the quetre or othir too at the chief chauntresse assignment shal begyn." Such alternatives afford sisters agency in the enactment of seemingly rigid ceremonies. This freedom within apparent restriction also appears in the *Additions'* depiction of divine service: "In the quyer, all schall be as angels, enclynge togyder, rysynge togyder, knelying togyder, stondynge, turnynge and syttng togyder, all after oo forme, goynge and comynge togyder" (102). While the model auxiliary "schall" conveys the sisters' assumed obedience, these

[213] This manuscript may be in the hand of Thomas Raille. Christopher De Hamel, "The Medieval Manuscripts of Syon abbey and their dispersal" in *The Library of the Bridgettine Nuns and Their Peregrinations after the Reformation* (Otley, UK: Roxburghe Club, 1991), 48-133.

instructions are also vague, leaving room for interpretation. How are the sisters to go? Do they walk in pairs or in single file? Where do they sit? The gap between text and performance in these texts reveals a devotional sphere in which the sisters wield considerable agency.

The sisters' role as the preservers of the abbey's tradition positions them, like the liturgy itself, as mediators between the past and future, a temporal position that resonates with that of utopia. Just as utopia draws on the past to project a desired future, the sisters reenacted the abbey's historical liturgy as a means of obtaining future communal salvation. Because the male clerical perspective viewed them as empty, identity-less containers, Syon's nuns became the purveyors of the abbey's past into its future. Reading this role through Agamben's theory of liturgy illuminates the degree to which their sense of being became fused with their future-oriented actions: the sisters themselves became microcosms of Syon's desired future and thus vehicles of utopianism. Like Christine's bricolage, Syon's female community used texts that sought to delimit their agency to exercise their authority; differently from Christine, however, the Syon sisters did not leave records of how they experienced their roles. Instead, we are left to read between the lines of texts written by men to imagine how sisters in medieval Syon might have understood their position within the abbey, hypotheses that gain ground in light of the sisters' later history.

Syon's female community was thus surprisingly engaged in a mode of utopian thinking that anticipated that of the secular world. With the publication of More's landmark work in 1516, the genre of utopia, characterized by stock formulas of shipwrecks and the discovery of foreign ideal commonwealths, became increasingly popular as the sixteenth century progressed.[214] Like Christian humanist utopias, Syon's medieval texts imagine an ideal female community that is never fully 'there,' but, unlike these fictional otherworlds, Syon's feminotopia does not aspire to be a finished

[214] Works that contain this formula in addition to More's include Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun: a Poetical Dialogue* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981) and Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis,* in *Three Early Modern Utopias*, ed. Susan Bruce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). See Manuel, *Utopian Thought.*

product. Rather, it relies on acts that are repeated over time, embracing process, adaptability and imperfection as modes of shaping the future. In this respect, Syon's female community is what Ernst Bloch calls a "Not-Yet-Become" that sits between Foucault's utopia and heterotopia as both an unrealized vision of the future and a material manifestation of an idea. In its emphasis on process, Syon corresponds with twentieth-century feminist literary utopias, but it also diverges from these since Syon was a functioning community that was testing and reframing female community in real-time. These stirrings of feminotopianism in the medieval abbey served as the foundation for the more active and overt utopian thinking that would emerge after the community's exile.

Utopia in Exile

When Syon was forced to leave England after King Henry VIII's dissolution of monastic lands in 1559, the community sold its property to the crown and fled to a Bridgettine house at Dermonde in Flanders.[215] The Bridgettines subsequently spent decades traveling in exile across Europe—to Zierikzee (1564-1568), Mishagen (1568-1571), Antwerp (1571-1572), Mechelen (1572-1580) and Rouen (1580-1594).[216] During this period, in which Syon truly lacked a place, the condition of exile brought to partial fruition the nascent utopianism of the abbey's medieval texts, as the sixteenth-century sisters in a range of documents— the *Letters by Elizabeth Sanders to Sir Francis Englefield, The Life and Good End of Mary Champney* and a petition signed at Rouen—marshaled the rhetoric of strength within weakness to figure themselves as avatars of the struggling English

[215] The Bridgettines were in a particularly in dangerous positions as, at this time, they were implicated in a protest against Henry VIII's divorce led by nun Elizabeth Baron, whose visions were said to have resulted from her exposure to the revelations of St Bridget and St Catherine of Siena read in her visits to Isleworth.

[216] The Dominicans, poor Clares and nuns of other English orders also founded abbeys on the continent during the Reformation. By the end of the seventeenth century, there were twenty-two English convents reestablished abroad. See Walker.

Catholic faith. This self-image was materially symbolized by their retention of the keys to their old foundation in England and by their continued use of the Rule and the medieval *Martiloge*.[217]

The letters of Elizabeth Sanders to Syon's patron Francis Englefield suggest how Syon's women may have taken on the role of containers of the abbey's self-image encouraged by their medieval guides.[218] Written in around 1587 after the community had temporarily settled in Rouen, Sanders' first letter describes her return from Flanders to England to raise funds for the impoverished order, her arrest for distributing copies of Edmund Campion's "Challenge" and subsequent imprisonment for eight years.[219] The second letter was written after Sanders surmised that Englefield had not received the first letter and repeats with varying degrees of detail the story of Sanders's hardships.[220] Together, these letters emphasize the Sanders's vision of mobile female community as a figure for a lost English Catholicism.

In these letters, Sanders depicts a mobile English Catholic community in which relationships

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[217] Though their position in Lisbon isolated Syon from other English convents, Walker notes that there were Irish Dominican friars in Lisbon from 1600 and a cloister of Dominican nuns from 1639 (Walker, 156). Bowden also argues that "The size and range of their collection is comparable with other English female religious communities of the period and the titles in the collection [of books] show that they bought many of the same books, thus demonstrating connections between the convents in exile in spite of the physical distance between Lisbon and the other houses" (Caroline Bowden, *Syon Abbey and Its Books: Reading, Writing and Religion, C.1400-1700* [Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010)], 201. See *The Martilogium* (BL MS Add 22,285; printed 1526). F. Procter and E.S. Dewick, eds. *The Martiloge,* Henry Bradshaw Society, vol. 3 (London, 1893).

[218] See Betty S. Travitsky, "The Puzzling Letters of Sister Elizabeth Sa(u)nder(s)," in *Textual Conversations in the Renaissance,* ed. Zachary Lesser and Benedict S. Robinson (Aldershote: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 131-146.

[219] This kind of return to England even during times of duress was a relatively common practice among religious women's communities. For instance, Mary Ward's institute set up houses with schools at Hammersmith in 1609 and Yorkshire 1677. Transcripts and documentation of Sanders' letters are in Fletcher's papers. See T. Nyberg, "The Canon Fletcher Manuscript in Syon Abbey," *Nordisk tidskrift for bokoch biblioteksvàsen* 47 (1960): 56-69.

[220] While the original copy of this second letter has been lost, a copy exists in a Spanish translation. See Deigo de Pyepes, *historia particular de la persecucion de Inglaterra* (Madrid, 1599) repr. with introduction by D.M. Rogers (Westmead Farmborough Hants, 1971), 724-37. Both letters have been published in *The Poor Souls' Friend* (1894; 1905) and were printed in 1966.

with women as well as men strengthen her faith. On her return to England, Sanders stayed with the dying Sister Anne Stapleton and subsequently spent time in the shelter of various sisters and laywomen. After this period of relative safety, she was imprisoned in Winchester Castle where she received help from the Governor's wife.[221] The subversive potential of female Catholic community at this point comes across more directly in Sanders's second letter.[222] Describing her escape from Winchester, Sanders writes that "had it not been for the great desire I had to obey my superior and find myself again with my Sisters, which gave me strength, I would not for a thousand worlds have put myself into such a dangerous position and one that, considered in itself, was more than rash" (48). After she showed the wife letters that, which she says "the Mother abbess wrote me from time to time as well as the confessor, urgently commanding both myself and the other nuns who were in England to use every diligence to return," Sanders tells Englefield, the wife "took pity on me and partly on this account" (48). In a scene that recalls Margery Kempe's account of how a prison warden's wife helped her escape, Sanders's longing to rejoin her female community inspires the Governor's wife to commit acts against her husband and the state. Sanders' strong affiliation with Syon's female community ultimately prove to be her most subversive act: as Claire Walker writes, "[Sanders] arguably challenged the state more in her determination to escape prison to join the Syon community in Rouen than in distributing polemical tracts."[223]

Sanders' repeated expression of her desire to "return to [her] Company" (20) articulates a new notion of English Catholic community that builds on and diverges from the utopianism of Syon's liturgical texts. Similar to the notion of utopia in the medieval texts, which look towards an amorphous spiritual ideal, Syon's post-Reformation ideal is a "good place that is nowhere," but now

[221] Receiving help from the wife of a captor is a common trope in saint's lives. See, for instance, *The Life of St Katherine* and *The Book of Margery Kempe*.

[222] Letter no. 2 *PSF* 14.2 (March-April, 1966).

[223] Walker, 173.

it is "nowhere" in a more literal sense since the community no longer has a home. The self-image of the post-Reformation nuns literalizes the sense of otherness inherent in their medieval male-authored texts since the nuns were now not just figuratively apart but literally in exile (along with a much smaller number of brothers). Thus, like Foucault's heterotopias and utopias, Syon was at once a dislocated yet joined through otherness. This double sense of being there and not there is expressed when Sanders, describing her return Rouen, writes that this is "where our community *is*" but continues, "I was welcomed by our Reverend Abbess, and my living Sisters with the joy *you may imagine*, being so ardently expected and having been so long away and in so many dangers that it seemed impossible I should ever return."[224] In this call to the reader to *imagine* her joy at her reunion with her fellow sisters and to remember the seeming impossibility of this return in the past, Sanders's letter expresses a utopianism that pairs impossibility with realization. Sanders' letters depict a present that is simultaneously engaged in remembering the past and looking towards a better future, and they situate this double temporal perspective within female community, constituting a feminotopianism that builds on Syon's medieval legacy.

As we see in Sanders' letters, the self-image that Syon's male clerics had crafted for its nuns primed them to render otherness and abjection as sites of strength: Syon's women crafted their dual position of weakness as women in exile into an the epicenter of an English Catholicism. This self-representation is further developed in *The Biography of Mary Champney*.[225] Written in a hagiographic

[224] Second letter. Sanders probably returned in May 1587.

[225] And edition of this text is available in Ann M. Hutchison, "The Life and Good End of Sister Marie," *Birgittiana* 13 (2002): 33–89. A discussion of this text is available in Ann M. Hutchison "Mary Champney a Bridgettine Nun Under the Rule of Queen Elizabeth I," *Birgittiana* 13 (2002): 3–32. From internal evidence, this biography appears to have been written very shortly after the death of Mary Champney on April 27, 1580 (Hutchison, "Mary Champney," 5). This evidence includes a statement that says that the choir was sacked "about four yeares agone" (472) and that the decision made by bishops to evacuate convents of nuns in Flanders was made in 1578, "this time two yeares" (495-6). The author leaves little clue of his or her identity though we can surmise that the life may be by a layperson is suggested by the way that priests and nuns are referred as superiors. It also seems

register, this text by an unknown author tells the story of Champney (1547 -1580), who left England in 1569 to join the Bridgettines in Spanish Flanders.[226] In 1578, Champney, like Sanders, returned to England with a group of about 10 younger nuns to collect much-needed funds for Syon's community.[227] The descriptions in Champney's biography strikingly recall those of the abbey's medieval texts. For instance, at age twelve, Champney has a vision in which she is brought to church and given a new habit with the red-spotted white crown, the symbol of the crucifixion worn by the Bridgettine nuns (35-36).[228] Describing Champney's reaction, the life relates, "she had such a deepe impressyon printed in her remembraunce that she thought ever after that she coulde knowe it agayne from all the attires in the worlde if they were shewed all at once." The "deepe impression"

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that the author is not a Bridgettine because the Life refers to this community as "they," as in "their rule," rather than "our rule" (Hutchison, "Mary Champney," 6). The inclusion of the parallel story of Anne Stapleton suggests that the author lived in or near London, possibly in the same household that would later take in Mary. The intimate and detailed nature of the account also suggests the narration of an eyewitness and even, as Hutchison guesses, a woman based detailed observations of Mary's physical appearance though there is no corroborating evidence for this assertation. (Hutchison, "Mary Champney," 6).

[226] While the Life states that Champney was the daughter of a Captain from Somerset, she is not found among members of the Somerset branch of the Champney family in Orchardleigh. Hutchison suggests that another possibility is that she was descended from John Champnes, in Ulfcolombe, Devon, who refers to "my daughter mary" in his will of January 9, 1568, but Hutchison also says by 1568 Mary must already have gone abroad and so it would have dangerous to name her. This could explain why no daughter Mary is referred to in will of Henry Champneys of Orchardleigh (Hutchison, "Mary Champney,"14). Pinpointing the year of Champney's birth has been difficult. She writes that at the time of her profession in 1569 she was 21 (Hutchison, "Mary Champney," 7), which suggests that she was born in 1548 or 1549, but later she is reported to have said as she was dying that was 33 years old, which would mean that she had been born in 1547. This would mean that she was 22 at the time of her profession. Hutchison concludes that 21 must have been a scribal error (Hutchison, "Mary Champney," 14). The only manuscript copy of this text is London, British Library Additional 18650 (2r-16v) from last decade of sixteenth century. There is also a typescript made by Fletcher. The manuscript was most likely written in 1580 by someone who attended Mary Champney during the last weeks of her life.

[227] Hutchison disagrees with Nancy Bradley Warren's (ch. 6 of *Women of God and Arms*) argument that sisters were sent back to England for political purposes. Ann M. Hutchison, "Syon Abbey Preserved: Some Historians of Syon," in *Syon Abbey and Its Books,* ed. Jones and Walsham*,* 231.

[228] Reg. IV, 107; Rule III 11-12.

that the habit makes on Mary recalls the *Myroure's* description of nuns as pennies that are impressed with God's image. Just as in Syon's medieval texts, imitation for Champney could become a form of empowerment since her imitation of Bridget signifies her future agency in Syon's community.

Where the medieval texts authorize the sisters as symbols of the abbey, Champney's life extends this symbolism to make the nuns figures for English Catholicism as a whole. The narrator makes this connection when she writes that after Champney arrives in Flanders, she waits to become a nun until "vntill she had longer weyned herselfe from her olde longinge homewarde into Egipte againe" (38-39). This comparison of Champney to the Israelites echoes the view of English Catholics, who at this time saw their plight as a new version of the children of Israel fleeing from Egypt to preserve their religion.[229] This comparison is evident in the Latin quotation from Zachariah that begins Champney's life: "Quid enim bonum <eius> est, et quid pulchrum eius, nisi frumentum electorem, et vinum germinans virgins" (Zachariah 9-17) [Yea, how good and fair it shall be! Grain shall make the young man flourish and new wine the maidens] (Revised Standard Version).[230]

This equation of Syon's community to the Israelites recurs at several other moments in the Life. When Syon's Flemish chapel is sacked, "the good virgin [Champney] satt all in desolacion as it were vpon the fluddes of Babilon morninge and sobbinge," alluding to Psalm 137's famous line, "Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept: when we remembered Sion." (58-59). This reference to the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians links Syon to an Old Testament past that accentuates the sisters' roles as figures for post-Reformation English Catholic persecution. Later, after Champney returns to England, she responds to news that Syon's community at Mechlin has been captured by Calvinists by quoting from the Book of Lamentations, "Mulieres in Syon humiliaverunt, et virgines in ciuitatibus Iuda," (72) [they oppressed the women in

[229] Hutchison, "Mary," 39, n. 28.

[230] Ibid., 33, n. 1.

Syon and the virgins in the cities of Juda]. This synecdoche, in which the women stand for the entire Israelite community, places the nuns who are compared to these women at the center of the Catholic plight, rendering the survival of Syon's sisters integral to the survival of the faith as a whole.

Champney's participation in her community's typological role becomes a means of active resistance to the English state. This connection is particularly evident when Champney is on her deathbed at the age of 33, and an unnamed male speaker, instructs her, "But nowe good virgin…thou must praye for the speedei conversion of Englande by name…and by name also for Godes cheife prisoner (you knowe what good Ladye I meane), that shee maye be fullye deliuered out of miscreantes handes to be an instrument for it." (57) God's chief prisoner is here a coded name for Mary Queen of Scots, whom many English Catholics considered the legitimate ruler. By asking Champney to pray for the queen, the speaker conveys his perception of her (and the Bridgettines') instrumental role in resistance to Queen Elizabeth. To this plea Champney replies, "to remember her by name likewise I will…it is for such a *Susanna*, by whom (for her heavie crosse) in deede we maie hope for some grete worke of God to all our comfortes, when we ar at the lowest" (57). By comparing Mary Queen of Scots, who was accused of plotting to murder Queen Elizabeth, to Susanna, who, in the Book of Daniel, is falsely accused of promiscuity by the elders, Champney not only makes a case for the former's innocence but she also links the English present to the Israelite past. Through this comparison, Champney positions her order a new Israelites who, like Susanna, will draw on a position of vulnerability to make a name for themselves in religious history. Her prayer promises English Catholics that Syon, like Susanna, will be vindicated through the intercession of the Bridgettine order.

The political implications of such descriptions are accentuated in the narrator's subsequent comments. After Champney's reply to the anonymous male speaker, the narrator is reminded "of certayne wordes which I hearde her speake: how she had hearde by some secret hope of such a

thinge a longe tyme spoken of in their howse since their first suppresion, that their oder should be erected againe in the northe partes of Englande, whosoeuer shoulde live to see it (57). This "thinge a longe tyme spoken of" gestures to the rumor that the Bridgettines had once hoped to use their Northern connections to reestablish their house in the North of England.[231] This reference, coupled with the preceding prayer for Mary Queen of Scots may, as Nancy Warren suggests, convey the Bridgettines' possible involvement with plots against Elizabeth.[232] More certainly, in this passage, female dissent becomes a model for the political dissension of English Catholics, giving them an example of how perceived weakness could be repurposed into strength. As Warrens writes, Champney's biography makes it "abundantly clear that the past, projected into the future, can have serious political implications in the present."[233] This tri-temporal engagement underlays the utopianism not just of Champney's Life but of Syon's female community more broadly.

A more outward-facing product of this feminized political agency survives in an appeal, circulated between 1587 and 1594, that the community sent to England from Rouen: "Supplication of Poor Syon."[234] This document, which was signed by all members of the convent as well as by several English Catholic exiles in Rouen, requests aid for the order on the grounds that "not only were we the first exiles for our Holy Catholic Faith but also the only ones of all the orders and convents of English nuns who have continued and persevered in this very hard exile." This supplication concludes, we "beseachyne all charitable and weldisposed Catholiques to succour and preserve with their devout almes this thus distressyd religious companye of thyrty personnes wch

[231] Hutchison, n. 57.

[232] Warren, 148.

[233] Ibid., 162.

[234] See copy in *Pour Soul's Friend*. "A petition for aid from the religious of the Order of St Bridget, formerly of Sion in England" in Thomas Francis Knox, *Records of the English Catholics Under the Penal Laws*, vol. I of *the First and Second Diaries of the English College, Douay, and an Appendix of Unpublished Documents* (London: David Nutt, 1878).

have hitherto in manifold perils and with great labour endevored to contynne their holy religion in banyshment and strange countryes: w[hi]ch also ye only religiouse convent remaynge of our country." The petition was ultimately confiscated by English authorities and, given Syon's continued financial struggles, does seem to have had its desired effect, but in its effort to situate Syon as the last remnant of English Catholicism, the document bears witness to the Bridgettine nuns' mapping of their double identity—as weak women and encapsulations of a sacred mission— onto their new condition to make their struggle a sign of their exceptionality. It exhibits a utopianism rooted in female community that sees a desired future as deriving from a past that is in a constant process of being reshaped.

Beside Home and Exile: Syon's Lisbon Settlement

On May 20th 1594, after forty years of wandering, twenty-two English Bridgettine sisters and eight brothers landed in Lisbon, Portugal. The loss of most of the sisters' archives in a convent fire in 1651 has made unraveling their experiences at Lisbon challenging, and there have been few studies of this period in Syon's history. Recently, however, the remaining nuns of the English Bridgettine order, who were based in South Brent, Devon until 2012, placed their archives on permanent loan with Exeter University, making works from Syon's years in Lisbon publically available for the first time. This archive includes printed books, letters, petitions, records of professions and liturgical manuscripts, which, in addition to the Arundel Manuscript and "Answer to an attack on the nuns of Sion," offer insight into how the order's utopianism developed once it established a more permanent home. At this point, I argue, the historical accident of exile became increasingly meaningful on political and spiritual planes: it allowed the community to transform the apparent weakness of Syon's nuns into a figure for a lost Catholic utopia and in doing so, to catalyze active female networking and community building. Far more than at earlier points of its history, Syon's seventeenth-century utopianism joins the political and the spiritual and thus bridges a

theological notion of utopia with one directed by human agency.

From the Cloister to Politics: the Arundel Manuscript

One of the documents most overtly focused on idealized female community from Syon's Lisbon settlement is the Arundel manuscript (9 ¾ inches x 7 inches), which was compiled in the seventeenth century by the sisters on the occasion of the proposed marriage between Charles I and the second daughter of the Spanish King Philip III.[235] Now in the library of the Duke of Norfolk at Arundel Castle, the book, written entirely in Spanish (Portugal at this time was under Spanish rule), combines an opening petition to the Infanta to help the order return to England with a history of the order originally created for her father Philip upon his visit to Portugal in 1619.[236] These texts are accompanied by seven miniatures,[237] which tell the history of the Bridgettines, adding a second voice to the manuscript.[238] While scholars have explored the political and rhetorical significance of the

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[235] The Earl of Shrewsbury bought the manuscript in 1810 from some of the Bridgettine nuns who had returned to England following the Napoleonic invasion of Portugal. It remained at Alton towers until 1856 when Bertram Arthur Tabot, the last Catholic Earl of Shrewsbury, died in 1856. His will left the manuscript to the 14th duke of Norfolk as his closest Catholic descendent. A facsimile with commentary has been published in De Hamel, *Syon Abbey*. Quotations from this edition will be cited parenthetically within the text.

[236] Elizabeth Perry argues that Abbess Barbara Wiseman likely supervised the manuscript's production. She and her sister Anne were daughters of a prominent recusant family in Essex and were probably professed at Mechelen in 1577. Perry also suggests that the community may also have been looking beyond Philip III in their designation of the manuscript, realizing that noblewomen in Spanish convents would have interest in the manuscript's story. For example, Philip might have shared the book with his aunt archduchess Margaret of Austria, who was a nun at the Franciscan Descalzas Reales. Elizabeth Perry, "Petitioning for Patronage: An Illuminated Tale of Exile from Syon," in *The English Convents in Exile, 1600-1800 Communities, Culture and Identity,* ed. Caroline Bowden and James E. Kelly (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 165.

[237] Perry asserts that the fact that the book does not lay flat suggests that it was not bound professionally but rather within the convent, likely under the supervision of Abbess Barbara Wiseman (d. 1649) (note. 47). The book may have been assembled in haste, as the last two illuminations show the transfer of wet paint from one page to the next (Perry, 174).

[238] While De Hamel has suggested that the combination of historic details and accurate heraldry in these images may have been the work of a heraldic artist who compiled Spanish noble genealogies (7), Perry argues that the manuscript was illuminated by a nun since the "illuminations speak very

texts in the Arundel manuscript, such as their emphasis on the convent's Lancastrian heritage and use of Marian imagery, only recently have the book's illuminations received attention in a chapter by Elizabeth Perry.[239] In this section, by looking at Arundel's texts and images together, I argue that the sisters drew on the rhetoric of their medieval past to negotiate between submission and assertion to argue for their own significant as symbols of the exiled English Catholic faith. In doing so, they modeled a utopianism that bridged a typological understanding of the past with a more modern view of the future as shaped by human agency.

The Arundel manuscript's opening dedication to the princess reveals the sisters' awareness of their delicate position. They portray themselves as supplicants, writing that they are "poor foreigners" in need of royal favor. This manuscript equally reproduces the passive, imitative identity that was central to the order's medieval guides by evoking a feminine genealogy when the opening explains that the book is "Dedicada al honor de nuestra Senora Maria Madre de Dios, y Reyna de los cielos, que assy despues sea favoreçida y conservada por estas otras Reynas Maria" ["dedicated to the honour of Our lady, Mary, Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, so that the Order might be favoured and protected by these other Queen Marys"] (12, 24). This juxtaposition of the dedication to our lady and the hope for protection by "other queen marys" draws a chain of imitative

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intimately and repeated to experience of nuns that could not have easily been imagined by an outsider" (173). As further evidence for this claim, Perry argues that though old Syon was not known for artistic production, other Bridgettine convents were (173). Perry also suggests that while sources state that none of the English nuns spoke Portuguese (*Life of Leonor de Mendanha*)—and so could not have written the text of the manuscript—, they likely exaggerate. Perry argues that images in Arundel were not created for the Spanish Infanta, noting that Wiseman's dedication explains that the account hasdalready been presented to the princess's late father on the occasion of the royal visit to the convent but was not being presented in light of her upcoming marriage. Because "The Explanation of What the Previous Pictures Show" is also addressed to Philip III rather than to Phillip IV, Perry argues that there must have been an illuminated manuscript of which this one is a copy. This fact is also suggested by the present manuscript's title: "the mirror of the peregrinations of the English nuns of the Order of Saint Bridget which they presented to their Royal patron, the Most Puissant King of the Spanish realm, Philip III" (Perry, 173).

[239] Warren, *Women of God and Arms*, 139-67; Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2008), 151-88.

connection between the Virgin, the sisters and the Infanta that seems to place the sisters in the lowest position. Indeed, disempowerment seems to have been part of the sisters' lived experience in Lisbon since the revisions made to the Rule made at this time (*Lisbon Additions of 1607*) to make them more in line with the Council of Trent gave Syon's brothers greater prominence in the monastery and the Confessor General more authority than ever before.[240]

However, just as the mirroring in the medieval devotional guides could be an active means of self-shaping as well as a sign of passivity, in the Arundel manuscript, imitation becomes a source of agency when the sisters suggest that they themselves are exemplars to be copied. They write in their dedication to the Infanta that their account will reveal: "the singular and continuous favors and devotion shown to the saint through us her daughters by your royal parents and predecessors" (23), to which they add the participle phrase, "floreciente con la imitaçion de sus virtudes y con la continuaçion dellas consequentemente" [flourishing in the imitation of *their* virtues and with their continuous exercise] (23). In this passage, while the possessive pronoun "sus" [their] could modify the virtues of the sisters' royal patrons, it could also refer to the virtues of the sisters. This ambiguity opens up a space in which the sisters' spirituality acts as a source rather than a product of imitation.[241]

As the petition continues, the sisters increasingly move away from the role of supplicant to emphasize what they can offer the royal family in exchange for its support. They promise the intercession of St Bridget, when they write to the princess:

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[240] For a comparison of the 1607 Rule with the medieval one, see Roger Ellis, "Syon Abbey: The Spirituality of the English Bridgettines," *Analecta Cartusiana* 68/2 (1984).

[241] That mirroring remained a key value within the Bridgettine order is made clear by, as Perry points out, Thomas Everard dedicated his English translation (1618) of Lucas Pinelli's treatise *the mirroure of religious perfection* to Barbara Wiseman. The abbey also possessed a work entitled *A Looking Glace for the Religious Spiritual Study of Contemplation* (EUL 262/18), which seems to have been copied specifically for the sisters. Another manuscript in the Exeter collection, *The Life of St. Bridget and St. Catherine* (Syon Abbey Administrative Records EUL MS 389) from the seventeenth century is likely in the same hand as Syon MS 18.

> No dudamos, sino que los ruegos, y oraçiones de nuestra gloriosa madre uistos los trabajos destas sus hijas tiene negoçiado, y alcançado de nuestro senor el casamiento de Vuestra Alteza con nuestro muy grandioso Prinçipe de la gran Bretania con este espeçial intencion que Vuestra Alteza fuesse y entrasse en su lugar por madre patrona y singular amparo dellas.
>
> [We do not doubt that the entreaties and prayers of our glorious mother, the hardships of these her daughters, have negotiated and brought about, through our Lord, the marriage of your highness with our very great prince of Great Britain, with this special intention that your highness should go to assume her place as mother and patroness and singular refuge of her daughters] (23-24).

Here, the sisters suggest that their suffering and prayers have enabled the proposed marriage of Maria to Charles, which obliges the Infanta to become their patron. This expectation of reciprocity also appears in the portions of the manuscript that address the king. Describing the book they likely originally prepared for King Phillip, the sisters wrote, "Tomad este prezente de la mano de nuestra pobreza" [Take this present from the hand of our poverty], and tell the king that this present "no es otra cosa q' los proprios merecientos y grandezas"/ is nothing more than Your rightful merits and multiple greatness" (29). They continue by explaining that their prayers will procure, through Bridget's intercession, the prosperity of the king's progeny, reminding him of their "trabajosa peregrinaçion y destierro," ["their labourious pilgrimage and exile"] (29). Here, the sisters draw attention to the intercession that they can offer the king in exchange for his protection with a language of self-negation, reworking the passivity that had been imposed into a source of collective authority.

The sister's oscillation between abject obedience and self-assertion in this manuscript parallels the condition of exile in which they found themselves: they were cast out of Protestant England and yet, in their minds, they were also the chosen preservers of medieval Catholicism, which they believed would once again triumph. This double identity comes across in the manuscript's repeated emphasis on the singularity of the Bridgettine's exile. The text not only characterizes Bridget, as "notable and singular" but it also identifies the women of her order as exceptional. The sisters argue that they are "los primeros desterrados por nuestra sancta fee

catholica" ["the first exiles for our Holy Catholic Faith"] (13, 25). They are also careful to remind their reader, that they are "solas" [the only ones] of all English orders and monasteries to have continued and persevered in this very hard exile. Here, the sisters actively draw on the framework of strength with weakness that their medieval documents made available to make a political claim for their importance.

A comparison with Robert Parsons's "Wanderings of Syon" (1595) illuminates the radical self-presentation of the sisters in Arundel.[242] The former account is based on Syon's General Confessor Seth Foster's experiences leading the community and was likely used as a source for Arundel. While there are similarities between these documents' accounts of Syon's history, there are also striking differences since Parsons' text foregrounds Foster's role as the abbey's guide. Arundel's account of the Bridgettine's wanderings notably omits Foster and the order's monks despite the fact that eight men arrived with the nuns in Lisbon. Arundel's dedication, moreover, is signed by "Sister Barbara Wiseman Abbess and the other English nuns of the Order of St Bridget" without mention of the order's male members. Arundel also deviates from Parsons' account of the abbey's foundation, which draws attention to Syon's Lancastrian heritage by claiming, "this monastery in England…was founded and very richly endowed by King Henry the Fifth, who was the second king of the House of Lancaster, and one of the most famous princes that ever was in England." The sisters' "short explanation of what the following pictures show" references "King Henry V, who was the second king of the royal house of Lancaster," but the petition itself emphasizes Bridget's role as foundress rather than Henry's, describing, "the secret mysteries and marvelous documents contained in the eight books of her Most Exalted Revelations." Arundel implicitly challenges Parsons' account and offers an alternative source of authority in its female foundation. The intertextual relation between these works thus foregrounds the sisters' assertion of female spiritual authority.

[242] Exeter University Library, Syon Abbey MS (unnumbered in Box 28).

Not only do the sisters view their wanderings and exile as evidence of their exceptionality among other Catholic orders but they also, like Champney's biographer, assert their importance by connecting themselves to figures from the Old Testament. Like Champney's Life, the Arundel manuscript compares the sisters to the Israelites and even likens Maria to Susanna and to "our Queen Esther ordained by our lord to set us free and lead us back to happy and greatly desired rest in our former home, Syon" (25). In the *Mirror of the Peregrinations*, they compare themselves to the children of Abraham, who "highly esteemed their great patriarch as their father," and write, "how much greater reason are we, true religious daughters of this glorious saint able to delight in and esteem our great and most holy mother" (28). Just as for Christine allegory operated as a means to covertly contest gender norms, for Syon's sisters, seeing themselves as allegorical types allowed to transcend their role as Catholic women, who were increasingly being regulated by the Church, to operate as symbols of a larger Catholic identity. While their liturgy suggested the sisters' connection to the past on spiritual plane, this metaphor positioned them within a larger religious and political history that gave them relevance for the present.

This stance of exceptionality, whereby the Bridgettines saw themselves as the descendants of Bridget's example and forbearers of the English Catholic faith, relies on the logic of typology, which can be seen as an early instantiation of what we now think of as utopianism. Typology conveys a view of reality in Christian thought and biblical narrative, whereby one historical personage or event prefigures or signifies a second, later one.[243] The latter will fulfill the former so that while the two remain distinct, their full significance emerges in the figural relationship between them. In her work on biblical exegesis, Frances Young writes that "typology works at the intersection of the synchronic and the diachronic," meaning that "[s]criptural narratives succeed one another—must indeed

[243] The word typos means something like to "impress," which seems especially appropriated given the language of impression used in the Bridgettine's own materials. "Typos" in the gospels refers to the mark of the nails (John 20:25).

succeed one another in the narrative frame of a time bound universe—but they [also] represent in their particularity a universal and eternal human story which makes sense of each person's story."[244] In this way, typological thought, as Erich Auerbach describes, joins the material present with the eternal: "the horizontal, that is the temporal and causal, connection of occurrences is dissolved; the here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events…it is something eternal, something omni-temporal, something already consummated in the realm of fragmentary earthly event."[245] As Auerbach explains, the individual earthly event is "viewed primarily in immediate vertical connection with a divine order which encompasses it, which on some future day will itself be concrete reality...But this reality is not only future: it is always present in the eye of God and in the other worlds, which is to say that in transcendence the revealed and true reality is present at all times, or timelessly." [246] Typology thus maintains yet dissolves divisions between moments in time, enabling a vision of the future that always already inhabits the present. Typology has a strong interventionist character: it denotes a transcendent or speculative order of reality that recurrently penetrates and interrupts the routinized dimension of historical life. It is in this way that typology aligns with utopia. A similar play between linear and universal time is present in Fredric Jameson's secular account of utopia, as he explains that utopia contains two dimensions: "existential experience (in which questions of memory predominate) and historical time with its urgent interrogations of the future," which become "seamlessly united as existential time is taken up into historical time, which is

[244] Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[245] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Williard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 74.

[246] "'Figura'"in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature, Theory and History of Literature* 9th ed. Wlad Godzich and Jochen Schulte-Sasse (Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 72.

paradoxically also the end of time, the end of history."[247]

Syon anticipated secular utopianism in its use of the double temporal dimensions of typology to situate its female community as a bridge between two ways of viewing the future. On the one hand, typology allowed Syon to frame its return to England as utopian destiny: in a typological view, because the Israelites were set free, Syon, as a figure of this Old Testament people, would also regain its rightful home. On the other hand, in the Arundel Manuscript, such logic sits beside a more linear, cause-and-effect temporal sensibility in which the ideal future is determined by human action. This latter sense of the future is conveyed in the manuscript when the sister claim that they have "*have negotiated and brought about*" the Infanta's impending marriage. Here, the sisters couple the manuscript's long view of their order's history with more immediate political rhetoric, which implies their impact on the events of the future. A similar sentiment is conveyed when the sisters write to the king that they offer him: "Una j(h)oia de mucho ma preçio y valor"/ "a jewel of much greater price and value" than all the other many gifts and presents that may arrive—this jewel, they later specific, is glory that will last eternally in Heaven. The sisters here promise eternal spiritual value in a language of immediate economic exchange as they earlier did when they told the Spanish monarchy that they would use Bridget's intercession to procure the happy and prosperous succession of the king's progeny. In this way, they blend a synchronic understanding of Bridget's ever-present support with a more diachronic transaction. At this pivotal political moment, Syon enacts two views of utopia: on the one hand, the nuns see their desired future as an inevitable (typological) realization of the past, but they also look towards an ideal future that is dependent on human initiative and immediate and practical tactics.

These two temporal imaginaries within Arundel are clarified by the work of historian Rheinhart Kosseleck.[248] Until the sixteenth century, Kosseleck writes, the history of Christianity was

[247] Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 7.

a history of the constant anticipation of the End of the World and of the continued deferment of this End. The Church integrated the future as the possible End of the World within its organization of time in a strictly linear fashion. The past was thus intimately connected to, or always "beside" the future. Between 1500 and 1800, however, Kosseleck argues, a new quality of historical time emerged as political calculation and rational prognosis marked out a new plane for the future. A different temporal perspective opened up, through which it was possible to look back on the past as entirely separate from the present and the future. Instead of being foreseen by prophecy, the future increasingly became a domain of finite possibilities, arranged according to their greater or lesser probability. This view challenged the conception of an eschatological future taken for granted by the Church. Whereas from the point of view of prophecy, events are merely types of that which is already known, this newer future becomes increasingly hypothetical. This transition maps onto a Christian view of utopia as something that will eventually emerge and an understanding of a utopia that is only distantly possible in the human imagination.

The presence of these competing views of the future emerges in Arundel's painted miniatures, which illustrate the history of Syon, giving the sisters a central role. In the first miniature (figure 3), Saint Bridget at the center towers over the landscape as she prepares for the pilgrimage to Rome that would make her order an official part of the Catholic Church. The title of this image, written above in majuscules, is "Peregrinacion" [Pilgrimage], and the caption below explains "Esta gloriosa Sta como S. Joseph el sposo de nuestra Snora y como el patriarcha Abraham foyanisada de Dies deauer des sex perigrina" [this glorious Saint, like St Joseph the spouse of Our Lady and, like the patriarch Abraham, was instructed by God to become a pilgrim]. Following these words is a quotation in Latin from Chronicles: "enim sumus coram te [et advenae] secut omnes patres nostri"

[248] Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Columbia University Press, 2005). For an expansion of Kosseleck's study of the future focused specifically on Renaissance England, see J.K. Barret, *Untold Futures, Time and Literary Culture in Renaissance England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

Figure 3. Manuscript, Miniature 1. From: Christopher De Hamel, ed. *Syon Abbey: the library of the Bridgettine nuns and their peregrinations after the reformation: with the manuscript at Arundel Castle* (London: Roxburghe Club, 1991).

[For we are sojourners before thee, and strangers as were all our fathers (Douay-Rheims)]. The next line of scripture is not included, but, as Perry points out, the nuns would have known it: "our days upon earth are a shadow and there is no stay."[249] This caption integrates the nuns into a biblical typology that the image confirms: on the lower left, below Bridget, on a smaller scale, are Mary, Joseph and the Christ child fleeing out of Egypt. On the upper left, an angel reads Bridget's book of revelations. The angel's arms direct back to center of the image, to Bridget, who, in turn, looks backward to the angel as well as to the past, creating a sense movement between different historical moments. Adding a further temporal layer, behind Bridget are five nuns, who could belong to her original Swedish order but could equally represent its seventeenth-century English descendants.

This composition, with its multiple temporalities represented in the image and text, portrays the nuns as typological successors of Abraham, Mary and Joseph and St Bridget. While medieval and early modern religious paintings commonly used continuous narrative to show multiple episodes in the same frame, such episodes usually form part of a coherent, linear story. For instance an alter piece by Gentile da Fabriano from around 1423 uses three-dimensional perspective to show the journey of the Magi in the upper portions of the painting, which culminates in the adoration of the Christ child at the bottom center left. Gentile's painting portrays a linear, causal movement of time while Syon's first miniature sets much more loosely connected events within a single pictorial space, moving the viewer's attention back and forth between moments in time. This miniature conveys the nuns' perception that their exile from England is a reenactment of the biblical flight out of Egypt and a reduplication of their foundress's Bridget's pilgrimage: it illustrates their vision of themselves as the fulfillment of a past that creates an inevitable future.

In contrast, the manuscript's final image, "Prayer for his Majesty" (figure 4) portrays a more contingent view of the future that depends on human agency. This image, unlike the others in the

[249] Perry, 165.

Figure 4. Arundel Manuscript, Miniature 7. Courtesy of the Archive Collections at Arundel Castle.

manuscript, is set indoors, inside a chapel within which King Philip II (or Philip III) kneels before an altar with a statue of the Virgin and Child as Saint Bridget stands behind him with her hand on his shoulder.[250] To the left, Phillip's son kneels facing the altar while, to the right behind Bridget, stand four Bridgettine nuns.[251] The caption below the image states: "la perpetua obligacion y oracion q'esta gloriosa Santa Brizida y sus hijas hazen por su Real Magestad" [This portrays the perpetual obligation and prayer that this glorious St Bridget and her daughters offer up for his Royal Majesty]. This caption is followed by a passage from psalm 60: "Dies super dies regis adicies annos eius usque in diem generationis et generationis" [You will add days to the days of the king, to his years, even to the time of generation after generation]. While this caption and its accompanying psalm assert the importance of the king, the image conveys a different message: as Bridget stands over her patron, her gaze meeting the Virgin's, the image emphasizes female spiritual authority. In contrast to the first image's suggestion through typology that the nuns' exile will inevitably lead them to their homeland, this final miniature portrays a more uncertain future that relies on women's agency. The result of Bridget's prayer for the king is not shown in the image—we are left to wonder what the Bridgettines' claim to spiritual connection will yield—, an omission that emphasizes the hypothetical view of the future that Kosseleck attributes to modernity though in a very different context. The Arundel manuscript thus mobilizes different notions of the future: one predetermined by divine forces and the other reliant on human intervention with the divine. As this image conveys, the

[250] No evidence survives of the appearance of the lower church in Lisbon before the fire of 1651, but a written description of the church before the Lisbon earthquake records grey stone, gilded woodwork, colored marble and painted wooden sculpture as seen in the image. This description of the church at Syon is found in *Historia dos mosterios conventos e casa religosas de Lisboa* vol. 2 (Lisbon 1950) and dates to 1704-8.

[251] Robinson has identified the central figure in this image as Phillip II with the young Philip III (De Hamel and Robinson *Syon Abbey*, 9) but Perry argues that it represents Phillip III in the Lisbon convent with young Philip IV on the occasion of their 1619 visit to Portugal. She bases this argument on the fact that, in all previous captions, Philip II is referred to as king Philip II or "that same King Philip II" whereas this caption states that the prayers are offered for his royal majesty, who would have been Philip III at the time this illumination was made.

sisters' fate was not in their control: plans for marriage between the English and Spanish royal crowns ultimately fell through, and the Arundel manuscript was never delivered.[252] Even as the sisters redirected the voices that sought to discipline them, they could be overshadowed by these voices and forgotten in the midst of the political and religious controversies that swirled around them.

In Arundel, female spiritual collectivity acts a figure for the preservation and fulfillment of the past, corresponding with the hope of English Catholics to reinstate their faith in England. The sisters model a utopianism that negotiates between the past, present and future, bridging an understanding the future as predetermined with a view of the future as reliant on unpredictable human actions. This manuscript thus shows that the apparently secular and modern perspective of the future also emerged in religious settings. The Arundel manuscript shows that utopia is never only about the future but rather about the ways in which the future builds on the past and the concerns of the present. While utopia can never fully be *here,* as the sister's political bid makes clear, it offers a valuable rhetorical tool with which to approach the concerns of the here and now.

Responding to Attack

Where the Arundel manuscript constitutes a highly choreographed and unanswered intervention into politics, other documents from this same period represent a more active and aggressive dialogue with the world. In 1622, Syon produced *An Answer to an Attack on the nuns of Sion*, in response to Thomas Robinson's pamphlet *The Anatomie of the English Nunnery at Lisbon* (1622).[253] Robinson was an English protestant who infiltrated the abbey under the pretense of being a

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[252] See Alexander Samson, ed. *The Spanish Match: Prince Charles Journey to Madrid 1623* (Aldershot, 2006) for a study of the events surrounding the proposed marriage.

[253] London, British Library MSS Additional 21203, Gf.42b. Thomas Robinson, *The anatomy of the English nunnery at Lisbon in Portugall Dissected and laid open by one that was sometime a yonger brother of the conuent: who (if the grace of God had not preuented him) might haue growne as old in a wicked life as the oldest among them. Published by authoritie,* reprinted in 1623, 1630, 1637 and 1662.

Catholic. *Anatomie,* addressed to Thomas Gurlin the mayor of King's Lynn, depicts the Lisbon convent as a bawdy house filled with "silly women" who live in "servile obedience" to their male superiors. In their *Answer* to this critique*,* the sisters, like in Arundel, deploy repurpose words intended to delimit them in their favor to craft a position of strength, but here do so in a way that registers awareness of a wider reading public. In their response, the sisters apply a utopianism that reshapes the past to mold a desired present and future to modern print culture.

Robinson's initial attack, which coincided with a burst of extremist anti-Catholic writing during England's negotiations with Spain for the marriage of prince Charles, levels its critique through the rhetorical features of print.[254] The work begins the work with two prefaces. The first is addressed to the mayor and reflects a traditional author-patron relationship, as Robinson expresses humility and indebtedness to the mayor as a patron: "…as a recognizance and acknowledgement of that debt and dutie, which I owe to your Wps, I presume to send you this insuing discourse..." After this address, however, Robinson includes a second preface "To the indifferent reader" to whom he writes, "Yet what hee promiseth by the Title, hee hath performed in the Treatise, and hath truly anatomized this handmayd of the Whore of Babylon; laying open her principall veines and sinews…" Here, Robinson widens the scope of his imagined readership, acknowledging the wider and less predictable circulation that print facilitated. By using the term "anatomize"— "To dissect or cut up; esp. To dissect a human body, or an animal, for the purpose of displaying the position, structure, and relations of the various parts; to make a dissection of" [OED]—, he gestures to a flourishing science to represent his exposure of Syon.[255] This metaphor of the abbey as the anatomized Whore of Babylon reverses its self-presentation as the container of England's Catholic past and conveys how the medium of print could expose the abbey to scrutinizing gaze of a wider

[254] On this text, see Frances Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY, 1999), 85-94.

[255] This work also coincides with the publication of Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy.*

audience. Robinson's comparison of the order to "Caterpillers of Egypt" who "eate vp the fat and best fruits of the Land" further emphasizes his perversion of the sisters' self image as new Israelites.[256] Robinson's pamphlet thus draws on the possibilities of print to create a document that threatens to make public what enclosure had previously kept hidden.

In a document signed on the 16th of December 1622, Syon drew up a lengthy response to Robinson's attack, probably headed by confessor general father Seth Foster but including the perspective of the sisters.[257] In this document, Syon deploys a bricolage strategy in which they refute Robinson's words by reciting them. The response opens with a counter-narrative to Robinson's, describing how Robinson was not held against his will, as he claims, but arrived at the convent with letter of introduction saying that he had come to Lisbon to find the priest who had converted his uncle to Catholicism. The *Answer* also asserts that Foster gave Robinson books of meditation to copy but never let him see the register from which he claimed to draw his material. By citing the *Anatomie* to point out inconsistencies within Robinson's stories, the *Response* uses Robinson's own language to challenge him. Since citation suggests direct access to the text, this strategy reflects the widely-available material form of Robinson's document foregrounding its identity as a print pamphlet. The *Response* further adapts Robinson's appeal to the expanded audience of print by addressing an unspecified reader: "the modest reader must give truthe leave, to call falshood a lye, and ye falsifyer a lyer, wch if she shuld not, she should not be her selfe, nor speake the truth" (101). The text inhabits the voice of a narrator of a printed text, but also re-fashions Robinson's "indifferent reader" into a "modest" one and characterizes this reader as female rather than ungendered. Syon here has moved from addressing an exclusive audience inside the convent, as its

[256] If Robinson worked as copiest for Syon, he may even have seen some version of the Arundel text. Warren argues, "it is difficult not to read the *Anatomie* as both a participant in the loud Protestant tirade against the Spanish marriage and a targeted response to Syon's framing of its own identity and that of the English nation" (165).

[257] This manuscript is now in Exeter's Collection.

medieval documents do, to addressing a political patron in the Arundel manuscript and, finally, to addressing the wider, unpredictable audience that print made possible while still endeavoring to have some control over that audience's identity.

But even as it registers awareness of the new possibilities that print made available, this text roots Syon's spiritual life in the past. The narrator does this by referencing the nun's Rule as a defense against Robinson's characterizations: "It is true yt the Nuns can*n*ot speake to the*m* of ye house, brothers and servants att all tymes, nor yet without a hearer, the which proceedeth of their wise and vertuous Rules, and not of father Fosters policy…for this rule was in ould Syon in Ingland, two hundreth yeares before father Foaster was borne."[258] This narrator harks back to the rule a source of authority that gains repute through its age in contradistinction to the newness of Robinson's printed text. The narrator also emphasizes the abbey's typological role as suffering representatives of English Catholicism, adding that Robinson's "aim is to 'overthrowe patient Syon: the which this more than threescore years of persecution, by sea and land, god still preservinge it could not bringe to passé" (120). The narrator further establishes what was by now a standard link between the sisters and Old Testament exile: "the reader shall recorde that he hath not only rayled at Syon and them but also rayled uppon all Jerusalem" (121). Syon thus merges a more modern approach to readership that was catalyzed by print with the sisters' typological identities. Like Arundel, their vision of the future is at once rooted in a past that offered a template for the future and projected into an uncertain future. Here, however, this dual view of the future takes on a more urgent dimension and conveys a utopianism that straddles tradition and adaptability to historical

[258] This was apparently not the only time that the sisters had had to defend their community. In the unedited *A tru examynacion of the brevy and the thre poynts of ye as they stand in order,* now at the University of Exeter, the sisters refute charges possibly made by a lay sister to the Pope against the brothers of the order. The document is not dated, but since it is signed by Barbara Wisement and identifies her as abbess, it must have been written between 1610 and 1649. Here, as in an *Answer*, the sisters make recourse to the Rule to defend themselves against the charges of the brevy. This document, unlike the *Answer,* was signed by all the sisters.

circumstances, shadowing the conceptual position between passivity and agency that was articulated in the abbey's foundational texts.

Spiritual Intimacy and Female Friends

The Arundel manuscript provides a highly choreographed, politically motivated vision of female community, and *Answer to an Attack* maps the community's historic priorities onto the concerns of the contemporary print market. Meanwhile, texts produced at Lisbon for consumption by the sisters alone register a different yet continuous notion of feminotopia.[259] The relationships between religious women that emerge from early modern book inscriptions and a devotional treatise produced for the sisters add a further dimension to Syon's feminotopianism by setting the vision of an ideal life within the framework of women's relationships.

Of the two kinds of evidence for women's relationships from Syon's early modern history, the first is piecemeal, consisting of inscriptions in printed books.[260] There are, for instance, inscriptions by several nuns in copies of Lucas Pinelli's *The Mirror of Religious Perfection* (1618), a particularly important book for the community since the English translation of this text was dedicated "to the right reverend and religios lady barbara wiseman abbesse of the English Moanstery of Sion in Lisbone of the Holy order of S. Brigit and the Rest of the Religious Sisters of that holy house and family."[261] The Exeter collection holds four copies of this book, two of which have inscriptions. The flyleaf of copy 1 is inscribed "For the use of Str Maria Ravena and after her death belonging to the Sisters," which suggests a readerly relationship between women that can continue

[259] The topic of same-sex spiritual friendship between women in the early modern period has been very little examined. There is more scholarship on spiritual friendships between religious women and their confessors. See Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives: Confessors and their Female Penitents, 1400-1750* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[260] While there was a prohibition against private property in the Syon Rule, an exception was made for books. To construct this list of books from Syon that contain inscriptions, I used the card catalogue at Exeter University's Special Collections.

[261] Exeter University Collection, Syon Abbey 1618/PIN.

after death. Other inscriptions convey relationships between pairs of sisters. For instance, on a blank page at end of this copy of *The Mirror* is written, "Sister Agatha her Book given her by sister Theresa Bosswell God rest her soul amen," which suggests a particular bond between these women. Another portrayal of friendship over a longue durée is conveyed in books with more than one inscription. For instance, on the third copy of *The Mirror*, "Lucy Smith" is written at bottom of the title page, and "Mary Lidd" on last page. Christopher Fonseca's *A Discourse of Holy Love, by which the Soul is united unto God* has on its title page the names of "ms Sor. Constantia Thers. De Jesus" and "n Amanda Sorrell."[262] While these women may have lived at different points in the abbey's history, their inscriptions within the same volume convey a female spiritual community constructed across a shared textual space.[263] Such traces of friendship enact female bonds across time and space, imagining a community that transcends temporal barriers. Such friendly ties perform more literally what Christine does in her virtual community, which was created between readers and historical women across time.

This suggestion of camaraderie between sisters is more full expressed in *Discourse or Entertainment for the Sacred time of Advent* (EUL MS 262 no. 5), an unpublished manuscript dated to 1657, which was presumably used by the sisters in preparation for Advent.[264] Written as a dialogue in which the abbess and the nuns discuss Advent in allegorical terms and provide each other with spiritual exercises, this book might have been as a script for performance, or it may simply have been read silently as a guide to devotion. There is no extant scholarship on this work, but given that there are no male speakers and that manuscript was produced at a time when there were few

[262] This text was translated by Sir George Strode Knight in 1652. Exeter University Library, loc. A228.

[263] See Mary Erler on female friendships and exchanges of books. *Women, Reading and Piety*.

[264] This manuscript has not been published, nor, to my knowledge, given scholarly consideration. The date is based on a signature at the end of the manuscript.

brothers in the community, it seems likely that a sister of the Bridgettine order composed this text (though neither the order nor Bridget is mentioned). This manuscript, perhaps more than any other text connected with Syon, sheds light on the models of intimacy that might have been available to the sisters. In its articulation of female bonds, *Discourse or Entertainment* clarifies and extends the feminotopian vision that was developed across Syon's earlier textual witnesses: this utopia borrows from a Christian eschatological perspective but puts female community at the center of a future-oriented imaginary. It thus sketches a more anthropocentric, pragmatic and process-based form of religious utopia than can be found in traditional devotional works.

> The *Discourse or Entertainment* begins with an outline of its content in a large flourished script: In this discourse the lady abbesse desirous her Nunnes should entertaine well ye saviorue at his birth enjoynes Placidda to adourne ye poor pores on Cribb wherein he is to be bourne, Lucilla to provide the babes Shirt, Esperanca ye Infants cloths. Serena his swaddling bands, Candida his cradle and cradle cloth and let Symplicia's office bee to worke ye Cradle. The Abbesse [con]cludes with a survay of the whole weeke, and in ye first place or weeke Humility is pratised in the second Faith in ye Third Hope in ye fourth charity in ye fifth Recollection, in ye sixth, Love of our Neighbour is explained commended and peacified and the seventh weeke is spent a reiteration of all former Exercises. (preface, my transcription)

In what follows, the sisters carry out the described assignments, using each task as an allegory for the spiritual preparations necessary for Christ's arrival. Similarly to Christine's *City of Ladies,* this text mobilizes allegory to portray knowledge as collaboratively enacted across sisters in the community.

Throughout, the discourse feminizes spiritual history. When the abbess begins by describing the coming of Christ, she emphasizes the Virgin Mary and compares the devout soul to Mary's conception, describing "how the soul spiritually [con]ceaves Christ o[u]r Lord and how it immitates in this his most Holy Mother" (5). The Abbess later expounds on this point by explaining, "ye soul who would be ye spirituall mother of [C]hrist or which is all one desires that [C]hrist should be born in her faith must fix his eyes upon his naturall mother and end savour to resemble her for soe much more perfectly will Christ be born in her by how much she shall bee more assimilated to her who was not only soe in body but in spirit (6). The sisters are thus called to imitate the Virgin Mary so

that they can imaginatively conceive Christ, a metaphor that feminizes Christic devotion. The importance of conception as a vehicle for a relationship with Christ persists in descriptions of the figurative acts of preparation for Advent, as the abbess tells her nuns that they "must furnish the romme where our Saviour is to reside" and that "ye soul conceives X with affection" (10). The Bridgettines thus draw on the biologically feminine role of conception to put themselves, as religious women, in a privileged position as preparers for the coming of Christ.

The manuscript furthermore envisions a spiritual community in which female collaboration enables spiritual progress. In the text's dialogues, the sisters rely on each other to build collective spiritual knowledge. Candida, for instance, asks for clarification on Serena's statement on the spiritual significance of choosing the 'better part:' "hold a little sister, here is a doubt that may not be deferred and perhaps it will help you the better to declare what you are to say: …how is it when the holy Ghospell saieth when Mary choosed it she chose the better part who nameth the better part names not all perfection but the better part only" (107-108). In another dialogue, Esperance confesses to Serena: "it hath alwayes beene very difficult to my poore understandi[n]g to apprehend how this can possibly be that God should conforme his will to the creatures for it seemeth that it would bee [?] and monsterous disorder in nature and then for thoss soules who are perfect who never desire anything in particular but only what is the will of God, how can it be That god conformes his will with theirs if they have no will at all?" (117-118). As the sisters offer each other explanations of divine precepts, they enacts the *Myroure*'s call to the sisters from 200 years before to explain the liturgy to each other, but they do this in a way that does assert one's authority over another but rather portrays spiritual knowledge as a collaborative project enacted between sisters.

This manuscript's portrayal of female spiritual community as collective and process-based figures it as a form of utopia. This characterization is emphasized at the end of the discourse when the abbess prays, "I offer unto thee o my lord god all my thoughts words and nor works." Her "I"

becomes a "we" in Placida's reply: "Truly mother…*I* am sure *our* unqualite to put it perfectly in execution intend by yr good leave to write out that prayer yt soe *I* may actute all my workes and actions with in." Their exchange foregrounds a process-based form of spiritual "perfection" enacted between women. This sense of process is further emphasized in the conclusion when the abbess advises the sisters: "I have determine that you Shall write out all the exercises which hitherto wee have had and from thence every one may take her owne copy and thus god give your charitys a good end of this feast and a happy entrance [?]. And end of years which those exercises of spirit and his lovee which your owne harts desire: and with this lett us besake up & depart" (310). While in the abbey's medieval liturgical texts, outward performance was the only way of gaining insight into the sisters' spiritual activities, here the abbess, like the *Myroure* narrator, directs devotion inward, as each sister will take her own copy of the discourse and continue to the write out the exercising. However, unlike Syon's early devotional treatises, this work in the sisters' own voices. This Advent discourse both remembers the history of the order and acts as a prompt for further performances evoking a utopianism that requires an active dialogue between a constantly revivified past and a present that is negotiated at the site of female community.

Conclusion

From the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, the English Bridgettine nuns deployed utopianism, a way of using the past to frame an ideal future, to make a case for the political and spiritual value of female religious community. Syon's medieval male-authored documents invested the nuns with a passivity that ironically enabled them to be figured as the epicenters of the abbey's spirituality, a role that the sisters' liturgy consolidated. After the Reformation, the female community catalyzed this strength within weakness to portray themselves as purveyors of a lost medieval English Catholicism and to justify their intervention in England's political landscape. At Lisbon, this feminotopianism took on an even more direct political dimension in the documents produced for

outside readers in which the nuns' presentation of their typological roles joined an eschatological sense of the future with an uncertain one determined by human agency. Finally, in the *Discourse or Entertainment for the Sacred time of Advent,* this self-image constructed for an external audience was directed back into the sisters' daily practices, which are figured as ways of revivifying the past to create the future. The sisters thus brought the utopian back from the larger, grand-scale gesture to the quotidian. As the shifting and dialogic nature of Syon's texts illustrates, by mobilizing a liminal stance between weakness and strength to embody a trans-temporal utopian ideal and a heterotopian lived otherness, Syon's female community constituted a feminotopia that joined certainty with precarity to make a bid for authority. These women show how female religious orders, even while separated from the world by enclosure, could actively intervene in the shaping of new political and philosophical views. By charting the development of Syon's female community into what is almost the modern era, this chapter has sought both to expand understandings of this particular female community and to make a case for the political relevance of early religious women. By including the pre-modern, the religious and the 'real,' utopian studies can better capture utopia's potential to motivate action. This notion of a utopia that derives from the uniquely powerless and powerful position of religious women must surely have influenced Cavendish's subsequent portrayal of convent life.

Chapter 3

Not Yet: the Queer Times and Utopian Politics of Margery Kempe and Mary Ward

Introduction

The authors whom I have thus far examined, despite the radical implications of their projects for women's roles, did not generally challenge the institutions of which they were a part. Christine de Pizan, who was patronized by aristocrats, occupied an elite literary world and has been criticized for her omission of lower class women from most of her work. The sisters of Syon Abbey hailed predominantly from the upper echelons of society and were expected to join fully with the Church upon profession to religious life. In the final chapter of this dissertation, Lady Mary Wroth, as part of the Sidney family and an attendant at Queen Henrietta Maria's court, was ensconced in the activities of England's literary and social elite, as was Margaret Cavendish. Elevated social positions enabled all these writers to imagine utopian situations for women while remaining part of systems that supported gender and social inequality.

Different circumstances characterize the lives of two religious women who lived largely outside traditional social, religious and economic institutions: Margery Kempe (c.1373-after 1438) and Mary Ward (1585-1645).[265] Each of these women pursued a religious vocation between the cloister and nonreligious life, a position from which they challenged prevailing systems of gender, religion, economy and nation. Margery Kempe was a middle class wife and mother, who, after experiencing visions of Christ and the Virgin Mary, followed a religious calling and fought for her right to live like as a religious woman while moving freely. Two centuries later, recusant Catholic Mary Ward eschewed a purely contemplative life and instead entered a mixed one, in which she

[265] Despite their similarities, these two women have rarely been examined together except by David Wallace in *Strong Women: Life, Text, and Territory 1347-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

dedicated herself to active ministry and founded her own institute for the education of girls. This chapter argues that Kempe's and Ward's projects chart a feminotopianism whose counter-intuitive mappings of the real preserve, in unfinished 'living' form, traces of what could have been.

Different from Christine's proto-feminist utopianism and Syon's utopian vision of a world in which religious women weild power, Kempe's and Ward's projects are utopian because they imagine communities that form across difference, specifically across sectarian divides. Kempe uses female friendship to model communities in which the mercantile values espoused by the nonreligious can not only coexist and enrich spiritual ones. After the Reformation, Ward and her followers go further to imagine communities in which the nonreligious and religious not only comingle but also in which those of different faiths find common ground. As opposed to the eschatological utopianism with which religious societies are generally associated (and because of which they are often excluded from studies of utopia), Kempe's and Ward's visions act as windows onto alternative ways to live in the world. Like Syon, they show the real-world political value that women's religious communities could have.

To clarify the method and form of Kempe's and Ward's utopias, I put queer theory into conversation with Augustine's notion of the *saeculum*. While theorized in vastly different contexts, these concepts find common ground in their application of non-linear time to utopian thought. Kempe and Ward's communities are queer as they imagine relationships between women that, while not necessarily overtly erotic (though in some cases they are), reconfigure heterosexual family structures to imagine worlds in which women find support through each other. Key to this vision both in Kempe's and Ward's writings and in queer theory is the subversion of linear historical time. While, as we saw in Syon Abbey's Arundel Manuscript, a Christian vision of the world already linked the past and the future in non-linear ways, Kempe and Ward evoke a more asynchronous and non-teleological temporality in their portrayals of female community. This queerness, similar to

Christine's bricolage, is the method through which they enact their particular brands of utopianism.

If queer theory elucidates the process whereby Kempe and Ward frame female communities as utopian spaces, Augustine's notion of the *saeculum* clarifies the form that these feminotopias take. While Augustine's *saeculum* shares a root with the modern word "secular," meaning "non-religious," these terms are not equivalent. The *saeculum,* a concept developed in *The City of God,* is not a non-religious space but a space in which the religious and nonreligious find common ground. It is an asynchronous space akin to that of queer theory and to utopia, as it at once looks to the future divine city that Christians hope one day to inhabit and has firm roots in the present. While Augustine did not devote attention to women's communities, he did metaphorically link women and the *saeculum* when he described "Jerusalem the bond woman, in which some also reigned who were children of the free woman, holding that kingdom in temporary stewardship, but holding the kingdom of the heavenly Jerusalem, whose children they were, in true faith, and hoping in the true Christ."[266] He also feminizes the eschatological dimensions of this city when he concludes his magnum opus by quoting Paul: "I saw a great city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."[267] The female communities in my project give form to the notion of the *saeculum* that Augustine uses the female body to represent as they join seemingly dissonant ways of life—religious and nonreligious—and, more broadly, envision compromises between opposing ideologies. Kempe's and Ward's records reveal how queerness and the secular translate into human practice as their queering of human community gives way to a view of the utopian world in which those with different beliefs and values can find common ground.

I begin this chapter by arguing that Margery's relationships with women, both in her worldly life and in her visions, enact utopianism by queering classical friendship theory and its Christian

[266] Augustine, *The City of God*, book 17, chapter 10.

[267] Ibid., book 20, chapter 17.

corollaries and instead offering a model of female friendship that works across social and religious difference. As they reformulate traditional friendship into something new, these female friendships operate in a queer time that knits together an asynchronous "now" and with what the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch calls a utopian "not yet."[268] The queerness of Margery's same-sex friendships blurs the binary between spiritual and worldly life: the communal reciprocity of her friendships with the women she meets on her travels both affirms mercantile practices and conveys their spiritual value while her friendships with visionaries reveal the worldliness of the spiritual by performing a 'market-driven' competition. These same-sex friendships revalue the economic world as a site of access to the spiritual one, envisioning a utopian 'secular' moment in which the worldly and the spiritual convene and offering a vision of mercantilism before it moved into modern capitalist logic.

This function of female community as a vehicle for thinking otherwise comes further into focus in the career of Mary Ward. Living in a time of sectarian strife, Ward frames the recusant English Catholic female community she establishes as the site of a temporality that evades the linear progression of historical time. By queering singular narratives of history to tell the story of same-sex female community as an entity pulled between temporal zones, Ward and her followers challenge standard notions of history. In doing so, they create new possibilities for thinking about the nation: as Ward's community established foundations across Europe, it proleptically enacted global British imperialism in a manner that was more inclusive than the model that eventually emerged.[269] Through their queer methodologies, Kempe's and Ward's communities preserve a notion of the secular that has since been lost: in this way and through the failures of both women to achieve their visions, they offer a model of utopia that has firm roots in the real.

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[268] See Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia.*

[269] Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*, 18; 5.

The Utopianism of Margery Kempe's Queer Friendships and Mercantile Spirituality

Friendship often carries traces of utopianism as it envisions a relationship of choice that betters the situation of each friend. However, as Jacques Derrida points out, friendship is also historically "a phallocentric or phallogocentric concept."[270] In place of a model that depends on equality and likeness between male friends, Derrida yearns for a friendship that "supposes disproportion [and] demands a certain rupture in reciprocity or equality, as well as the interruption of all fusion or confusion between you and me."[271] As I have shown through the examples of Christine de Pizan, the nuns of Syon Abbey and will further explore in the writings of Mary Wroth and Margaret Cavendish, models of such friendships do, in fact, already exist at the site of early women's communities, whose records Derrida would likely not have thought to consult. Indeed, most scholars have not considered early women's friendships not just due to a lack of evidence but because women's relationships did not accord with the public and political character that classical friendship was presumed to have. Alan Bray, in his seminal history of friendship, concluded reluctantly that he could find no evidence for the public "formal and objective character" of friendship in relationships between women before the seventeenth century and that premodern women only made themselves heard "as the troubling silence between the lines."[272] Aligning myself with a recent body of scholarship on early modern female friendships that has contested this finding, I argue that radical and queer models of female friendship predated the early modern period and that the queerness of such bonds could serve as a vehicle for utopianism that unseats conventional ways of understanding the world.

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[270] "Politics and Friendship: A Discussion with Jacques Derrida" (discourse at the Centre for Modern French Thought, University of Sussex, UK, December 1, 1997). A transcript of this conversation is available on *Living Philosophy* website, www.livingphilosophy.org/Derrida-politics-friendship.htm, modified November 4, 2003.

[271] Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 2005), 62.

[272] Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 11, 10.

Margery Kempe's often-overlooked bonds with women provide one surprising, anticipatory answer to Derrida's hope.[273] Though relatively little scholarship has considered female friendship in the life of Margery Kempe, female alliances, as well as contentious exchanges between women, proliferate in her spiritual autobiography, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, which survives uniquely in the manuscript London, British Library, Additional 61823 (c.1440).[274] This narrative, which purports to be dictated to two successive scribes, acts, in part, as a bid for its subject's sainthood but, along the way, narrates Margery's many encounters in the world—here, I follow Lynn Staley's distinction between the character in *The Book* ("Margery") and the author ("Kempe").[275] According to *The Book*, after giving birth to her fourteenth child, Margery, a middle-class English woman from Lynn, began experiencing mystical visions that prompted her to turn away from the world, enter a life of celibacy and embark on a series of pilgrimages. In all Margery's adventures, bonds with women, more than with the men who are her spiritual or social superiors, present a model of friendship that dismantles apparent divides between the worldly and the spiritual and thus charts a form of community that, in the manner of Augustine's *saeculum,* accommodates those with different believes.

Margery's Queer Friendships

By imagining a diverse community of female friends, Kempe's *Book* disrupts traditional

[273] Important recent studies of early modern female friendship include Penelope Anderson, *Friendship's Shadows: Women's Friendship and the Politics of Betrayal in England, 1640–1705* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012); and Amanda Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

[274] For an exception, see Lochrie, "Between Women."

[275] The view that the *Book* is aimed at Kempe's canonization is supported by several scholars: Kathleen Ashley, "Historicizing Margery: *The Book of Margery Kempe* as Social Text," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28.2 (1998): 371; Jessica Barr, *Willing to Know God: Dreamers and Visionaries in the Later Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010), 212; Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 2001), 174. For Staley's distinction between "Kempe" and "Margery," see Lynn Staley, "The Trope of the Scribe and the Question of Literary Authority in the Works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe," *Speculum* 66, no. 4 (1991): 820–38. See also See Lynn Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

paradigms of friendship from classical and Christian philosophy. She does this not only by representing friendship between women, who were excluded from dominant theories of friendship, but by imagining an amicable network of non-equals. In this, she deviates from Cicero's more conservative portrayal of friendship and instead accords with Aristotle's more inclusive model. Based on classical theories articulated in Cicero's *De Amicitia* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics,* which were later adapted by medieval theologians and still later by Renaissance humanists, friendship was understood as a bond between two virtuous equals that acted as the basis for political life. In *De Amicitia* (44 BCE), Cicero gives a highly prescriptive definition of friendship as a "complete identity of feeling about all things divine and human, as strengthened by mutual good will and affection."[276] For Cicero, a friend was meant to be a mirror of oneself: "he who looks upon a true friend, looks, as it were, upon a sort of image of himself."[277] Such "perfect friendships" could not exist without virtue, which was "the parent and preserver of friendship."[278] Aristotle was more nuanced, admitting the possibility of friendships between those of unequal status. While he still privileges the likeness-based model of friendship as ideal, unlike Cicero, he concedes that friendship can take diverse forms without necessarily becoming false or demeaned. Aristotle did, however, accord with Cicero on certain parameters of friendship, limiting the number of people who could participate in a friendship and insisting that they should be in close proximity of each other. In Aristotle's words, "A man who has many friends has no friends," and, "[d]istance does not break off the friendship *tout court* but its exercise…if the absence is lasting, it seems to make men forget their

[276] Cicero, "De Amicitia," in *Cicero de Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione*, trans. William Armistead Falconer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 187.

[277] Ibid., 133.

[278] Ibid., 131.

friendship."[279] While approaches varied, and Aristotle admitted the possibility of friendship between husbands and wives, women did not occupy a prominent place within early friendship theory. Influenced by Cicero, Renaissance humanist Michel Montaigne would later perpetuate this exclusion of women by claiming, "the ordinary capacity of women is inadequate for that communion and fellowship which is the nurse of this sacred bond; nor does their soul seem firm enough to endure the strain of so tight and durable a knot."[280]

While more-or-less agreed on the women's lesser status within friendship paradigms, classical philosophers differed in their views of reciprocity within friendship. Cicero is adamant that true friendship should not require exact exchange, insisting that a doctrine "which limits friendship to an exact equality in mutual good offices and good feelings…reduces friendship to a question of figures in a spirit far too narrow and illiberal, as though the object were to have an exact balance in a debtor and creditor account."[281] Aristotle, on the other hand, is more accepting of a mercantile strain within friendship, as he allows for the necessity of proportionate reciprocity in a lower form of "utility friendship" between dissimilar men. On this subject, he gives the example of currency in artisanal trade: "the shoemaker gets a return for his shoes in proportion to his worth, and the weaver and the rest do the same."[282] With Aristotle, we thus find the beginnings of link between commercial life and friendship that Kempe would later fortify.

Kempe is unlikely to have been immediately familiar with classical friendship theory, but her *Book* evinces knowledge of a wide range of theological sources through which she may have

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[279] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Ethics: Writings from the Complete Works,* ed. Jonathan Barnes and Anthony Kenny (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) 192*;* 309.

[280] Michel de Montaigne, "Of Friendship," in *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), 137.

[281] Cicero, 135.

[282] Aristotle, 325.

absorbed traces of Christian adaptations of classical friendship.[283] Theologians such as Augustine, Aelred of Rievaulx, Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas extended Cicero's notion of friendship as a generous gift to a larger Christian community.[284] Augustine, for instance, translated the classical notion of friendship for a monastic context, writing that a group of friends "hope to make one common household for all of us, so that in the clear trust of friendship things should not belong to this or that individual, but one thing should be made of all our possessions, and belong wholly to each of us, and everybody own everything."[285] Aquinas assimilated friendship into the Christian concept of *caritas*, which rejects exact reciprocity and instead requires care for others without the promise of return.

Kempe's frequent representations of friendships in her Book offer a more grounded model of friendship than those of many of her predecessors. The *Book* imagines a cross-class network of women on from different social backgrounds on different sides of the religious/lay divide that differs from what we find in the majority of Christian and classical friendship theories, aligning her with Aristotle's acceptance of difference. Cross-class relationships abound especially after Margery has taken a vow of poverty when her exchanges with wealthy laywomen afford her physical shelter and sustenance, which she often repays with spiritual nourishment. For instance, one of her wealthier lay friends, Margaret Florentine, sees Margery starving and asks in a broken mix of French and English, "'Margery a in poverté?'" (Margery is in poverty?), inviting Margery to visit her every

[283] On Kempe's borrowings from a range of theological sources, see Naoe Kukita Yoshikawa, *Margery's Kempe's Meditations: The Context of Medieval Devotional Literatures, Liturgy and Iconography* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007).

[284] For a discussion of medieval spiritual friendship, see Adele Fiske, *Friends and Friendship in the Monastic Tradition* (Cuernavaca, Mexico: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1970). On late-medieval friendship, particularly as influenced by Aristotle's *Ethics,* see James McEvoy, "The Theory of Friendship in Latin Middle Ages," in *Friendship and Medieval Europe,* ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud, UK: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 3–44.

[285] Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. *R. S*. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin, 1961), book 6*,* chapter 14.

Sunday for home-cooked meals.[286] Margery indirectly reciprocates this gift through her holy presence (1.38). In this moving interaction, Margery's difference from Margaret, a wealthy but less devout laywoman, becomes the basis of a supportive relationship.

In other cases, Margery forges bonds with women of lower classes, further exemplifying friendship's reach across class divides. In an especially intimate encounter, an impoverished woman welcomes Margery into her home and gives her a cup of wine. This woman is socially beneath Margery, who is the wife of a burgess, and less devout. Nonetheless, when the woman breastfeeds her baby boy, she creates an image that catalyzes Margery's mystical vision of the Virgin Mary:

> sche had a lytel manchylde sowkyng on hir brest, the whech sowkyd o while on the moderys brest…Than this creatur brast al into wepyng, as thei sche had seyn owr Lady and hir sone in tyme of hys Passyon, and had so many of holy thowtys that sche myth nevyr tellyn the halvendel, but evyr sat and wept plentyuowsly a long tyme that the powr woman, havyng compassyon of hir wepyng, preyd hir to sesyn, not knowyng why sche wept. (1.39)

As this woman's maternal acts inspire Margery's vision of the Virgin Mary with her son, the difference between one woman's worldliness and another's contemplative status emerges as a generative site of spiritual growth and material sustenance. Through Margery's relationships with women, Kempe reimagines friendship not as a relationship between two identical equals as classical theories would have it but rather as a network that operates across difference, resonating with the networks of historical medieval women, which scholars have increasingly investigated.[287]

Kempe queers friendship not simply because she offers a model that diverges from the canon but because her model contests heteronormativity by envisioning a world in which women

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[286] All quotations are drawn and cited by book and chapter from *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Sanford Brown Meech (1940; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1940).

[287] For work on medieval women's networks, see, for instance, Cynthia J. Brown, "Anne de Bretagne and Anne de France: French Female Networks at the Dawn of the Renaissance," *Founding Feminisms in Medieval Studies: Essays in Honor of E. Jane Burns,* ed. Laine E. Doggett and Daniel E. O'Sullivan (Woodbridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2016), 171-186; Erler, *Women, Reading and Piety*; Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Saints' Lives & *Women's Literary Culture: Virginity and Its Authorizations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

find solace and support through each other. Sometimes this support manifests in erotic ways, as we find in Margery's kissing of lepers.[288] This queerness of Margery's friendship is further evident in their temporality. Margery's bonds with women, in particular, operate at once within what Carolyn Dinshaw, applying queer theory to *The Book,* has called an asynchronous 'now' and a 'not yet.' Dinshaw defines asynchrony as "different time frames or temporal systems colliding in a single moment of now."[289] This mode of temporality, Dinshaw argues, differs from the ecclesiastical view that access to the past is possible in the present through the Church. In place of "a temporal multiplicity tightly controlled by institutional structures," Margery finds "immediate personal access to Christ in the now," as "her time, her present, her now, is invaded or infused by the other...she is a creature not merely in another time but rather with another time in her."[290] Though Dinshaw does not apply her observations about Margery's internalized temporality to her female community, I argue that this asynchrony is equally present (and perhaps enhanced) in Margery's bonds with women. Moreover, I suggest that this "fuller, denser, more crowded now" merges at the site of Margery's same-sex friendships with another more future-driven articulation of queer time. These temporal perspectives together invest female friendship in *The Book* with utopianism.[291]

Queer time, which provides the theoretical background for Dinshaw's reading of Margery, refers broadly to a temporality that rejects the presumed teleological progression of history. The notion of queer time has been used to define a way of being that exists beyond linear, conventional notions of family and biological reproduction. As Jack Halberstam writes, "queer uses of time and

[288] Jonathan Hsy, "'Be more strange and bold': Kissing Lepers and Female Same-Sex Desire in The Book of Margery Kempe," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (for special forum, "Sex and the Early Modern Woman: Representation, Practice, and Culture"), vol. 5 (2010): 189-199.

[289] Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 4; 5.

[290] Ibid., 106.

[291] Ibid., 4.

space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction…according to other logics of location, movement and identification."[292] Contemporary critiques, including Lee Edelman, Carla Freccero, Elizabeth Freeman, Jonathan Goldberg, Madhavi Menon and José Muñoz, have all invoked queer temporality as an alternative to the presumed teleological progression of history. Edelman, for instance, rejects the temporality of normative life course—reproductive futurity along with its investment in the child as its guarantor—while Kathryn Bond Stockton uses the figure of the queer child to convey a turn away from the normative vertical line of growing up to a focus on non-linear growth. Muñoz opposes "straight time," with its productive mandate, to queerness, "an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future," and he engages temporal modes such as waiting, anticipation, belatedness to open up the potentialities of what Bloch called the "no-longer conscious" and the "not yet conscious."[293] Although queer theory emerged in the context of contemporary queer experiences, it has expanded to encompass any sexual identity or activity that disrupts heteronormativity and, as such, has been integrated in scholarship of earlier periods, for which queer temporality has been a particularly relevant concept. In addition to Dinshaw, Carla Freccero has notably drawn on the notion of queer time in her work on early modern French literature to describe temporalities that "proceed otherwise than according to a presumed logic of cause and effect, anticipation and result; as otherwise than according to a presumed logic of the 'done-ness' of the past, since queer time is haunted by the persistence of affect and ethical imperatives in and across time."[294] Such work attests to the utility of queer theory for times that precede contemporary queer identities.

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[292] Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 1.

[293] Muñoz, 1.

[294] Freccero, 5.

Though nonlinear time was a common-place in Kempe's world—the lived present frequently came into contact with the biblical past and eschatological future in visionary texts—, Margery's female friendships are distinct in that they stress disunity and temporal division. One of the key ways they do this is through their enactment of a communal reciprocity that extends over time. Acts of giving in Margery's same-sex encounters are often delayed rather than reciprocated in straightforward sequence, as, for example, Margery's prayers early in the narrative act as responses to later acts of kindness bestowed on her by laywomen. Moreover, her meetings with women, as well as men, during her travels frequently occur as simultaneous or jumbled episodes rather than a continuous narrative. For instance, the narrator tells the story of Margery's visit to the home of a man in Rome "whos wyfe was gret wyth childe, hyly desiryng to have had this creatur to godmodyr to hir childe whan it had ben born" (1.38). This description is followed by the unrelated interjection: "And also ther was an holy mayden gaf this creatur hir mete on the Wednysday" (1.38). Here, the coordinating conjunction "and," as opposed to a paratactic or hypotactic structure, places these two events, which happened at different moments in time, on an equal plane. Margery's receipt of "mete" from this "holy mayden" seems to occur in the same time frame as her visit to the house of a woman "gret wyth childe," a simultaneity that forges reciprocity not just between two individuals in a finite, linear exchange but also across a network of women, who at once occupy different moments and the same time.

Alongside these supportive interactions, Margery's contentious exchanges with women further draw attention to temporal disjuncture. While the men who scorn Margery thwart her spiritual ambitions, aggressions by women seem particularly venomous. For instance, among many notable encounters, when Margery is accused of being a Lollard, women run out of their houses to yell, "'Brennyth this fals heretyk" (1.53). Such attacks by women on Margery draw attention to the obstacles to forming female community or friendship in medieval society, reminding us that women

did not necessarily see themselves as a group with common values. These antagonisms stress the fact that medieval female friendship itself existed outside of time, neither fully within nor outside the present, in a position of *besideness*.

Kempe's bonds with women, both supportive and antagonistic, thus not only embody Dinshaw's "crowded now" but also resonate with Muñoz's queer utopias, in which he opposes "straight time," with its focus on reproduction, to queer time, "an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future."[295] Muñoz's queer utopias engage the temporal modes of waiting, anticipation and belatedness, just as medieval female community existed in a deferred time since it occupied a historical period that broadly denied the possibility of female friendship and female political community. Through their queerness, Margery's same-sex female relationships through their queerness—on both the temporal levels of asynchronous 'nowness' and futurity—act as *mise-en-abyme*s of the utopian status of female friendship in the medieval world.

If Margery's interactions with women in the world enact a queer time that voices the "not-yet consciousness" of utopian hope, her emulation of the holy women in her visions further reveals the precarity of this vision, thereby emphasizing its utopianism.[296] While "friendship" between the living and the dead may not seem to fit the definition of what we now consider friendship, Margery's imagined bonds with deceased holy women accord with a tradition of classical and Christian

[295] Muñoz, 1.

[296] On Margery's engagement with continental female mysticism, see, Clarissa Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); Susan Dickman, "Margery Kempe and the Continental Tradition of the Pious Woman," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1984,* ed. Marion Glasscoe (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1984), 150-168. For Margery's imitation of female virgin martyrs, see, Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, "Veneration of Virgin Martyrs in Margery Kempe's Meditation: Influence of the Sarum Liturgy and Hagiography," in *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England,* ed. Denis Renevey and Christina Whitehead (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 177-195.

friendship, as amity was seen to continue beyond life.[297] One of Margery's most sustained relationships with women in heaven is her bond with Saint Bridget. When God assures Margery that her revelations surpass Bridget's, the English mystic enters a precarious, asynchronous moment of waiting for her spiritual potential to unfold. God's speech opens with a sequential portrayal of time: "On a day as this creatur was heryng hir messe, a yong man and a good prest heldyng up the sacrament in hys handys ovyr hys hed, the sacrament schok and flekeryd to and fro as a dowe flekeryth wyth hir wengys" (1.20). By juxtaposing the past continuous tense with the perfect tense and using an adverbial of time, "on a day," this description offers a seemingly linear sequence of events. But these events direct Margery to think about the future, as she longs to see another miracle: "Whan the sacre was don, this creatur had gret merveyle of the steryng and mevyng of the blyssed sacrament, desyring to se mor sacreys and lokyng yf it wold don so agen" (1.20). Instead of showing her one, however, God directs Margery back to the past, informing her "'My dowtyr, Bryde, say me nevyr in this wyse'" (1.20). He then continues, "as I spak to Seynt Bryde ryte so I speke to the, dowtyr, and I telle the trewly it is trewe every word that is wretyn in Brides boke, and be the it schal be knowyn for very trewth" (1.20). Here, God figures Margery as a proxy for St Bridget, setting her within a continuous spiritual time, but, through His promise that Bridget "say me nevyr in this wyse," God also temporally distinguishes Margery from her predecessor. When God then tells Margery that she will realize the "trewth" of Bridget's book, this typology both separates the past and present from future and joins them, positioning Margery in a moment beside her own present and a future of collective women's truth. This queer time enables a form of utopian time, as it enacts a promise for the future that is only partially realized in the present.

Significantly, Margery never actually accomplished her vision of joining a community of female saints, as she was never canonized. Her participation in a heavenly collective of friends,

[297] Augustine, *Commentary on the Letter of John to the Parthians*, ed. J.P. Migne. Patrologia Latina 35 (Paris, 1845), 10.3.

unlike the Christian promise of heaven, is perpetually deferred. This failure is, however, part of what makes her *Book* utopian. As Muñoz writes, however, "[d]isappointment is a big part of utopian longing": "utopia's rejection of pragmatism is often associated with failure."[298] And yet, "within failure," Muñoz continues, "we can locate a kernel of potentiality:" "[t]he act of failing thus opens up referentiality or of impossible reality—not because something is missing, but because something else is done, or because something else is said…"[299] Margery's female friendships, like her sainthood, rest within a queer time of potentiality that makes the *Book* utopian in the way that a hagiography would not be.

Spiritualizing the Mercantile in Margery's Saeculum

The product of the queer temporality of Margery's same-sex friendships is a utopian space of exchange between the mercantile and the spiritual. This imagined space between seemingly opposite values makes legible, in however protean a form, a notion of the secular that is not generally thought to have existed in the Middle Ages. Usually understood as the opposite of the spiritual, as explained above, secularism in Charles Taylor's words is instead "[a] move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed unproblematic to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easier to embrace."[300] Clearly, disbelief in God was not an option in Margery's world, but Augustine's *City of God* offers a historical precedent for a notion of the secular that encompasses religion. Augustine, Robert Markus explains, envisions the *saeculum* as a space shared between the 'sacred,' "the sphere of Christian religious belief, practises, institutions, and cult" and the 'profane,' "what has to be rejected in the surrounding culture, practises, institutions."[301] The

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[298] Muñoz, 188; 172.

[299] Ibid., 173.

[300] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3.

[301] Markus.

saeculum for Augustine is not a third City between the earthly and the heavenly, but rather consists of "their mixed inextricably intertwined state in this temporal life."[302] The cities of earth and heaven develop common priorities within their different goals, as "The heavenly city during its pilgrimage here on earth…makes use of the earthly peace and of a certain cohesion of human wills concerning the things pertaining to men's mortal nature."[303] Kempe maps out a utopian space similar (though less teleological) to Augustine's *saeculum* at the site of Margery's female friendship not by suggesting that non-religion is a possibility but by representing female friendship between non-equals within a queer time that envisions a crossroad between mercantile and spiritual values.

In exchanges between Margery and women in the world, the *Book* stages a mercantile form of reciprocity but infuses it with spiritual value. Margery's relationships do not disclaim reciprocity like Cicero does, but nor do they rely on the exacting proportionate reciprocity of Aristotle. Instead, women in Kempe's *Book* exhibit a communal reciprocity, in which Margery often gives more than she gains and vice-versa, creating a system in which friendship depends on trade but where no woman's resources are depleted, as giving and taking balance out across a community. There are, for instance, many cases in which Margery prays for women and receives nothing in return. When "an holy woman wech was a specyal frende to this creatur was ryte seke," Margery prays for her, soliciting from God a promise that "'Sche schal not deyn this ten yer for ye schal aftyr this makyn ful mery togedyr and han ful good comunycacyon as ye han had befor'" (1.23). Margery thus ensures this woman's recovery without receiving anything, exemplifying a model of friendship that evokes Aristotle's proportionate reciprocity but enacts a more supportive form of giving between friends, in which each offers what she has.

There are many other cases in which Margery receives unreciprocated material support or

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[302] Ibid., 39.

[303] Augustine, *City of God,* book 19, chapter 17.

guidance from women, gifts that seem to balance out her own uncompensated prayers. A striking example of imbalanced spiritual 'gift-giving' occurs in Margery's visit to Julian of Norwich, the well-known English anchoress whom the text figures as spiritually superior to Margery. Here, Margery describes her visions to Julian, showing her "the grace that God put in hir [Margery's] sowle of compunccyon, contricyon, swetnesse and devocyon, compassyon wyth holy meditacyon and hy contemplacyon" as a way of verifying that there is not "any deceyte" in them, placing Julian in an authoritarian role akin to that of a confessor (1.18). Not only are the women unequal since Julian is an "expert" (1.18) but Julian does not seem to receive any spiritual or material benefit from Margery. In the larger arc of the text, however, Margery's subsequent acts of unreciprocated guidance act as repayment for the advice she receives from Julian during their "holy dalyawns" (1.18). Women's acts of friendship do not to demand immediate or direct reciprocation but rather to balance out over time to benefit the community as a whole.

Margery's interactions with women of different backgrounds recall the work of the burgeoning class of late medieval merchants, who moved between ports, producers and buyers of diverse social stations.[304] Just as a mercantile system keeps money and goods in circulation, Margery and her friends, by transferring spiritual and material goods, weave a web of reciprocity in the total sum of their interactions that prevents any one person from having too much.[305] Margery's friendships further evoke mercantilism by relying on a principle of credit. While classical friendship requires an intimate bond that depends on knowing one's *alter idem* (other self) absolutely, in *The Book*, women trust each other based on information they have received from others. In some cases,

[304] For recent work on the role of merchants in medieval society, see Jenny Kermode, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David M Palliser, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* Vol. 1, 600–1540 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Jonathan Hsy, *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism, and Medieval Literature* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013).

[305] Anxiety about surplus was prevalent in the medieval consciousness. See D. Vance Smith, *Arts of Possession: the Middle English Household Imaginary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

women summon Margery because they have heard of her works, as when the nuns of Denny request that she visit them. In other instances, as with Julian of Norwich and an unnamed anchoress in York, Margery hears about other holy women and visits them. Through word of mouth, women in Margery's world develop a reputation-based network that resonates with a mercantile system of credit but also inspires acts of giving that ignore profit. Kempe's *Book* thus subverts an either/or paradigm of materialism and spirituality and instead shows how the two realms intersect in a 'secular utopia' at the site of female community.[306]

Margery's relationships with the holy exemplars in her visions further blur the spiritual and mercantile. While these bonds, far more than Margery's relationships with women in the world, resemble a Ciceronian mode of classical friendship since Margery strives to imitate the women she admires, her mimicry equally evokes the competition of the commercial marketplace. In the interest of inscribing Margery into a sacred feminine genealogy, *The Book* links her cries of religious fervor at every reminder of Christ's passion to the devotional wailing of female saints. Describing Margery's tears upon hearing her priest read a religious treatise, for instance, Kempe recalls that "Elizabeth of Hungry cryed wyth lowde voys, as is wretyn in hir tretys" (1.62). Her priest also reads "of a woman clepyd Maria de Oegines and of hir maner of levyng, of the wondirful swetnesse that sche had in the word of God heryng, of the wondirful compassyon that sche had in hys Passyon thynkyng, and of the plentyuows teerys that sche wept" (1.62), which convinces him that Margery's responses are genuine.[307] Such efforts to mold herself on the examples of holy women anticipate a practice that would become more common in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries when laywomen such as Cecily Neville, Duchess of York (d.1493) and Margaret Beaufort (d.1509) imitated monastic

[306] In this conclusion, I concur with Sarah Beckwith's observations about the engagement of Margery's visions with worldly social relations. See Beckwith, "A Very Material Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe," in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology, and History*, ed. David Aers (New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 1986), 34-54.

[307] This reference is to Marie of Oignies (d. 1213), a well-known Beguine mystic.

practices by reciting the divine office, wearing hairshirts, religiously weeping and taking vows of chastity.[308] In Margery's case, these parallels legitimize her seemingly unorthodox behavior and, as a consequence, forge a friendship at a temporal distance between Margery and these women. However, they also enact a market-driven form of competition that infuses these seemingly higher, more spiritual forms of friendship with a mercantile dimension.

The Book further evinces this mercantile form of competition by setting Margery in the same places and situations that other female saints once occupied. When visiting the chamber in which Saint Bridget (1303-1373) died, Margery kneels "also on the ston on the whech owr Lord aperyd to Seynt Brigyte and telde hir what day sche schuld deyn on" (1.39). Here, as Margery sits in the same spot where Bridget received her revelations, physical identification with the saint signifies spiritual sameness. Another crucial moment of likeness occurs in Margery's vision of her marriage to God, which closely shadows Saint Katherine's mystical marriage to Christ. Describing this moment, Kempe recounts, "And than the Fadyr toke hir be the hand in hir sowle befor the Sone and the Holy Gost and the Modyr of Jhesu and alle the twelve apostelys and Seynt Kateryn and Seynt Margarete and many other seyntys and holy virgynes wyth gret multitude of awngelys..."' (1.35). This marriage ceremony closely recalls Katherine's, a likeness that this saint's presence as an attendant underscores.[309] Even Margery's seemingly individualized vision of her own martyrdom aligns with accounts of female saints. As she prays to be "slayn for Goddys lofe," picturing herself bound and "hir hed to be smet of wyth a scharp ex for Goddys lofe" (1.14), she imaginatively enacts the beheadings of female saints such as Katherine and Cecilia. In these cases, Kempe places Margery into imaginative spatial proximity with her holy 'friends' and, moreover, fuses Margery's physical

[308] See A. E. Goodman, *Margery Kempe and Her World* (Harlow, UK: Pearson, 2002), 125-126.

[309] See Yoshikawa, "Veneration of Virgin Martyrs," 183.

presence with the bodies of these women, validating Derrida's observation that classical friendship blurs the distinction between "you and me."

At the same time that the *Book* emphasizes Margery's resemblance to reputed holy women, by putting her into typological relation with saints such as Bridget, Elizabeth and Katherine, it draws attention to her difference from them. Margery is, after all, neither a virgin nor a martyr, much as she would want to be. As if to compensate for this difference, the *Book* insists on reciprocity between her and other holy women that evokes the calculated forms of exchange that Cicero condemns within friendship. For instance, when Margery visits Saint Bridget's cell and receives a vision from God, she hopes "that owr Lord wold hys holy seyntys day schulde ben halwyd and the seynt had in mor worshep than sche was at that tyme" (1.39). Here, Margery pointedly reciprocates the spiritual examples that Bridget has given her by wishing that the saint will be more revered in the future, a hope that her *Book* effectively performs by promoting Bridget's cult. In this case, as well as in Margery's depictions of Mary of Oignies and saints Katherine, Mary Magdalene, Barbara and Margaret, the *Book* imagines Margery's repayment of these women's examples through her publication of their reputations, envisioning friendships that require constant maintenance and demand a return of gifts.

In addition to these moments of exacting reciprocity, *The Book* frames these spiritual female friendships as commercial by depicting the forms of competition that they engender. In one striking passage, after Margery receives a vision of the Eucharist shaking like a dove, God assures her, "My dowtyr, Bryde, say me nevyr in this wyse" (1.20). By noting that Bridget did not receive this vision, the text asserts Margery's superior access to the divine, an argument for Margery's singularity that is earlier emphasized when God tells her, "'Dowtyr, ther was nevyr chyld so buxom to the fadyr as I wyl be to the to help the and kepe the'" (1.14). God again demarcates Margery's place above other holy women when she visits Bridget's chamber and He promises her "synguler grace in hevyn"

among his "blyssed modyr and myn holy awngelys and twelve apostelys, Seynt Kateryne, Seynt Margarete, Seynt Mary Mawdelyn, and many other seyntys that ben in hevyn" (1.22). Even as he places her within a community of holy women, God's use of "singular" characterizes grace as preferential, suggesting that Margery must compete with and displace other holy women. The competition inherent in this desire for sameness anticipates the slippage between enemy and friend observed by Derrida when he writes: "the two concepts (friend/enemy) consequently intersect and ceaselessly change places. They intertwine, as though they loved each other."[310] In the larger arc of Margery's book, however, this mercantile competition brings her closer to holiness: because female friendships occupy a space between what exists and what might, they allow Kempe to imagine a mercantile form of spirituality, a possibility that late medieval writings on lay piety, such as Walter Hilton's *The Mixed Life* (mid-1380s), had begun to think through but which *The Book* explores on a more radical and visceral level.[311]

Margery's female networks critique a monopoly of the holy by the priesthood and instead imagine a spiritual world in which members of all classes and levels of sainthood play a role through a mercantile form of friendly *caritas*. Kempe thus appropriates the ennobling force of Ciceronian friendship to a spiritual self-refinement that relies on giving and receiving. While economic exchanges might seem at odds with such spirituality, Kempe develops friendship modes of ennobling love rooted in economic exchange: she mixes nobility friendship, which rejects economic return, with networking, a form of relationality that her book specifically associates with women. Through this joining of economics and spirituality, Kempe envisions a 'secular' space in which different value systems come together, which constitutes the "happy place" or utopia of her *Book*. Kempe's utopianism looks forward to a time in which the commercial and spiritual worlds can come

[310] Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship,* 72.

[311] For discussions of the late medieval interested in lay piety, see: Nicole Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline in Middle English Literature* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

together and in which people of different beliefs can draw on the strengths of their opposites to achieve mutual fulfillment. In a concrete example of the 'secular' common ground that this book makes possible, Kempe describes how a jail keeper's wife nourishes Margery against her husband's orders, taking a ladder against a window to "govyn hir [Margery] a pynte of wyn in a potte" (1.53). In this touching act of generosity, the jail keeper's wife acknowledges her ethical responsibility to one who holds different beliefs. Though Kempe does not imagine a time in which people have no religion, moments like this one enact a neutral space in which different levels of devotion are accommodated. In a time when religious practice was increasingly bifurcating, this aspiring holy woman with a bourgeois background anticipated a neutral, secular space through the queering mechanism of female friendship.

Margery Kempe would never become a saint. In the sixteenth century, her book was published in a sanitized form that erased her more subversive acts before falling into oblivion until Emily Hope Allen discovered its original manuscript in 1936. Kempe's radical expansion of friendship theory was, moreover, if we determine success by duplication in the dominant discourse, unsuccessful. However, the egalitarian friendships and supportive network that she envisioned would, much later, reemerge in the imagination of postmodern theory with Derrida's longing for a different form of friendship. Kempe's utopianism lies in her situation of a queer temporality within same-sex female friendship and her use of this temporality to overlay material and spiritual values. In this, she offers one foundation for a forward-moving process towards the secular that would not fully be realized in the Catholic Church until the ecumenical concession of Vatican II.[312]

Queer Times, the *Saeculum* and the English Nation in the Mission of Mary Ward

The forward-moving yet perpetually deferred utopianism that the queer elements of Kempe's female friendships adumbrate was more directly advanced in the spiritual project of Mary

[312] On the intersection of the *saeculum* and Vatican II, see Markus.

Ward, who founded female houses without enclosure across Europe and gathered a large community of followers. Ward's dynamic career was shaped by the particular circumstances of post-Reformation English Catholicism. Born in 1585 to religious parents from a Catholic family in Yorkshire, Ward spent much of her early life with relatives.[313] In 1599, she moved to the home of Sir Ralph Babthorpe at Osgodby, Selby, where, at the age of 15, she found a calling to religious life. A few years later, in 1606, like many recusant Catholics, Ward left England to join the convent of Saint Clare in Saint-Omer, where she met her future spiritual director Roger Lee (1574-1615). The following year she founded a new convent of this order specifically for English women at the nearby Gravelines. Five years later, having received a divine revelation in which God instructed her to "take the same of the society" (referring to the Society of Jesus), Ward left Gravelines to found the Schola Beata Mariae, the first of over a dozen houses on the Continent devoted to teaching Catholic English girls and pursuing missionary work for the Catholic cause in England.[314] Numerous, understudied sources bear witness to Ward's dazzling career, including: an early English biography, a later Italian *Vita*, Ward's own letters, speeches and a series of 50 paintings commissioned by Ward's early companions.[315] Ward's legacy was also ensured by the centers that she found in Bratislava

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[313] Ward's maternal great-great-grandfather, famously defended his parish church against change of religion for two days; he died in 1547. See Mary C. E. Chambers, *The Life of Mary Ward*, ed. H. J. Coleridge, 2 vols. (London, 1885), 1:1–10; Margaret Mary Littlehales, *Mary Ward: Pilgrim and Mystic* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns and Oates, 1998), 16–18. Ward's maternal uncles John and Christopher Wright were gunpowder plotters.

[314] "The same" became a code word for the ignition model (see Ward's letters to John Gerard and Nuncio Albergati).

[315] Sources of Ward's life have recently been compiled in four volumes with editorial material in German: *Mary Ward und hire Gründung. Die quellentexte bis 1645*, ed. Ursula Dirmeier CJ, 4 vols. (Munster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2007). I cite all works from these by volume and page number with the exception of *The Briefe Relation* and the autobiographical fragments, which I cite from Sr. Christina Kentworthy-Browne's edition. Modern biographies of Ward, which rely on these sources to varying degrees, include: Chambers, *Life of Mary Ward*; Ida Goerres Coudenhove, *Mary Ward*, trans. Elsie Codd (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1938); Littlehales, *Mary Ward*; Henriette Peters, *Mary Ward: A World in Contemplation* (Gracewing Publishing, 1994).

(Pressburg), Cologne, Hewarth, Liège, London, Munich, Naples, Perugia, Prague, Rome, St.-Omer, Trèves (Trier), and Vienna. Despite this tremendous achievement, Ward has received limited scholarly attention outside of her own communities.[316]

While Ward's life and work were grounded in her contemporary circumstances, her mission, like Kempe's, looked toward the future (since women in the Catholic Church were not afforded the kind of power that Ward imagined for them). Though her institute, for a time, flourished, especially in Central Europe, Ward's vision of a community of religious women engaged in active ministry was never fully realized in her lifetime primarily due to opposition from her own Catholic faith (including by one of her community's former members, Mary Alcock). Opponents viewed Ward as heretical, dubbing her and her followers "galloping nuns," as, in violation of Tridentine decree, they were unenclosed.[317] This breach of papal law led to the Vatican's suppression of the Institute in 1631, with the pope's signing of the *Pastoralis Romani Pontificis.* After this, Ward spent time under house arrest in Rome and later moved between to several spas due to her ill health before returning to Yorkshire where she died on January 30, 1645. Ward was never allowed to see the written statements against her, and it was not until recently, when granted access to the Vatican's archives, that the Institute realized the extent of papal opposition to her mission.

After her death, Ward's foundation slowly gained recognition: the Institute received full confirmation by Pope Pius IX in 1877; in 1900, the name Institute of the Blessed Virgin became its official title; in 1909, the petition for Ward's habilitation received approval by Pius X. Finally, in

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[316] For exceptions to this omission of Ward from the literary canon see Lowell Gallagher, "Remembering Lot's Wife: The Structure of Testimony in the *Painted Life* of Mary Ward," *Sodomoscapes: Hospitality of the Flesh* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2017)*,* 72-95; and David Wallace, "Periodizing Women: Mary Ward (1585-1645) and the Premodern Canon," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36.2 (2006): 419 and *Strong Women*.

[317] The name "galloping nun" appears in a number of sources. See "Sister Dorothea's Narrative," in Littlehales*,* appendix 3, 248-51; 251; William Prynne, *Hidden Workes of Darkenes Brought to Publike Light* (London, 1645), 203.

1979, the Vatican approved Ward's plan to adopt the Jesuit Constitutions; and in 2004, the Roman branch of IBVM was renamed the Congregation of Jesus, fulfilling the vision of its foundress, who was given the title 'Venerable' by Benedict XVI in 2009.[318] Deferral, what Ernst Bloch calls the "not yet," was thus integral to Ward's identity as a religious visionary. Indeed, this element persists today, for while the struggle to win a consecrated life without enclosure for women was eventually vindicated, Ward, unlike Kempe, remains little studied and even less taught.

Ward's female community, which was at-once rooted in the present and an oriented towards a radical future offered an alternative view of women's roles. Not only did Ward and her followers choose not to marry and, through their close ties, refashion the notion of family but Ward explicitly challenged (or *bricolated*) assumptions about women's weakness and instead afforded women a pivotal position with the post-Reformation Catholic Church. Like the female friendships in Kempe's *Book*, women's relationships in Ward's society exist within a queer time that negates linearity and operates asynchronously between past, present and future. However, while for Kempe this temporality enables a fragmented network of women friends, for Ward, it becomes a way to narrate the history of female community and to make this community integral to a new way of understanding the past and the future. Ward's sense of her community's being between times also activates its liminal sense of being between places—between the Catholic England of the past, the nomadic state of exile, which the nuns of Syon also embraced, and a secular Pan-European future. This location of Ward's community *beside* multiple times and spaces that encode differing religious beliefs positions her as the agent of an ethical common ground between doctrines that relies on national identity, rather than sectarian allegiance, as a form of belonging. Whereas Margery's same-

[318] Until the suppression of her institute in 1631, Ward used the title "Society of Jesus" or "Mothers of the Society of Jesus," and a similar seal to that of the Jesuits for her letters. The IHS monogram was mounted over the entrance to the Institute's house in Liège and also in Vienna, where it can still be seen. As I am writing exclusively about this community within Ward's lifetime and just after, I generally refer to Ward's movement by its original name "society."

sex bonds projected generalizable democratic and 'secular' forms of community, Ward's mission thus has more specifically English implications as it imagines a new kind of cross-cultural national identity in which alienation and non-belonging play a defining role. Ward thus imagines a form of global British identity that embraces difference. In this utopian vision of what the nation could have become, Ward's society moved towards a secularism that would not be fully realized until the ecumenical settlement of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

"Apt for Friendship": Queering Time and Female Community in Ward's Mission

Ward's choice to eschew marriage and pursue religious life outside the convent eschews biological reproduction and challenges heteronormativity by proposing same-sex forms of affiliation that replace those of the nuclear family. The *Briefe Relation*, a biography written after Ward's death sometime between 1645 and 1650 possibly by her two close companions Mary Poyntz and Winifred Wigmore, explains Ward's choice to remain unmarried: "Her heavenly Father had higher designes on this his blessed Child, and drew her by the Wayes he pleased, and she knew not."[319] Leaving her biological father who was "passionately found of her," Ward, like many religious women before her, instead chose a spiritual father.[320] While the choice of a spiritual father over a biological one is common in spiritual biographies, it has added significance in Ward's life since she goes on not merely to join an already-established convent but found her own community, whose female members become her family: she, in a sense, becomes a founding father. Indeed, the *Briefe Relation* uses the term "family" to describe Ward's followers when it explains how, when Ward returned to England after her time on the Continent, "she kept a great Family and a Chappell standing till the searches were so dayly, as noe time was secure" (66). The importance of female affiliation is

[319] Mary Ward, *A Briefe Relation, with Autobiographical Fragments and a Selection of Letters*, ed. Christina Kenworthy-Browne (Woodbridge: the Boydell Press 2008), 6. Pages from this edition will be cited parenthetically within the text.

[320] St Clare's Abbey, Darlington England MS 1, Graveline Chronicles 1686-1773, in Dirmeier, ed. vol 1.

everywhere in Ward's records. She describes herself as being "apt for friendship," so much so that, her Ignatian Spiritual Exercises of 1619, she resolves, "I will sometime…absent my self volluntarylie from the company of those I more perticularly affect."[321] Female community not only replaces the world one; it at times threatens to eclipse Ward's relationship with God.

Ward's followers took a similar path to their foundress replacing worldly affections with love for God and attachment to female fellowship. In one striking story from accounts of Ward's community is that of Mary Poyntz, who became one of Ward's closest confidants. When young Poyntz was under pressure to marry, she reportedly looked out a window at Tockington Park and saw Ward walking, which prompted her to say to her suitor "there she is through whose instructions God will save me."[322] Pressured to give the suitor a portrait as a token, Poyntz offers him a still-extent image with her face on one side and worm-eaten death's head on the other.[323] By portraying the ravages of time on Poyntz's temporal body, this portrait exposes the fallacy of worldly beauty and suggests that Ward and her followers occupy a temporal zone that approaches the eternal.

While the rejection of human time is common in religious life and not necessarily queer, the queer dimension of Ward's Society emerges through the intimacy of her female friendships and the ways that they position her community within both human and divine time. The English Life relates, "there was nothing in [her Institute], nor practised by her or hers which had not beene practised by Holy Woman [sic] and approved by the Holy Church in particular persons, but never practised by a community" (38). This pronouncement joins the assurance that the Institute is duplicating the practices of established holy women with a recognition of their acts are unprecedented. The Life thus positions the society between a holy past and a boundless future, enacting a non-linear

[321] Dirmeier, ed., vol.1, 471.

[322] Chambers, *Life*, 239.

[323] See Chambers, *Life*, 239-41, and the image of portrait on 240-41.

temporality that shares features with what is now called queer time. Viewing Ward's agenda through the lens of queer time illuminates how her methods differ from those of the nuns of Syon Abbey—whereas Syon drew on typology to position their future as the fulfillment of a holy past, Ward saw her community as doing something that while deferential to the past, was invested in creating something new. In this way, her same-sex community evokes Muñoz's notion of queerness as "an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future."[324] This temporal dimension of Ward's mission activates its utopianism, for, as Levitas explains, "the unfinished nature of reality locates concrete utopia as a possible future within the real."[325] Placed in a time between what has been and what is already in the process of emerging, Ward's female community instrumentalized a queer perspective in order not just to imagine (as we saw with Christine and will see with Wroth and Cavendish) but to create a spiritual utopia for women.

Ward's implementation of futurity that is distilled from the past, much like Christine's *bricolage* of literary misogyny, engages with and then subverts traditional gender hierarchies. In a set of addresses given to a community of English women at St Omer in December, 2017, Ward repurposes men's words against women to articulate a radical view of women's capabilities. Her first address begins by citing a Jesuit father, who claimed about her group, "when all is doe, they are but women." In imagined response, Ward asks, "What think you of this word 'but women?' But as if we were in all things inferior to some other creature which I suppose to be man." She continues,

> [I]t is true this fervour doeth many times growe could: But what is the cause: is it becaus wee are weomen. No, but because we are imperfect weomen and love not verity, but seeks after lies. *Veritas Domini manet in aeternum*, the verity of our Lorde remaneth forever. It is not *veritas hominum*, verity of men, nor veritie of woemen, but *veritas Domini*, and this veritie wemen may have, as well as men. If we fayle, it is for want of this verity and not because we are weomen. I hope in god it will be seene that weomen in tyme to come will doe much.[326]

[324] Muñoz, 1.

[325] Levitas, 89.

[326] Dirmeier, ed., vol.1, 358.

Here, Ward disassociates gender from ability and instead links ability to the truth, *veritas*, of God, which is accessible to both genders. Her use of the Latin *veritas hominum* and the English "veritie of woemen" at once draws a parallel between abilities of men and women and, in her shift to the vernacular, differentiates between them. In this linguistic distinction, Ward consigns men to the scripted, Latinate world while women operate in the active present of the vernacular. She then places this present into contact with the future when she says, "weomen in tyme to come will doe much." Ward subsequently challenges men who tell women what they "must belewe" and instead appeals to women's experiences of their own capacities: "lett us be wise, and know what we are to believe and what not, and not to be made to thinke that we can doe nothing" (I, 359). Her concluding example further resonates with Christine's rewriting of female nature based on women's experiences: in response to a priest who said "he would not for a 10.000 of worlds be a woaman, because he thought a woman could not apprehend god," Ward recounts that she "answered nothing but only smyled, although I could have answered him by the experience I have of the contrarie" (359). This smile at once further emphasized the existence of a woman's discourse that lies beyond the words of men and epitomizes Ward's certain that women, her community in particular, will be vindicated in the future.

Ward's third address at St. Omer goes further not just to set her women's community on an equal plane to men but to suggest that her followers are exceptional. She conveys this exceptionality when she addresses her audience in superlative terms:

> You are spectakells to god, angells and men. It is certaine that god has looked uppon you as he never looked uppon any…all looketh uppon you as new beginners of a cours never thought of before; merviling what you entend and what will be the end of you, sum thinking we are weomen and ayming at greater matters then was ever thought weoman wer ever capable of; they expect perhaps to see us faile; or com short in many things; others esstemes us but weomen… (363)

This stirring rhetoric frames Ward's followers as examples for all as they embark on a new mission. She thus figures her community of women as not equal to men in virtue but as uniquely positioned to enact a new kind of future, "a course never thought of before." Female community within Ward's theological thinking embodies a radical form of futurity, as it charts possibilities that can hardly be imagined.

Telling a History of Female Community

Ward's female community not only imagines the future but it also reimagines the past. By drawing attention to the construction of history, Ward questions its truth-value and so makes space for the stories of those who have been left out of history. Ward's theory of history is conveyed in her Italian Life, an autobiographical fragment that covers the period 1600-1609 and was written sometime after August 1624. In this autobiographical fragment, she describes her return to the Babthorpe house in which she spent several years of her youth and recalls her early use of spiritual books to structure her days and to give meaning to her living space:

> I found a way of distributing the days of the week for the exercise of divers virtues, and of dedicating the rooms of the house to various saints. I applied myself so punctually to this practice, that many years afterwards returning to England for certain affairs, and coming to the said place to visit some relations etc. The house appeared to me like a paradise, the same devotions and exercises presenting themselves at every step as I had before used the, so had not freedom of mind sufficient to perform certain civilities and other things more fitting to the time and the occasion, which sentiment caused me confusion in remembering what I had done when I was less obliged. (Kenworthy-Browne 122)

Ward's insertion of monastic practice into a non-religious space transposes memories of religious figures from the past onto the rooms of the Babthorpe house so much so that they remain years later when she returns to England. The revisiting of this "paradise" and the memories that accompany it set Ward out of time, as her memories prevent her from performing "certain civilities" that would have been more fitting to the *present* "time and occasion." This moment queers time by portraying a present that both remembers the past and is disrupted by it. The call to monastic life for Ward is, as this passage suggests, not a straightforward path to bliss but a way of life that renders

strange both past and present (much like utopia). This temporality evades a linear logic of "progress" or "generation" enacts the kind of queerness that Munoz envisioned.

In Ward's records, this reshaping of history through a mode of queer temporality happens at the site of female community. In the English version of her autobiography, Ward describes her calling to religious life as inspired by Margaret Garrett, a "maide of great vertue (and in year) who looked to the Chappell" at the Babthorpe house. Describing an event that immediately precedes her description of her return to the house years later, Ward writes:

> Once as we wear sewinge together in one roome shee speakeing of God (which was her ordernary talke) amongst other good stories, she tould one of a religius Nunn, who violating her virginity and beinge found with child, was therefore by the lawes of her religioun injoined daily, and for divers years togeather to lye prostrat without the Chappell or quir door of her monastery, for all the other Nunns passinge by to tread upon. This so great a pennance made the falt seem extreem and withall I reflected that the lyke was nether rare very disgracefull nor much punished amongst wordlings: by which I emediatly conceived a singular love, and esteem of religious life, as a sanctuary whear all might and must be holy.[327]

Garrett's story of a nun's punishment might seem a curious catalyst for Ward's religious calling, but it becomes legible in light of the path that Ward would later follow. This nun's status as a punished devotee who nonetheless remains within the community "for all the other nuns passinge by to tread upon" exemplifies what Lowell Gallagher calls "an impossible yet lived intimacy between the chosen and the cast out."[328] The transgressing nun, like Ward herself, is exiled but is also integral to her community—she occupies both a spatial and temporal betweenness that is necessary to her community's self-definition. This nun's position outside the chapel conveys is lived out in Ward's mission as she founded an unenclosed female spiritual community. Her view of religious life as a sanctuary "whear all might and must be holy," moreover, conveys, with its modal verbs, both the potentiality and precarity of this vision. The condition of being on the threshold is at once at spatial

[327] Autobiographical Fragment 3 (Kenworthy-Browne 114); Dirmeier, ed., 22-23. Ward began writing her autobiography at the bequest of Father Roger Lee in on St Emerantiana's day January 23, 1617, her 32nd birthday. The remaining fragments of this autobiography are in Munich.

[328] Gallagher, *Sodomscapes*.

and temporal: it represents a space between two things but also a moment of being about the enter, a time of potential that foregrounds a utopianism that, as Muñoz writes, sees within the "here and now" a "potentiality for another world."[329]

This status of being on the threshold is visualized and extended in image 9 of the Painted Life (figure 3), a series of fifty paintings illustrating significant events in Ward's life. Commissioned by Wigmore, Poyntz and other early companions in the second half of the seventeenth century, these paintings are now kept in the convent of the Congregatio Jesu in Augsburg, a community founded by Ward that survives today.[330] The caption above painting 9 explains what is depicted in the image: "One day, when Mary was fifteen, she sat sewing with her cousin Barbara Babthorpe while a devout woman, named Margaret Garrett, told them of the severe punishment inflicted on a religious whose conduct had given scandal. On hearing this story Mary received so much light from God on the excellency of the religious life that she decided to embrace this state." While this caption refers only to the sewing circle and Garrett's story, the image adds a temporal layer by portraying a woman—presumably Ward at a future moment—praying at an altar before a statue of the Virgin Mary. While it was common to show multiple moments of time at once in religious painting, here, as discussed in chapter 2, it is striking that a doorway separates the present narrative moment on the left and from future one on the right. This sense of temporal juncture increases through the blurred

[329] Muñoz, 1.

[330] From Ward's letters we know that two of these paintings, Image 24 and Image 29, were painted during her own lifetime. The rest were completed after her death. According to Immolata Wetter, five different artists executed the paintings under the supervision of Mary Poyntz and Barbara Babthorpe; see Wetter, *Tenth Letter of Instruction* (Institute circulation), i–x, as cited in Jennifer J. Cameron, IBVM, *A Dangerous Innovator* (Strathfield, New South Wales: St. Pauls, 2000), 254. Images of the complete series of paintings are now available online: Congregatio Jesu, Augsburg, http://www.congregatiojesu.org/en/maryward_painted_life.asp.

Figure 5. *The Painted Life,* image 9. 'Painted Life' Pictures. Mary Ward Spirituality Centre, Augsburg. Photo by Tanner, Nesselwang, Germany. From: Congregatio Jesu, http://www.congregatiojesu.org/en/maryward_painted_life.asp (accessed May 20, 2018).

background before the doorway on the right, a technique that often depicts a different time and place.[331] In the context of Garrett's story, this open door evokes to the doorway in which the punished nun lies and so visually enacts a transaction between the past of Garrett's narrative of female community and Ward's future career. In this way, the painting performs a notion of history that is queer on two levels: first, it narrates a non-genealogical lineage of women's communal life and, second, it consists not of a stultified past but rather of an active dialogue between past and future.

The way in which Ward's career queers history is evident throughout her textual record, as different accounts tell the story of her community in divergent ways, resulting in a women's history that embraces multiple points of foundation rather than a single patrilineal one. The account of Ward's early religious stirrings occurs not only in the Painted Life but also appears twice in her autobiographical fragments and later in her *Briefe Relation* as well as in the Italian vita and is, each time, slightly different. Ward's second account of the nun's punishment in the Autobiographical Fragments is given as follows:

> My first motions to religioun happined so near as I can remember about the 15 year of my age, occatined as I think by a devout woman's speech who amongst pious other discourses happened upon a true story which fell forth in our country before the fail of religion. A nun, said she, having violated her virginity in such sort as the thing was verily apparent and commonly known, and first bannished the monasterie until she was disburdened and afterwards admitted again (because they could not dismiss her, she having made vows); there she suffered much confusion, shame and pain. Amongst her other penance this was one, that for many years she was always to lie at the threshold of the quire that the religious as they passed to and fro might tread upon her. This exact punnishment of that vice gave a splendor to the contrary virtue, and I thinke on that instant my loving Lord did so touch my hart with a longing desire to dedicate myself to his divine service…[332]

Here, the earlier story is repeated but with several changes. Ward introduces the tale not as an anecdote about her early life that works inductively to presage her spiritual conversion but rather as

[331] On this technique in Spanish visionary paintings, see Victor I. Stoichita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997).

[332] Autobiographical Fragment 4, *Briefe Relation*, 117-118.

a clear moment of importance when she says that it sparked her "motions towards religion." She historicizes this moment by saying that it happened "in our country before the fail of religion," a detail that frames the narrative as a lesson about the declining state of religion in England rather than just about her personal conversation. Finally, in this re-telling, the nun is condemned to lie not "without the Chapell" but specifically "at the threshold of the quire," a position that foregrounds the liminal time and space that Ward's own community would later occupy. Through the addition of such framing details, this second telling of Ward's turn to religious life coalesces the narrative into a foundational history even as, by coexisting with a variant account, it draws attention to this history's instability.

The *Briefe Relation* tells yet another version of Ward's early conversion, expanding further to render it a foundational moment for an entire community of women. Of Ward's encounter with Margaret Garrett, the narrator(s) tells us:

> She wou'd retyre herselfe alone in her Chaumber, with an old Catholicke Woman (Margaret Garretteo at Osbodby, one of the Babthorpe houses south of York where mary lived from lat 1599 til 1605), and heare her tell storyes of Religious Women, particulary one, who for having comitted a frailety, was severly punished for it which gave her such Light of the excellency of a Religious state, as all her Life she had a feeling of it, and upon occasion would speake to us concerning the Light she was wont also to spend much time in reading the Lifes of Saints, particularly Martyrs, which so enflammed her well prepared Hart, as noting cou'd satisfy her, but a Living or dying Matrydome.[333]

This account puts less emphasis on the punished nun than on the story's precipitation of the "Light" that Ward would later describe to her followers who, in this version, coalesce into an "us." As text written by Ward's followers, *The Briefe Relation* reworks Ward's early religious to anticipate her later accumulation of female followers. This moment also serves to introduce Ward's emulation of holy martyrs (represented in painting 10 of the Painted Life, figure 4), which inducts her into a spiritual, rather than biological, lineage, a network of spiritual models that recreates the concept of family for

[333] *Briefe Relation*, 6-7.

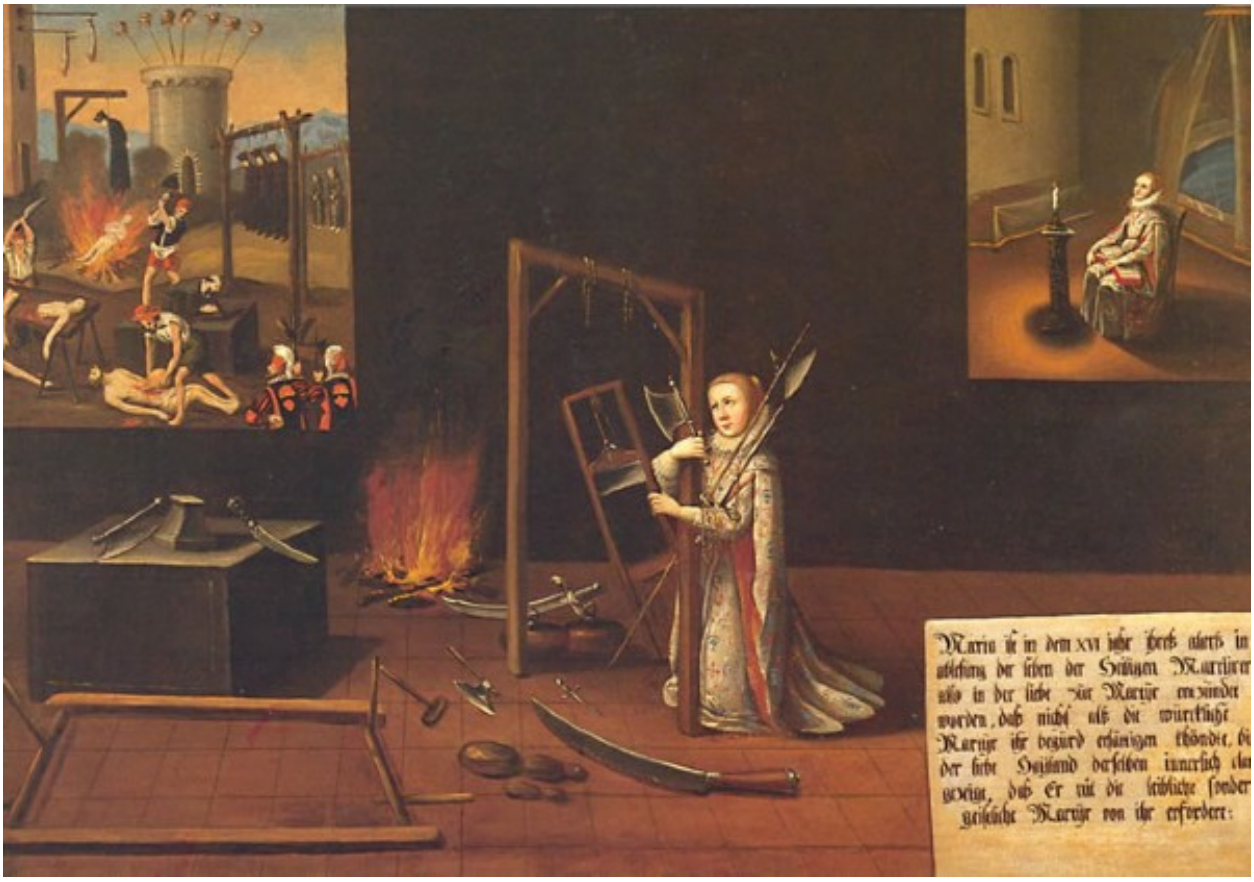

Figure 6. *The Painted Life,* image 10. 'Painted Life' Pictures. Mary Ward Spirituality Centre, Augsburg. Photo by Tanner, Nesselwang, Germany. From: Congregatio Jesu, http://www.congregatiojesu.org/en/maryward_painted_life.asp (accessed May 20, 2018).

many holy women.[334] This revision of Ward's conversion story thus transforms a personal transformation into a narrative of community building, which includes not just Ward's immediate followers but also a wider network of saints. These revisions to a foundational moment in Ward's life in different documents from Ward's textual record expose history's construction—together, they offer a self-conscious picture of how meaning is retroactively infused into past events to make history. Ward's life and mission thus queer history and by revealing its construction open possibilities for new histories that include women.

Ward's Queer Utopianism

In the records of her life, both her own and those written by her followers, Ward is presented as an embodiment of the merging of temporalities to build a better future. This utopian aspect within Ward's temporalities emerges more distinctly in Ward's her glory vision, in which she perceives that it is not God's will that she enter a traditional religious order but rather that she is destined for something else. Of this defining moment, the *Briefe Relation* relates:

> after her morning prayer while combing her head, she was surprised with something above her owne forces and intellectually saw a glory to redowne to God so great and so unexpressable, as the more she saw the lesse she found the End; it tooke away the sight of her corporall eyes and in her Eares sounded nothing but glory, glory, glory; and this impression and sound in her Eares lasted for many Dayes. This happened to her in lodgings in Saint Clements church-yard in the strand in London. (20)

Here, Ward's senses are transported from the earthly to the spiritual, positioning the moment within a heavenly sphere. At the same time, the narrator concludes with a more prosaic reminder: "this happened to her in lodging in Saint Clements church-yard in the strand in London." This description of Ward's vision thus occurs at both eternal and temporal levels (not sequentially as a typological scene would do but synchronically). This dual temporality epitomizes the nature of the mission that she would subsequently found, as it would position itself between traditional religious

[334] On the role of martyrs' stories in English recusant households "as comfort literature and conduct books," see Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2002).

life and the world. Ward's vision, which would be the catalyst for the foundation of female spiritual community, effects a form of utopianism: it puts the known into contact with the unknown to gesture towards something that is not yet imaginable.

As with Margaret Garrison's story, the re-representation of Ward's vision at other pints in her textual and visual record spots the construction of a women's history. For instance, the portrayal of this moment in the Painted Life's image 21 (figure 3). This image's caption, appended on the right significantly expands on the *Briefe Relation*'s description of Ward's Glory vision:

> One morning in 1609, when Mary was in London, she had just made her meditation with, as she thought, very little fervour. Whilst dressing, she determined to make amends for this by giving a large sum of money to a person of good birth who desired to enter religion, but had not the necessary dowry. Mary thereby fell into an ecstasy, which deprived her of her senses and her power of movement. While in this state, she perceived clearly that it was not God's will for her to enter an austere order, but that she was called to a much more excellent state which would do far more to promote the glory of God. After a space of two hours, which seemed to her like a quarter of an hour, a long time elapsed before she could hear anything except the word GLORY.

This caption, much like the rewritings of Garrett's story, clarifies the larger significance of Ward's experience by saying that it prompted Ward to relinquish her goal of entering a convent and instead to engage in active ministry. Futurity within the past is apparent in the image itself, which recalling portraits of Mary Magdalene, shows Mary performing her morning toilet, her hair unbound, and rings and jewelry lying on the table (figure 7). In front of her is a mirror, an object, which, as I discussed in Chapter 2, can signify both utopia and heterotopia and, in this case, serves as an emblem of the community Ward would found.

The mirror image was crucial in medieval theology since Christian Platonism viewed the world as a reflection of God's glory.[335] Moreover, for women mystics, as Sarah Beckwith observes, the mirror offered "a site of a complex play and interchange of roles—far from being the site of a

[335] A comment in the entry on the mirror-image in the *Dictionnaire de Spirituality* says that the mirror represented exemplarity and existed by virtue of its relation to an origin-God. Beckwith, "A Very Material Mysticism."

Figure 7. *The Painted Life,* image 21. 'Painted Life' Pictures. Mary Ward Spirituality Centre, Augsburg. Photo by Tanner, Nesselwang, Germany. From: Congregatio Jesu, http://www.congregatiojesu.org/en/maryward_painted_life.asp (accessed May 20, 2018).

dissolution of subjectivity, it is the place where a new subjectivity is evolved."[336] The mirror insists both on likeness and distance from its source image: it indicates the 'real' object but never exactly becomes it. A similar dialectic of alienation and identification is present in Lacan's mirror stage in which the recognition of difference creates the desire for unity in the subject. Much like utopia itself, as Beckwith writes, "the mirror image embodies the transcendent in the immanent."[337] In Foucault's theory, this sense of being both transcendent and immanent is bifurcated into utopia and heterotopia: Foucault observes that a mirror at once puts a viewer in another place, a non-place (utopia) but also reifies the position of that viewer, performing the physicality or here-ness of heterotopia. In my reading, however, utopia encompasses both of these elements: Ward's ideal vision, like Kempe's, is one in which female community is at once engaged in the eternal realm and in the here-and-now.

In the painting, Ward, like the mirror, is at once in this world and not, reifying a utopian notion of a place that is nowhere. As David Wallace observes, "her knees align with the plane of the table, opening her body toward the viewer, although her head inclines toward a large mirror and her eyes roll upward toward celestial illumination."[338] This position resonates Ward's own intermediately position within the faith: she is called not to enter an "austere order" but rather is "called to a much more excellent state" that promises ultimately to join her in unity with God but will require her to be more in the world as the Jesuit mission required active ministry. Ward thus is outside standard religious institutions while being inside God's 'family'—she is both within and beyond the world.

Strikingly, while Ward appears alone here, this image concerns more than her own spirituality. The mirror in this image, unlike Lacan's, does not show Ward's reflection but is opaque.

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[336] Beckwith, 41 citing Toril Moi.

[337] Ibid., 42.

[338] Wallace, "Periodizing Women," 419.

The absence of a reflection suggests a disinterest in the individual subjectivity that is Lacan's concern and instead renders the murkier future of Ward's mission, which would come to depend not on one woman but on many. The importance of the mirror to the communal aspects of Ward's utopian vision is emphasized by the repetition of its form in the scene's doorway and in the three-dimensional tableau to the right, which shows Ward praying before a crucifix. Ward's presence is refracted throughout space and time, as the scene on the right depicts a moment in the future, thus conveying, in a manner resonant to the impression that Bridget was intended to make on the Bridgettine nuns, how Ward's personal holiness would be imparted onto a host of other women. As Wallace notes, "the scene seems to straddle centuries, suggesting at once medieval traditions of truth-telling, *à la Miroir de l'homme*, and novelistic moments of self-contemplation."[339] More precisely, by knitting together these temporalities, this image conveys how a queer conception of time enables Ward to convey a utopianism that enacts a not-yet vision of female community.

Towards a Secular Englishness

The utopianism that the polyvalent temporality Ward's mission enacts, whereby, it at once participates in an eternal time and in the worldly time, places Ward between religious and nonreligious life, charting a notion of the secular that is rooted in female community. Bypassing the teleological view of the English Protestant state and instead looking to a once and future Catholicism, Ward operates between temporal registers imagining a present that, like Augustine's saeculum, is in a state of waiting. By joining temporalities, Ward also brings together two ways of life, suggesting the possibility of an ethical common ground not just between the laity and the professed but, more broadly, between those of different beliefs. The political imaginary that she uses to convey the possibility of harmony within difference is the English state itself. Ward thus creates a model of national identity that, as she and her followers travel around European establishing

[339] Ibid.

foundations, resembles what would later become imperialism. However, she articulates a more inclusive version of imperialism than what would eventually emerge.

Secular community, Markus explains, "has no ground of its own on which it may simply exist apart" and relies, in modern terms on "complete openness to and inclusiveness of diversity"(6). As Oliver Donovan writes, "Secularity is the stance of patience in the face of plurality."[340] Since the secular is "what can be shared with non Christian," it was not fully possible in a uniformly medieval Christian society (though of course there were significant doctrinal differences in this period), but as Taylor argues, the wars of religion in the seventeenth century once again created a need for a neutral common ground.[341] According to Markus, two forms of secularism have been used to respond to situations of conflict: "the common ground strategy," which assumes a range of beliefs shared by all Christians and minimizes differences, as embodied by the ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, and second, an approach that outlines an independent political ethic, one that establishes norms for how human should behave towards one another in society that are separate from religious ethos. Though Ward's Institute looked forward to the ecumenism of Vatican II, its vision of community evokes the latter form by embracing national identity as a way of belonging and thus charting a utopian vision of nation before the idea of the nation fully existed.

The Painted Life visualizes the spatial dynamics of an Augustinian secularity. The threshold, which appears so frequently in the images, like Augustine's *Saeculum,* has "no ground of its own" but rather is part of both the space outside and within. It, thereby, epitomizes Ward's mission, lived in between worldly and religious life, and, particularly in these images, which were patronized by her followers, also becomes a space in which a larger female community is made visible. Painting 36 (figure 8) is particularly evocative of the intersection of Ward's female community and the notion of

[340] Oliver Donovan, *Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflection and the Shaping of Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 63.

[341] Markus, 6.

secular space. This painting's caption narrates: "In 1624 Mary obtained a speedy recovery from illness for his Eminence, Cardinal Trescio. The favour was granted to her through a pilgrimage to the shrine of the miraculous Madonna on Monte Giovino where she spent five hours in prayer for the Cardinal." The image itself is split into three panels, showing, in sequence, Cardinal Trescio on his death bed with Ward and one of her followers seated beside him; a narrower, middle panel in which Ward approaches Monte Giovino on a donkey; and a third larger panel in which Ward, inside the shrine, prays, as smaller figures in the background pray, hit each other and, in one case, hang from a rope.[342] The middle panel, which depicts Ward's travel in defiance of a papal mandate, visually evokes a neither space between religious duty and institutional disobedience—it literally sandwiches Ward's encounter with a Church official and her own independent prayer in Church. With its almost impressionistic and abstracted representation of the brightly-colored landscape, which stands in contrast to the more specific, darker scenes to its left and right, this landscapes conveys an aestheticized indeterminacy. In front of this dream-like landscape is a small strip of red carpet bordered by a wooden railing, which brings viewers out of the immediacy of the scene to become conscious of themselves as observers. Curiously, this landscape is then reduplicated in miniature at the back of the third panel through the doorway of the church, suggesting the ways in which this liminal space of movement is then incorporated into Ward's devotion. This space of betweenness, transgression and indeterminacy, emphasized by the repeated forms of doorways in the left the right panels, conveys the spatial dimensions of the secular as a space shared between different beliefs, which Ward embodies through her position in a common ground between

[342] A sister at the Congregatio Jesu in Augsburg suggests that these were meant to represent votive statues.

Figure 8. *The Painted Life,* image 36. 'Painted Life' Pictures. Mary Ward Spirituality Centre, Augsburg. Photo by Tanner, Nesselwang, Germany. From: Congregatio Jesu, http://www.congregatiojesu.org/en/maryward_painted_life.asp (accessed May 20, 2018).

institutional doctrine and religious radicalism. Female community spotlights the utopian potential of the secular as the collective presence of Ward's followers, who are not mentioned in the caption, open up a semantic gap between text and image. This gap suggests that one possibility that might emerge from a more inclusive politics is female community. These women are part of Ward's mission, being mirror images of her, but they are also separate, projecting into a future that extends beyond Ward's temporal life, like Augustine's secular realm, in a state of "waiting for the proclamation to be heard."

A consequence of the secularity of Ward's vision, which carves out a common space between professed religious life and life in the world, is the articulation of English national identity as a form of belonging that could cross spiritual differences. Englishness was integral to Ward's spirituality from her earliest days as it was the English Reformation that forced her leave her country and enter the community of the Poor Clares "wherin wear, and had lived divers years severall Gentilwoemen of [her] Nation." Her experience at this convent was equally conditioned by her national affiliations, since, according to the *Briefe Relation,* she found a place "amongst the lay Sisters, more being not to be obtained for any English" (29). From her earliest religious profession, Englishness put Ward in a liminal position: she was exiled from her country and marginalized within the Catholic world. She would later make Englishness central in her own community, first by founding a specifically English branch of the Clares and later by establishing an unenclosed community modeled after the Jesuits whose leaders were English women. By mobilizing English women abroad in active ministry Ward's society advances an Englishness that is detached from the physical place of England. Like the sisters of Syon, Ward's community adopts a national identity that is defined by a condition of exile; however, unlike Syon, Ward does not see enclosed life as the ultimate symbol of English Catholicism. Ward thus anticipates a secular common ground in the form of Anglophone identity, which contains but is not exclusively defined by religion.

At the same time that Ward's mission is rooted in a notion of Englishness, it detaches the idea of nation from its geographical roots, imagining a portable Englishness as her "galloping nuns" roam around Europe. In their exile, Ward's followers participated in a Catholic diaspora, a term that Nancy Warren has also applied to the Syon nuns. Warren, citing William Safran, writes that members of a diaspora share several of the following characteristics:

> 1. They have been dispersed from a specific original center 2. They retain a collective memorial vision about their original homeland 3. They believe that they are not fully accepted by their host society 4. They regard their ancestral homeland as their ideal home 5. They believe that they should collectively be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity 6. They continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.[343]

Ward's community fits this definition as it refers to its members as the "English ladies" (even though they have been dispersed from their homeland) and encourages them to see themselves as part of a project to return Catholicism to England. The diasporic quality of Ward's community is heightened its movement back and forth between England and the Continent, which reaffirms the women's English ties. Their collective vision of their homeland is more temporally than geographically based, as it looks back to medieval Catholic identity that Ward, in her own body, seems to encode. Her embodied presence acts as a locus of English Catholicism for her followers as, like Margery, others are drawn to her. For instance, during her illness, Ward "cou'd not excuse the importunity of many visits, some for Love and Friendship, others confessing the need they had and profit they repaed of and by her presence, and others for novelty, and curiosity, which by sight and speaking grew to real Friendship as severall themselves have confessed" (69). Those who come to see Ward for novelty and curiosity join a larger, imagined community, which is distinguished by a

[343] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* I (1991): 83-84.

sense of Englishness that transcends the place itself, forging a diasporic community with a shared national identity.

The utopian dimensions of this secularized, mobile national identity come across in Ward's prayers and visions, which aim not just at solidifying a present form of English community but at ensuring a global English Catholic future. The *Briefe Relation* describes how, while at St Omer, before Ward had founded her own community, "On St George's day, she offred up certaine devotions for the conversion of England, remembering the Saint the graces he on Earth had doen to the sayd Countrey, begging he wou'd not forget them now, and obtain for her, that she might live and dy in Gods will" (11). This moment is followed by a blessing from the convent General: "when he called for the English, there being none of the Nation but she, she presented her selfe to him, who said 'My child you are not for this state of Life, you are capable to serve God in what soever order, make your choyce, I will serve you in what soever I can.'" Ward, who "allwayes had an unspeakable Zeale for the good of England," responds by proposing that the General join two monasteries and leave one for the "English nation" (11).[344] Ward (and the followers who wrote this account) thus understood her aspirations to found an institute as rooted a hope for an English spiritual utopia, one that could be fulfilled by religious female community.

Ward's sense of Englishness as a defining element of her community is evident in her Plan for the Institute (the *Ratio Instituti*), which she first wrote in 1616 and revised in 1622. The first scheme of the Institute from 1616 emphasizes how England's situation created the need for women to work outside of convents:

> As the sadly afflicted state of England, our native country,
> stands greatly in need of spiritual labourers, and as priests, both

[344] This episode is also recounted in the Italian Life, though slightly differently. Ward writes: "On the feast of St Gregory the Great (my particular advocate) sitting in silence at work with the nuns, I recited privately certain prayers in honour of that saint, entreating him that as on earth he loved and helped the English so now in heaven he would help and protect one of that nation…suddenly I was enkindled with a vehement desire to procure a monastery for the English of this order" (129).

> religious and secular respectively, work assiduously as Apostles
> in this harvest, it seems that the female sex also in its own
> measure, should and can in like manner undertake something
> more than ordinary in this same common spiritual necessity.
> And as many of our sex holily serve God in monasteries out
> of England, and day and night greatly advance the conversion
> of the kingdom by their prayers and pious works,
> so we also feel within ourselves the pious desire infused into us, we trust, by
> God to embrace the religious state and at the same time to devote ourselves, according to
> our slender capacity, to the performance of those works of Christian charity
> towards our neighbour, that cannot be undertaken in convents.[345]

Given this "sadly afflicted state of England" and the consequent need for work outside of convents, Ward and her followers, therefore:

> propose to follow a mixed kind of life,
> such a life as we hold Christ our Lord and Master, to have taught His disciples,
> such a life as His Blessed Mother seems to have lived
> and to have left to those following her, such a life as appears to
> have been led by Saints Mary Magdalen, Martha, Praxedes,
> Pudentiana, Thecla, Cecilia, Lucy, and many other holy virgins and widows

This plan links the need for a historically-grounded "mixed kind of life" to "these times, in which, as in early times, the Church is sorely oppressed in our country." Ward thus bridges the past with the exigencies of the present as a means of ensuring a certain kind of future Englishness, which will be achieved by "the female sex" in her society.

Ward's response to the exilic form of national identity that the Reformation created for Catholics is to create a secular vocation. Her goal, she states, is not only to form women for religious life but, rather, to "instruct virgins and young girls from their earliest years in piety, Christian morals and the liberal arts, that they may afterwards, according to their respective vocations, profitably embrace either the secular or the religious state."[346] Ward thus acknowledges the ways in which religious values can find a common ground with the nonreligious and roots this possibility within her English female followers. The secularism of her utopian project is further stressed when she

[345] *Ratio Instituti in Anglia Historia,* printed in Chambers, 1: 382-3, n. 3.

[346] Ibid.

champions virtue as the unifying value of the institute: "Virtue, indeed, we would have so highly valued in all those who would embrace our manner of life, that anyone wanting in it is to be judged unfit for our state, no matter what may be her other talents and endowments, much more does this same want of virtue disqualify a person for the task of government, and for the discharge of any other important office in the Institute." Just as, in Augustine's city of men, peace is a value that transcends pagan and Christian beliefs, virtue could apply to those women in Ward's soceity but is also a more generalizable value that could be conveyed to those outside. Ward sees the education of girls as doing this kind of work: "to promote or procure the salvation of our neighbour, by means of the education of girls, or by any other means that are congruous to the times, or in which it is judged that we can by our labours promote the greater glory of God and, in any place, further the propagation of our Holy Mother, the Catholic Church." In order to attain the "salvation of our neighbour," the *Ratio* argues that it is necessary for the society "to begin and exercise its duties without inclosure, as otherwise our Institute and method of life can neither be observed nor practised with any hope of obtaining the fruit that we propose to draw from it." "Christian life in the world" is thus essential to the Institute's goals, and it enables these women to imagine a utopian space in which religion is a guiding force (Ward still yearns for a Catholic England) but which operates according to the less denominational value of virtue. Ward does not address Protestants here (nor indeed does she in most of her oeuvre), but her emphasis on shared values that transcend enclosed life opens the door to a form of ecumenism.[347]

While Ward's sense of religious obligation arose in part form the precarious position of the Catholic Church in England, her approach to the establishment of English community abroad is cosmopolitan. She proposes, for instance, that the style of dress for the women of her institute "should, for the most part, be conformed to that generally worn by virtuous ladies in those countries

[347] See Gallagher.

or provinces where ours happen to live or reside…"[348] In instructions like this one, the Institute frames itself as adapting the habits of the different countries in which it is established. Wards diasporic community moves seamlessly in and out of England, transporting Englishness but also absorbing the influences of the native culture, as is stressed in the conclusion of the *Ratio:*

> In this matter we have laboured more or less for seven years in the diocese of the Most Reverend Prelate and Lord, the Lord Bishop of St. Omer, in the province of Artois, where we now number sixty persons; others of our Society and some externs are likewise labouring in England in conjunction with us, both actually and in desire, and send here noble young virgins to be educated, and others of more mature years to be prepared for holy religion, while they save others from the jaws of the imminent death of heresy and vice ; everywhere indeed we find persons anxious to embrace our Institute, were but the state of life declared to be approved by the Apostolic See.

This early plan for the Institute envisions a utopian community of women engaged in active ministry that emerges from an English sensibility but also moves beyond it to "everywhere," making available a utopian notion of a not yet nation—were but the state of life declared to be approved by the Apostolic See—that is disseminated by women living a mixed life.

The 'not yet' vision of the English nation developed by Ward and her followers is closely tied to the 'not yet' of women. As her the *Briefe Relation* relates, her followers believed that Ward "would make our age and Nation see themselves happy, solving that great difficulty *Mulierem fortem* etc (who shall find a valiant woman? Proverbs 31:10)." This aspirational statement sets the potentiality or indeterminacy of Ward's status as a *mulierem fortem* into relation with the equally precarious figure of the English Catholic nation. This 'not yet' of quality a powerful woman metonomizes a form of Englishness that itself stands in waiting between the local and the global as well as between religious and universal values.

[348] Chambers, notes to book 3, 76-78.

Ward's endeavor to chart not just new forms of history, as discussed above, but specifically a new national history is enacted in a moment in the *Briefe Relation* in which Ward visits the Bishop of Canterbury.[349] Since the bishop is away, she leaves "her name and that she had beene there to see him written in the glasse Window with a Diamond" (22). The *Briefe Relation* here rewrites a famous description of Queen Elizabeth in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs.* In Foxe's account, Elizabeth, upon leaving Woodstock, writes verses with her diamond in a glass window: "Much suspsted by me:/Nothing proved can be./Quoth Elizabeth prisoner."[350] The *Briefe Relation* revises this pivotal moment of English history, which was intended to serve a foundation for the Protestant English state, to fashion Ward as a new Elizabeth. By rewriting this moment, the *Relation* offers an alternative to an Elizabethan teleological sense of Protestant nationhood and instead crafts a vision of Englishness that rooted in women's recusant Catholicism and, even more specific to Ward's mission, their ability to move freely.

As she made her galloping community the center of English history, Ward anticipated the imperialistic ventures upon which Britain would later embark. The Institute drew women from England to the Continent: "Many english gentlewomen hearing of this new foundation came out of England, to render themselves Religious there."[351] In this way, the foundation created a new locus of English identity that purported to be more English than the island itself. Its members, moreover, disseminated this Englishness by employing themselves "in education of Youth, not onely those of our owne Nation…but also those of the places where they lived" (16). Through this inclusive instruction, Ward and her followers deployed English virtue as a national quality that could be

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[349] Gallagher. See also Wallace, *Strong Women,* 166.

[350] *Foxe's Book of Martyrs: Select Narrative,* ed. John N. King (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 273.

[351] Saint Clare's Abbey, Darlington England MS 1, Graveline Chronicles 1686-1773, Dirmeier, ed., vol. 1, 145.

dispersed and shared with others. Later, once Ward withdrew from the Clare foundation to found her own Institute based on the Jesuit Constitutions, the English ladies saw their community as a missionary-like model for other countries. The *Briefe Relation,* for instance, describes the gratitude of the Elector and Electress for Foundations in Vienna (1627) and Pressburg— (1628), who state that "The English had beene the first to teach them their faith, they were not to teach them the manner of Christian Living" (33). This sense of a mobile, global Englishness as a vehicle of religious faith continued to develop as Ward's mission moved back and forth from the Continent to England through a network of women writing letters in lemon juice, which appeared invisible until heated, a form that conjures the quality of coming into being that defines Ward's 'not yet' vision.

Ward and her followers, living at the beginnings of European expansion, in reimagining roles for women also anticipated a global British national identity. This national identity offers an alternative to the ubiquitous understanding of England's identity as being derived from Protestantism. As Philip Schwyzer summarizes, most critics see the Protestant English monarchy as instrumental to the sixteenth-century English "invention" of the modern form of nationalism.[352] Such nationalism is typically assumed to have generated the British Empire that began with foundations in India in the second half of the eighteenth century. Ward lived at an earlier imperial moment, in what David Armitage calls the first empire, which was "for the most part a maritime empire, not an empire of conquest, an empire defended by ships not troops [an by] the outgrowth of British norms exported and fostered by metropolitan migrants.[353] She and her followers, far removed from the Protestant monarchy, enacted a similar exportation of values. Her secular imperialism did not influence the emergence of this first empire: rather, it offered an alternative to

[352] Schwyzer himself contests these assumptions by arguing for the importance of Britishness as opposed to Englishness. See Philp Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[353] David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

what this empire became. Her society is utopian in that it holds a mirror to the current notion of nation and so has the capacity to queer our conception of what the nation was and can be.

Though Wards career aspired and sometimes reached great heights, it was also clouded by disappointment, keeping her vision, like utopia, out of reach. Troubled by ill health, Ward returned to England to die in 1645. Her death, as described in *The Briefe Relation,* holds in balance the different threads of her career that forged a feminotopian model of community. While the text's description of her perfectly-preserved lifeless body evokes the timeless nature of a saint, her burial is tactically rooted in England's present:

> The malice and hatred of Heretikes at such a heigh as they wou'd not permitt Catolockes to have Christian burriall in place or forme…which was cause we found out a little Church-yard where the Minister was honest enough to be bribed and the Church yard, not the Church, because less profane and might make our recourse to her Grave…it was heard like an Eccho amongst them these words, there was never seene such a Woman no never. (73)

In death, as in life, Ward's identity is at once beyond history and entrenched in it. Her burial is a reminder of the historical presence of "Hetertikes" in England, but the narrator also compares her reputation to an "Eccho," a concept also central to Mary Wroth's work in the next chapter. In this she implies that Ward's presence will continue into the future, a point that she further emphasizes when she concludes lyrically, "there was never seene such a Woman no never," placing Ward's greatness within a longer history. Ward's death joins a historical notion of Englishness with transhistorical faith that, her mission would implicitly argue, English women preserved. In this, she enacts utopia's capacity both to hold a mirror to the present and portray a desired future. Ward herself conveys this notion in a letter to her confessor Roger Lee SJ, in which she writes of "a sertaine clear and perfit estate, to be had in this lyfe, and such an one as ys altogeather needfull for thos that shoud we discharge the duties of this Institute…The felicity of this estate (for as as much as I can express) was a singuler freedome from all that could make one adhear to earthly thinges…yt then occured and so still contues in my minde, that thos in pardice, before the first fale wear in this

estate; yt seemed to me then, and that hope remaines still, that our lord let me see yt" (290). As this letter indicates, Ward saw her life as a work-in-progress that could reveal a future "pardice" while also having effects in the present. Her mission's search to create a place for women in religious history led her glimpse not an ethereal paradise but a paradise on earth in which people of different beliefs could find common ground.

Conclusion: Utopian Failures

Kempe's and Ward's lives and writing evoke queer temporalities and consequent forms of secularity that are rooted in female community. While their visions, more boldly than the others that this dissertation has examined, offer unprecedented visions of empowered female spiritual community, failure is also integral to their projects. Such failure, however, enhances the utopianism of their projects. As José Muñoz writes, "Disappointment is a big part of utopian longing:" "utopia's rejection of pragmatism is often associated with failure. And indeed, most profoundly, utopianism represents a failure to be normal."[354] Failure is crucial to maintaining the hope that utopia keeps alive. Whereas Christine was pragmatic, diplomatically appealing to multiple positions at once and the nuns of Syon worked within established conventions even as they subverted them, Kempe and Ward were more willing to displease. Perhaps as a consequence of her disinterest in conforming to standard models of religious women's behavior, Margery Kempe did not become a saint, nor did her original manuscript have a significant afterlife until the modern era.[355] Given the institutional opposition to Ward's plans, her project was only realized through a process that would take centuries. Indeed, the notion of the secular that her institute promotes would still only be hinted at in the ecumenical settlement of Vatican II. As David Wallace writes, "Had things turned out

[354] Muñoz, 188; 172.

[355] A version that erases Margery's more radical actions was produced for a Carthusian monastic community.

differently in 1688, [Ward] might now be a household name—an English Catherine of Siena."[356] It is important, however that she did not, for as Muñoz contends, "within failure we can locate a kernel of potentiality:" "[t]he act of failing thus opens up referentiality or of impossible reality—not because something is missing, but because something else is done, or because something else is said…"[357] Kempe's and Ward's failures are also what allow them to preserve the impossible: the merging of friendship and difference, economy and spirituality, secular and religious, imperialism and an ethics of care through the mechanism of female communities from the past, present and future.

[356] Wallace, "Periodizing Women," 405.

[357] Muñoz, 173.

Chapter 4

"We Are All Picturd in that Piece:" Women's Romance Friendships and Critical Utopias

Introduction

If Catholic communities like Syon Abbey and Mary Ward's Institute modeled how women could act as leaders and how their communities could rise to exemplary status (or anticipated exemplary status) within the Church, the literary fictions of late medieval and early modern women authors present a more partial vision of feminotopia. While they do not eschew the possibility of something better for women, romances in this period, increasingly with the rise of Protestantism, move away from the supportive image of the convent as the space of female community. They instead focus their utopian visions within individual women's friendships, which, due to priorities of romantic love with men and the questing and movement that the romance genre engenders, are often fragmented or even bordered with enmity. At the same time, the possibility of union within difference and discontent that these women's friendships foreground aligns with them with an Augustinian secularism. These romances provide a literary, nonreligious parallel to the secularism that Kempe and Ward modeled. As such, women's romances enact a utopianism that shares with its Catholic corollaries even while diverging from them.

This more partial mode of romance-genre feminotopianism informs what is usually considered to be the first woman's utopian work: Margaret Cavendish's *A Description of a New World Called The Blazing World* (1666; 1668). While Cavendish's utopia is usually read as a proto-feminist revision of Thomas More's and Francis Bacon's androcentric utopias, her work is more than a corrective to misogyny; it is also an extension of a proto-feminist project with a longer durée in which a key interlocutor is Lady Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621). Critics do not generally link *The Blazing World* to the *Urania*, but Cavendish herself draws attention to Wroth as

a source of inspiration in her preface to *Poems and Fancies* (1653). This preface rewrites a poem in which Lord Edward Denny criticized Wroth based on her supposed defamation of his family. In Cavendish's revision of this poem, she writes:[358]

> And very like they will say to me, as to the Lady that wrote the Romancy,
> Work Lady, work, let writing Books alone,
> For surely wiser Women nere wrote one.[359]

Even as Cavendish's short poem distinguishes its author from "the Lady that wrote the Romancy," it also links them as women who dared to circulate their writings publically. This chapter pursues this underexplored connection between these authors, arguing that this suggestion of an extra-textual bond between the authors is indicative of an intertextual relationship between their works as well as other works of romance: Wroth's framing of female friendships as vehicles of utopian thought within her pastoral romance thus participates in a wider discourse of women-centered romance writing that is an unrecognized influence on Cavendish's utopia.

Women's friendships in *The Urania* and *The Blazing World* are utopian, not according the narrow definition of utopia as an ideal programmatic space, but in the broader sense of utopia as a "heuristic device that opposes our habits of thinking and ideologies with the intimation of the

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[358] For critical sources that have paired Wroth and Cavendish, see Naomi Miller, "Playing with Margaret Cavendish and Mary Wroth: Staging Early Modern Women's Dramatic Romances for Modern Audiences," *Early Modern Women* 10.2 (2016): 95-110; Jacqueline T. Miller "Ladies of the Oddest Passion: Early Modern Women and the Arts of Discretion," *MP* 103 (2006): 453–73; Nicole Pohl, *Women, Space and Utopia 1600–1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006) and "'The Emperess of the World': Gender and the Voyage Utopia," in Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tooley eds., *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 121– 132; Anne Shaver "Agency and Marriage in the Fictions of Lady Mary Wroth and Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle," in *Pilgrimage for Love: Essays in Early Modern Literature in Honor of Josephine A. Roberts*, ed. Sigrid King (1999), 177–90. Among these critics, only Pohl has grouped the *Urania* and *The Blazing World* together as utopias.

[359] Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (London, 1653), sig A3v. For Denny's original poem, see Josephine Robert, "Introduction," *The Poems of Mary Wroth,* ed. Josephine Roberts (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1983), 32-5.

possibility that things could be different."[360] In this more conceptual framework, utopia, as delineated by critics such as Bloch, Jameson and Levitas, is the desire for something different from the present accompanied by a sadness or melancholy that this 'something else' does not yet exist. As Karma Lochrie argues, melancholy "is the very affective mode of all utopianism:" the expression of melancholy offers a "form of revolt" against the rigid pragmatism that would deny utopian ideals.[361] So often catalyzed by the melancholic desire for alternatives to the present, utopias, and feminotopias in particular, do not general develop entirely new paradigms. Instead, they use the tactic of bricolage to reassemble social and political structures that draw from the past to create new options for women. Due to this tactic of bricolage, one of its most persistent signatures of feminotopia is the blurring of binaries, a quality that the *Urania* and *The Blazing World* most often situate in women's friendships. These friendships not only represent possibilities beyond the present but, through tensions that emerge between friends, also register the failure that is integral to utopia: in order to remain utopian, as we saw with Kempe and Ward, utopias have to fail.[362]

By juxtaposing Wroth's and Cavendish's works, this chapter offers the mostly separate scholarship on these individual authors new avenues for considering the emergence of women's utopian writing as an exchange between women writers. To craft the first broadly recognized woman's utopia Cavendish drew on the forms of romance and used a model of female friendship that had already been articulated by the first woman to write a prose romance in English. In Wroth's pastoral romance, as female characters, far more than their male counterparts, bond over shared sorrow, they blur distinctions between self and other, inner and outer, past and future, and human

[360] Lochrie, *Nowhere*, 17. Ernst Bloch found utopianism in cultural objects ranging from literature to architecture and the circus in *Principle of Hope*, vol. 1. See the discussion of the spectrum of utopian discourse in my introduction.

[361] Lochrie, *Nowhere,* 188.

[362] As Muñoz writes, "utopia's rejection of pragmatism is often associated with failure. And indeed, most profoundly, utopianism represents a failure to be normal" (172).

and nature. However, as these women's friendships also incorporate difference, jealousy and rivalry, they fail to dismantle fully these binaries. Women's friendships in Wroth's work thus constitute a form of "critical utopia:" they reach towards harmony between beings but register skepticism about its possibility.[363]

Critics have only rarely examined friendship in *The Blazing World,* tending more often to look for women's amity in Cavendish's closet drama *The Convent of Pleasures*; however, reading *The Blazing World* in conversation with Wroth's pastoral romance as well as two anonymous medieval romances focused on women's experiences, *The Floure and the Leafe* and *The Assembly of Ladies,* brings into focus the importance of women's friendships for Cavendish's utopianism.[364] I argue that while Cavendish's *Blazing World* is usually classified as a utopia, it also exhibits romance traits, including the prominence of female friendship. The friendship between the Empress and Duchess in this work models a symbiotic relationship that, as in the *Urania*, blurs boundaries, troubling divisions between categories of self and other in a way that serves as a model for other unions, particularly between the past and the future and the human and the natural. At the same time that female friendships model a utopian symbiosis, the jealousy and rivalry between friends challenges the very utopianism they embody, and, in Cavendish's case, her own natural philosophy. Cavendish thus shadows Wroth's use of female friendship to both model and critique utopian desire. Different from the homogenizing same-sex women's communities that would emerge in women's utopian writing at the end of the seventeenth

[363] My use of "critical utopia" to denote a utopia that is critical of itself draws on Jameson's claim that utopian literature performs a "critical negativity" in *Archaeologies*, 211; and with Tom Moylan's argument that "[a] central concern in the critical utopia is the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as a blueprint while preserving it as a dream" in Moylan, 10. Peter Fitting also employs the phrase 'critical and utopian' in "The Modern Anglo-American SF Novel: Utopian Longing and Capitalist Cooptation," *Science Fiction Studies* 6:1 (1979), 59–76.

[364] For studies of friendship in *The Convent of Pleasure,* see Oddvar Holmesland, *Utopian Negotiation: Aphra Behn and Margaret Cavendish* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013); Theodora A. Jankowski, "Pure Resistance: Queer(y)ing Virginity in William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*," *Shakespeare Studies* 26 (1998): 218-55

century and later, these mid-seventeenth-century works draw on the genre of romance and its blurring of categories to make to worlds, offer an alternative track for women's utopianism, one that uses friendship to convey an awareness of its own limitations.[365] This chapter thus reveals Wroth's unrecognized connection to Cavendish's utopianism and, more broadly suggests that women's utopias emerged not purely through negative reactions to androcentric worldviews but through transtemporal collaborations between women writers who drew on the utopian potential of literary female friendship.

Women's Friendship, Utopia and Romance

To theorize women's friendship in the early modern period was, in a sense, automatically to engage in utopianism. Utopia, etymologically formed from the Greek *ou* (no) and *topas* (place) and punning on *eu-topas* ("happy place"), means "a good place that is nowhere." Women's friendships, while they certainly existed in the real world, occupied a "no place" within early modern friendship theory. As Jacques Derrida writes, friendship is "…a desert. Not a woman in sight…In vain would you look for a figure of a woman, a feminine silhouette, and the slightest allusion to sexual difference."[366] This absence dates back to classical theories of friendship, which defined this bond as a virtuous, reciprocal relationship between male equals. The friend, according to Cicero, was to be identical to the self— "he who looks upon a true friend, looks, as it were, upon a sort of image of himself."[367] Such perfect friendship was viewed as the foundation for moral political life; women were, therefore, excluded because they were not considered to part of public, political life.[368] As Michel de Montaigne writes, "the ordinary capacity of women is inadequate for that communion and

[365] For a later iteration of utopia's investment in limitations, see Nersessian.

[366] Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship,* 155-156.

[367] Cicero, 133.

[368] Ibid., 131.

fellowship which is the nurse of this sacred bond; nor does their soul seem firm enough to endure the strain of so tight and durable a knot."[369] This historical omission of women has influenced contemporary scholarship as well. Alan Bray, for instance, concluded that before the seventeenth century, he could find no evidence for the public "formal and objective character" of friendship in relationships between women and lamented that early women only make themselves heard "as the troubling silence between the lines."[370] In the past decade, however, scholars such as Penelope Anderson and Naomi Miller have increasingly unearthed evidence for pre-modern female friendship, showing how women both developed the trope of *amicitia* and produced alternative models.[371]

While this scholarship capably reveals the importance of friendship in women's lives and the ways in which literary friendships document that importance, this present chapter takes a different approach by considering how female friendships in early modern literary texts could signify beyond a one-to-one correspondence with real-world relationships. As I will argue, because there was no codified theory of friendship for women, literary women's friendships conveyed not only the social and political importance of real women friendships but could also provide occasions for authors, both male and female, to explore the limits of possibility: by theorizing a relationship that was presumed not to exist, authors had to subvert oppositional binaries—between women and friendship, women and politics—and develop new paradigms, an act that stimulates utopian

[369] Montaigne, 138.

[370] Bray, 11, 10.

[371] See Penelope Anderson, "The Absent Female Friend: Recent Studies in Early Modern Women's Friendship," *Literature Compass* 7 (2010): 243–253 and *Friendship's Shadows*; Naomi Miller, *Changing The Subject: Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England* (Lexington KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1996). Miller is one of the earliest scholars to address friendship in the *Urania* (see ch. 6). On women's friendship in the Renaissance, see also: Jonathan Goldberg, *The Seeds of Things: Theorizing Sexuality and Materiality in Renaissance Representations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009); Allison Johnson, "Virtue's Friends": The Politics of Friendship in Early Modern English Women's Writing" (PhD diss., University of Miami, 201); *Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700,* ed. Daniel T. Lochman, Maritere Lopez, and Lorna Margaret Hutson (New York: Routledge, 2010).

thinking.

While the subversion of categories appears in all utopias, scholars have particularly called attention to its presence in women's writing. Examining women's utopias from the second half of the seventeenth-century by Cavendish, Mary Cary, Aphra Behn and Mary Astell, Kate Lilley observes, "Such writing subverts categories and boundaries: arts and sciences, irrational and rational, fantastic/abnormal and natural/normal."[372] This subversion of categories manifests on multiple fronts, acting as the basis for the intersubjectivity—the blurring of self and other—as well as the interconnection of humans and nature, or ecotopianism, that scholars have observed in women's utopian writing.[373] Women utopists subvert boundaries in myriad ways, but Wroth and Cavendish situate their utopian subversions of binaries particularly within women's friendships, which model the merging of identities, undermining divisions between self/other, inner/outer, fact/fiction, present/future, private/public and human/nature. At the same time, by encoding difference, rivalry and jealousy, such friendships simultaneously uphold divisions between these very binaries. By both offering a vision of interconnection and dismantling that vision, Cavendish and Wroth enact what Fredric Jameson describes as "Utopia's deepest subject…our inability to conceive it." These works, therefore, challenge the perception of women's utopias as perfectly harmonious and model a more fraught utopianism—or critical utopia—that contemplates its own fallibility.

Integral to this brand of utopianism is the romance genre. Wroth's sprawling work clearly participates in this genre, but Cavendish's *Blazing World,* while usually classified as a utopia, also deploys romance tropes, including the romance abduction trope, heroic quest and romantic love.[374]

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[372] Lilley, 101.

[373] On these characteristics, see Alessa Johns, "Feminism and Utopianism," in *the Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Tooley and Pohl, "Introduction," *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century,* 8; Donawerth and Komerten, 4, 5.

Other early modern women of letters represented women's idealized or utopian friendships, most notably Aemilia Lanyer and Katherine Phillips. Indeed, Wroth and Cavendish themselves wrote other works that portrayed female friendship including Wroth's play *Love's Victory* and Cavendish's closet drama *Convent of Pleasures* and epistolary work *Sociable Letters*. However, the *Urania* and *The Blazing World* are singular in being English works of prose romance by early modern women that portray female friendship.[375] The friendships contained within them have a different kind of status that derives from the form of romance itself.

Famously resistant to definition, romance is derived from the Old French *romanz* meaning vernacular fiction. Although romance is heavily invested in the supernatural, it is a genre principally engaged with ideas about the human. While the medieval romances considered in this chapter derive from the chivalric tradition developed by Chrétien de Troyes, the early modern romances are characterized by a generic reshaping catalyzed by the rediscovery of ancient Greek fictions, particularly Heliodorus's *Aethiopica*, the mingling of vernacular traditions from across Europe, such as the Italian texts gathered in Bandello's collection of novellas the Spanish romance *Amadis of Gaule,* and the advances in scientific knowledge and the exploration of the new world. Infused both by Hellenistic foundations and medieval chivalric tradition, early modern romance was a genre concerned with world making and the exploration of boundaries, literal and figurative.

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[374] On reading Cavendish's utopia as a romance, see Geraldine Wagner, "Romancing Multiplicity: Female Subjectivity and the Body Divisible in Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 9.1 (May, 2003): 1.1-59. To understand Blazing World in this way is to challenge a popular critical position espoused most fully by Rachel Trubowitz, "The Reenchantment of Utopia and the Female Monarchical Self," The Reenchantment of Utopia and the Female Monarchical Self," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 11.2 (1992): 229-245 and Lee Cullen Khanna, "The Subject of Utopia: Margaret Cavendish and Her BlazingWorld," in *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women: Worlds of Difference*, ed. Jane L. Donawerth and Carol A. Kolmerten (Syracuse University Press, 1994), 15-34, both of whom argue that Margaret appropriates and refigures utopian fantasy in representing a feminist politics and female selfhood.

[375] Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* provides another example of this phenomenon in French. See, for instance, Mary I. Baker, "Friendship Revisited: *Heptaméron* Tales 10, 21, 15, and 70," *Romance Quarterly* 48.1 (2001): 3-14.

Romances different from epic, which is preoccupied with the foundation of a new civilization, are concerned with making the old world new. This endeavor is explained by Nandini Das: "romance was from its beginnings a fabric woven out of generational negotiations, between past and present narratives, practitioners and readers, between the entrenched discourse of inherited tradition and the urge to make the old 'inscription on the tomb' speak out in a new language and voice."[376] Fredric Jameson also theorizes romance as a genre of encounters, though of a more socio-economic nature, as he argues that the collision of different socio-economic moments engineer a form of utopianism. Jameson writes that romance offers "a transitional moment in which two distinct modes of production or moments of socio-economic development coexist. Their antagonism is not yet articulated in terms of the struggle of social classes, so that its resolution can be projected in the form of a nostalgic (or less often a Utopian) harmony."[377] Romance thus enacts the meeting of perspectives and the final resolution of these positions in a form of utopia, supporting Northrop Frye's account of romance's utopian tendencies.[378] This capacity of romance to project a form of nostalgic or utopian harmony corresponds with what Jameson identifies as romance's capacity to create worlds, as he writes that romance is "that form in which the world-ness of world reveals itself." Romance is thus a genre in which the inner and the outer world come together in mutual in forms of infinite world building.

Romance, as a genre that brings together different worlds in the bricolage fashion to build a

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[376] Nandini Das, *Renaissance Romance: The Transformation of English Prose Fiction, 1570–1620* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 1. For other theories of early modern romance, see Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Barbara Fuchs, *Romance* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Steve Mentz, *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England: The Rise of Prose Fiction* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006).

[377] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 148.

[378] Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

new one, is what ties it to utopia as both are concerned with the creation of new worlds. The fusion of romance and utopia reminds us the worlds such genres envision are never *ex nova* but rather are formed from a merging of the known and the unknown. This facet of romance results in a capacity to think beyond available categories in a way that corresponds with what we know think of as speculative fiction. The speculations of romance mirror and intensify the speculative quality of women's' friendships in these works. As I have already established, to represent women's friendship in the medieval and early modern period was a radical act: it meant going against canonical theories of friendship, and it meant championing alliances that were thought to be subversive by patriarchal society. Women's bonds themselves thus enact a form of world building: they envision something not yet realized—a world in which women's communities are recognized as important. Women's relationships in romances could also theorize models of intimate sociality as alternatives to hyper masculine, externalized acts. Thus, while other models of idealized women's friendship existed in the early modern period, Wroth and Cavendish's, as well as the anonymous medieval author's, positioning of women's friendships within the genre of romance associated these bonds with forms of becoming and boundary blurring with the goal of building a new world that were particular to this genre.

Indeed, Wroth and Cavendish drew on a utopian potential of female friendships that is also present in romance works by men, as we find in *The Faerie Queene* and Sidney's *Arcadia.*[379] These male-authored literary works favor male protagonists but also include prominent female characters, who, if only briefly, engage in bonds with other women. The low profile of female friendships within these texts, however, has prevented them from attracting significant critical attention: as Dorothy Stephens writes, "*The Faerie Queene* does not allow many such meetings between women to

[379] Sheila T. Cavanagh, "Romancing the Epic: Lady Mary Wroth's Urania and Literary Traditions," in *Approaches to the Anglo and American Female Epic*, ed. Bernard Schweizer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 19–36, notes the Spenserian allusions in the *Urania*.

happen within its borders."[380] This work, like the *Arcadia,* however, also draws attention to the significance of friendships through its very efforts to suppress them. Female friendships, mirroring the omission of women from classical friendship theory, function in these works as markers of what must be left out or omitted to create dominant cultural narratives. They, therefore, much like Ward's female community, have a utopian potential as figures for alternatives to the present-day structures that include but go beyond women's roles.

This dialectical tension between visibility and suppression that often characterizes utopia is evident in the career of warrior princess Britomart and her relationship with the long-suffering Amoret in Spenser's Book IV. When Britomart rescues Amoret from the House of Busirane, Britomart is disguised as a man, but after she competes for Amoret in a tournament, Britomart removes her helmet and reveals her gender. This act is followed by an invitation to Amoret's bed:

> And eke fayre Amoret now freed from feare,
> More franke affection did to her afford,
> And to her bed, which she was wont forbeare,
> Now freely drew, and found right safe assurance theare.
> Where all that niht they of their loues did treat,
> And hard adventures twixt themselues alone,
> That each the other gan with passion great,
> And griefull pittie priuately bemoane. (4.1.15-16)

This eroticized encounter offers a utopian moment of safety and assurance.[381] It subverts the standard heterosexual narrative of romance and instead imagines another means of fulfillment for women, enacting utopia's potential to disrupt the future and imagine something better. This moment of consolation remains brief, however—it is soon superseded by the more action-based and male-centered narrative preoccupations of Book IV. The foreclosure of these women's friendships reflects what Tracy Sedinger argues is the book's anxiety that "the libidinal investments

[380] Dorothy Stephens, "Into Other Arms: Amoret's Evasion," in *Queering the Renaissance*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 192.

[381] See Valerie Traub, "Setting the Stage Behind the Seen," *i*n *The Queerest Art: essays on Lesbian and Gay Theater,* ed. Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla (New York: NYU Press, 2002), 55-105.

of 'true loue and faithfull friendship"' might "lead to discordant erotic and/or aggressive relations which undo the virtuous concord Book 4 seeks to promote."[382] While not allowed to blossom into a more substantive friendship, through its sheer existence, Britomart and Amoret's intimate bond operates as an inverse mirror to the more aggressive male friendships that dominant the rest of the book, raising the possibility of an alternative way of enacting friendship.

A similar utopian opening of possibility appears in Sidney's *Arcadia* with Princess Philoclea's desire for Pyrocles, who is disguised as Zelmane. This friendship stages a form of friendly imitation that translates into same-sex desire:

> . . .as Zelmane did often eye her [Philoclea], she would often eye Zelmane, and as Zelmane's eyes would deliver a submissive but vehement desire in their look, she, though as yet she had not the desire in her, yet should her eyes answer in like-piercing kindness of a look. ... If Zelmane took her hand and softly strained it, she also, thinking the knots of friendship ought to be mutual, would with a sweet fastness show she was loath to part from it. And if Zelmane sighed, she would sigh also. (145)[383]

Philoclea's desire for the man whom she believes to be a woman opens the possibility of a female friendship that veers into the erotic, showing how the mutuality and identicality of ideal friendship lay the groundwork for passion between the women. Her desire catalyzes Philoclea's utopian wish for a world in which things are different: "Then, grown bolder, [Philoclea] would wish either herself or Zelmane a man, that there might succeed a blessed marriage betwixt them…Then followed whole squadrons of longings that so it might be, with a main battle of mislikings and repinings against their creation that so it was not" (145-46).[384] Though she does not go so far as to hope for a world in which women may marry, Philoclea's wish for one of them to become a man signifies a broader

[382] Tracey Sedinger, "Women's Friendship and the Refusal of Lesbian Desire in 'The Faerie Queene,'" *Criticism* 42, no. 1 (2000): 91-113.

[383] Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia,* ed. Maurice Evans (London: Penguin Classics, 1977).

[384] For an extended consideration of this relationship that focuses on what it might suggest about real-world women's relationships, see Richard A. Levin, "What? How? Female-Female Desire in Sidney's 'New Arcadia,'" *Criticism* 39, no. 4 (1997): 464.

utopian yearning for creation to be otherwise. The *Arcadia*'s quick rejection of this possibility when Zelmane reveals herself as Pyrocles only serves, as in the *Faerie Queene,* to foreground the utopian potential of this bond. As Jameson writes, "Utopia's deepest subject…is precisely our inability to conceive it." Women's friendship in literary fiction, by remaining unfulfilled and, therefore unimaginable, thus possesses a utopian potential that enables it to represent not just the possibility of unprecedented women's agency but also a new way of seeing the world. The female-authored works that I will now examine go much further towards making this utopian promise of female friendship a viable possibility.

Utopian Friendship in Medieval Women's Romance

While *The Faerie Queene* and *The Arcadia* might seem to be more obvious touchstones for the women's writings in this chapter, particularly Wroth's romance, an illuminating perspectives also appears in romance works from earlier periods that more explicitly foreground women's bonds. In particular, this chapter will address two anonymous late-fifteenth-century romances, *The Floure and the Leafe* and *The Assembly of Ladies,* which have been tentatively attributed to women due to their use of female narrators and representations of idealized women's societies.[385] For this reason, I refer to them as women's romances despite the fact that the gender of their authors has not be definitively determined. Wroth and Cavendish are unlikely to have read these works and have never been associated with them. However, these medieval writings nonetheless share with their early modern successors a common understanding of women's subjectivities and emotions that develops from

[385] Skeat argued that these works were authored by a single women while Pearsall was more cautious. D.A. Pearsall, ed. *The Floure and the Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies* (London and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1962; reprinted Manchester: Manchester University Press, Old and Middle English Texts Series, 1980), 16. Barratt argues that a woman author cannot be ruled out while Marshall considers anonymity to be a crucial lens through which to view the work. Alexandra A. T. Barratt, "'The Flower and the Leaf' and 'The Assembly of Ladies': Is There a (Sexual) Difference?" *Philological Quarterly* 66 (1987), 6. Simone Celine Marshall, *The Anonymous Text: The 500-Year History of The Assembly of Ladies* (Peter Lang, 2010). Though these romances are not definitively attributed to women authors, I refer to them as "women's romances" in this chapter due to their concerns with women's communities and women's perspectives.

adaptation to analogous patriarchal structures. The correspondences between them point up ways in which women's friendships could engender a form of utopian thinking within literary fictions, particularly those that participate in the romance genre.

The first of these, *The Floure and the Leafe,* portrays a world of courtly romance but focuses its action in female bonding and resulting forms of identity and agency that resemble those in Wroth's and Cavendish's writing. The poem, originally attributed to Chaucer but later ascribed to an unknown, possibly female author, opens with a female narrator in a waking dream.[386] Leaving her bed, this narrator comes to discover a pastoral paradise into which "A world of ladies" (l.135) arrives, each wearing "a chaplet/ on her head of leves fresh and grene" (ll. 154-155).[387] These ladies are then joined by a group of knights, who, together with the ladies, constitute the company of the leaf. This company, observed by the narrator, performs a series of songs and jousts before retiring to a tree, at which point a similar company ornamented with flowers replace them.[388] In a parallel performance, one of the flower company ladies begins a *bergerette*, a dance-song in praise of the daisy, but this latter group is quickly "Forshronke with heat" (l. 358) and then overcome by a "storme of haile" (l.369). At this point, the company of the leaf, through an effort led by its queen, comes to the aid of those of the flower:

> The queen in white, that was of great beauty,
> Tooke by the hond the queen that was in grene
> And said, "Suster, I have right great pity
> Of your annoy, and of the troublous tene

[386] The only authoritative text of this work is in Thomas Speght's first edition (1598) of Chaucer's Collected Works, though there is a contemporary list of contents in the late fifteenth-century manuscript Wiltshire Longleat House MS 258 (which also contains *The Assembly of Ladies*) that suggests that the *Floure and the Leafe* once occupied pages now lost in that manuscript.

[387] Line numbers refer to Pearsall's edition.

[388] The courtly cult of the Flower and the Leaf is also referenced by Chaucer, Eustache Deschamps and Charles d'Orleans. The present text differs from these examples by moralizing the Flower and the Leaf in terms of a contrast between fidelity in love and fashionable fickleness. For a discussion of the cult, see Pearsall, "Introduction," 22-29.

Wherein ye and your company have bene
So long, alas! and if that it you please
To go with me, I shall do you the ease
In all the pleasure that I can or may. (ll. 386-393)

In this passage, the parallel structure of the queens' attributions—the first "that was of great beauty" and the second "that was in grene" emphasizes both their shared royal qualities and their differences. In contrast to the insistence classical of friendship theory on likeness, in this grasshopper-and-ant story, it is the difference between these women—one associated with frivolity, the other with reason—that forms a bond between them. Much like the friendships that form across difference in Margery's book, one woman's need and the other's ability to fill it acts as the basis for friendship, a stark difference from the Ciceronian emphasis on exact reciprocity in the friendship bond.

In the case of *The Floure and the Leafe*, this initial rapprochement between women has positive effects for the entire community. Following the queen of the leaf's gesture of hospitality, "every lady, then anon right/That were in white, one of them took in grene/By the hond; which when the knights had seene,/ In like wise ech of them took a knight/ Clad in grene" (ll.396-401). Following the example of their queens take each other by the hands, suggesting the power of women leaders to act as examples of empathy. This same-sex female empathy is, moreover, not limited to women but rather touches the entire community, creating a utopian social space in which a more inclusive form of female friendship reverberates into the world.

The Assembly of Ladies, an allegorical dream vision and romance poem with elements of the complaint genre contemporary to *The Floure and the Leafe,* portrays an even more intensified level of emotive identification between women that anticipates the imitative affections of the *Urania* and *The Blazing World*. The *Assembly* begins similarly to *The Floure and the Leafe,* with a female narrator journeying to a "verray paradise" (l.168) called "Plesaunt Regard." This paradise is, however, is a

court at which women present their complaints about love to the allegorical Lady Loyalty. Strikingly, the palace in which the court takes place is adorned with stories of classical women betrayed in love, including Phyllis, Thisbe, Cleopatra and Melusine (ll. 457-469). These images recall the figural portrayals of wronged women in John Lydgate's *The Temple of Glass* (c.1403). In Lydgate's poem, such images precipitate a bystander male narrator's insertion of himself into literary tradition, but the *Assembly*'s narrator joins the audience of ladies to present her own complaint. In this way the *Assembly* bricolates historical women in much the same manner that Christine de Pizan does in her city, bringing them into a new context that renders them into sources of female strength rather than causes of men's downfalls. The narrator's bill, which asks "[f]or fynal end of sorwes and peyne" (l. 695), adds to this larger female community by articulating a self that lacks specification and so can stand in for a generalizable, feminized suffering. Shared female grievance is further emphasized by the women's bills "upon a tappet spredde" (l. 579) before they are read aloud "oon by oon" (l. 581). The spreading of these complaints on the carpet visualizes a space of intertwined women's stories, a form of spatial intersubjectivity that would also be developed in Wroth's work. This narrative imagines a public yet protected space in which women can voice their complaints and be heard. Though Lady Loyalty delays her answer, this possibility that women's grievances might receive justice is, similar to the supportive communities formed across difference in *The Floure and the Leafe,* acts a utopian alternative to the medieval present.

Though at a remove from Wroth's and Cavendish's literary milieu, these two late medieval, possibly female-authored poems similarly use female friendships and community to represent the intermingling of self and other and resultant forms of utopian, supportive communities. They portray female friendships as spaces that evade the sameness and rigid reciprocity of classical friendship and instead portray alternative communities that provide support and justice for women. The recurrence of female friendship as a site for challenging boundaries and building alternatives in

Wroth's and Cavendish's works does not suggest a direct influence but rather the way in which women's friendships, as relationships ignored in dominant discourse, could serve as sites of unrealized possibility. These works together make visible a figural genealogy between late medieval and early modern texts, one governed not by teleology but by resilient institutions that recur in different guises over time. Reading these medieval women-centered romances in conjunction with the first English romance verifiably authored by a woman and a work that deploys romance tropes to construct what has often been considered the first English woman's utopia (though, of course, as this dissertation argues, it is not the first work to exhibit utopianism) makes visible an alternative literary history that is grounded in female friendships, both between characters and between works.

Utopian Friendships in Wroth's *Urania*

As the *Urania*'s titular dedication to Wroth's friend, Susan Herbert, the Countess of Montgomery, presages, women's friendships are central to Wroth's romance.[389] These friendships are, as critics often remark, shape female characters' subjectivity and agency, but they also serve as vehicles of broader speculative thought. They enact the 'nowhereness' of utopia by troubling divisions between categories to imagine an interconnected world in which women thrive while also remaining alert to the obstacles facing this vision. Certainly, forms of utopian female community appear in other early modern women's writings, particularly the poetry of Aemelia Lanyer and Katherine Phillips. Equally, Wroth's own drama *Love's Victory* has been named a feminotopia. I focus on the *Urania* here, however, because the labyrinthine structure of the romance accentuates the joining of different categories between women and the love intrigues create divisions between women that allow for the creation of the kind of 'secular' space that I have identified as a defining feature of women's utopia. Individual hybridities—of genres, categories of public and private, self

[389] Unless otherwise noted, I refer to the first part of *The Urania*, which was published in 1621 as opposed the second part, which survives as a holograph manuscript and was published for the first time in 1999.

and other—have often been observed in Wroth's romance, but connecting them as a common impulse reveals how the *Urania,* while it is not part of the utopian canon, nonetheless exhibits a form of utopianism that imagines alternative possibilities to the present.

The most visible boundary transgression enacted by the *Urania*'s women's friendships is the imbrication of self and other. While likeness between friends is endemic to early modern friendship and, though less frequently, also apparent in the *Urania*'s male friendships, Wroth's women's friendships are distinct in that they lay the groundwork for larger sympathetic communities of women that challenged established categories on multiple fronts. We see this merging of initially separate identities after the lady Rossalea and shepherdess Celina rescue a man from drowning in "Brittany." In this pastoral setting, the shepherdess, who has previously eschewed love, becomes enamored with the drowning man by imitating her friend's empathy for him:

> [Celina] seemed to lament with her as her friend, she counterfeited not,
> but in truth sorry, yet at first she immitated Rossalea, first knew not
> alasse how to greive, but so she played till it was so perfectly counterfeited,
> as she acted beyond that part, and in earnest greived. (642)[390]

As Jacqueline T. Miller notes, this episode shows how early modern "[p]assions (and their verbal and bodily signs) are transferrable and blur the demarcation between inner and outer as well as between self and other."[391] The scene goes further to frame the blurring of passions between friends as the foundation for supportive female community evocative of that in the *Assembly of Ladies*. This utopian possibility is set into motion when a group of shepherdess friends gather around the melancholy Celina after she has been disappointed in her love and become jealous of Rossalea. Describing her newfound community of friends, Celina concludes, "We are all picturd in that piece…a large cloth, and full of much worke"'(650). This image of the friends as "a large cloth" visualizes the joining of

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[390] All quotations are from *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania,* ed. Josephine Roberts.

[391] Jacqueline T. Miller, "The Passion Signified: Imitation and the Construction of Emotions in Sidney and Wroth," *Criticism* 43 (2001), 417.

their identities through shared desire and grief. While the notion of relational or mimetic selfhood was far from novel in Wroth's time and, indeed, is implicit in classical friendship theory's notion of the friend as a mirror of the self, here, it acts as the basis for a utopianism because it contests norms by challenging women's traditional exclusion from the pastoral genre, the injunction against women's collectivity as well as classical friendship's restriction of friends to a pair. Moreover, this "large cloth" of female friends departs from classical friendship theory's notion of friends who are always already identical and depicts likeness as developing of over time, foregrounding transformation over staticity.[392] This blurring of self and other in the shepherdesses' Brittany thus participates in a larger utopian project that challenges established categories on multiple fronts.

The *Urania*'s main character, Queen Pamphilia, experiences the merging of self and other as a form of solace, and this as a *mise-en-abyme* of the romance's blurring between fact and fiction. While walking in the woods, Limena, who is called Pamphilia's "second selfe"—evoking Augustine's naming of the friend as a second self—promises her friend: "I will tell you a discourse, the Scene shall be in my Countrey, and the rather will I tell it, since in that you shall see your selfe truly free from such distresse, as in a perfect glasse" (225).[393] By proposing to tell a story that will be a "perfect glasse," Limena suggests that her tale will reflect Pamphilia's current emotional state, but she also says that it will show Pamphilia a happier version of herself. Limena thus recognizes a utopian potential in the story she tells to offer a better version of reality. This potential is realized, though not in the way one might expect, when, as Limena describes Alena's disappointments in love, Pamphilia recognizes her own rejection by Amphilanthus and reacts with tortured emotion: her soul

[392] On relational or mimetic early modern subjectivity, see Debora Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 233 and "The 'I' of the Beholder: Renaissance Mirrors and the Reflexive Mind," in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 37.

[393] As Laurie Shannon, notes early modern friendship, based on classical models, called the friend "another self" and two friends "one soul in two bodies." *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3.

sends "teares from out her eyes to witnesse the affliction that she felt" (229). As Pamphilia's outer self bears witness to her inner one, inner and outer become one, and her friend experiences this grief as if it were her own: "shee [Limena] greev'd for those teares, and with cryes gave testimony of her [Pamphilia's] sorrow" (229). Limena's cries thus gives voice to Pamphilia's sorrow, which, in turn, has been catalyzed by the fictional Alena's. Pamphilia does not find happiness through this tale, but she does find a sense of recognition that challenges the separation between herself and other women. It is in this sense that this moment is utopian as it blurs categories to imagine ways of being beyond the present. The narrative not only blurs lines between all three women's identities but it also troubles the division between fact and fiction, since Pamphilia's 'real' experiences correspond with those of the fictional Alena. Shared melancholy, as *The Assembly,* acts as a vehicle of co-commiseration and bonding that foregrounds romance's potential to function as a utopian mechanism with import for the 'real' world.[394]

The blurring of categories performed in the *Urania*'s women's friendships also manifests in spatial dimensions that lay the foundation for a connection between women and the natural world. As these bonds most often develop in permeable yet secluded spaces, such as woods, groves, banks, meadows and boats, they subvert distinctions between public and private, mirroring the blurring of inner and outer that occurs through the force of these friendships.[395] Unlike the men who retreat alone to natural spaces, women most often retire to these retreats in pairs. Pamphilia and Antissia,

[394] For other studies of melancholy in Wroth's work, which generally focus on the solitary rather than social aspects of melancholy, see Helen Hackett, "'a book, and solitariness': Melancholia, Gender and Literary Subjectivity in Mary Wroth's *Urania*" in *Renaissance Configurations: Voices/Bodies/Spaces 1580-1690* (Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1998), 64-88; Elizabeth Hodgson, *Grief and Women Writers in the English Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[395] Several scholars have examined the slippage between public and private in the *Urania* though not from the perspective of women's friendship. See Paul Salzman, "The Strang[e] Constructions of Mary Wroth's *Urania*: Arcadian Romance and the Public Realm," *English Renaissance Prose: History, Language, and Politics,* ed. Neil Rhodes (Tempe: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997), 109-124; Mary Trull, *Performing Privacy and Gender in Early Modern Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

who are rivals for the love of the hero Amphilanthus, for instance, "'goe into the solitary woods, where [they] may unheard, and unperceiv'd, better discourse [their] woes, saddly, and freely complaining'" (145). As women in the *Urania* bond within as well as with nature, they trouble the boundaries between the human and nature. The interconnection between women and nature is most visible in the narrative's pathetic fallacies, or what Sylvia Bowerbank calls "pathetic stylistics."[396] This rhetorical device through which women map their emotions onto nature parallels the mimetic, empathetic relationships between female friends. For instance, when Pamphilia pines for Amphilanthus, she finds "a purling, murmuring, sad Brooke, weeping away her sorrowes, desiring the bankes to ease her, even with teares" (90). As the brook experiences the same sorrow as Pamphilia, it becomes a surrogate friend for the queen, rendering indistinct the border between human and nature. The shepherdess Veralinda, a woman who enters the story as a parallel of the shepherdess Urania, equally participates in an amicable relationship with a brook, whom she addresses as a companion: "Poore Brooke…how like my paines are yours" (432). As Andrea Leslie observes, these women differ from the male protagonist Amphilanthus, who desires flowing water to serve him: "'Deare hopes spring as this water, flow to injoying like this streame, but wast not till my life doth wast in me; nay dye, runne to my Love, and tell her what I feele'" (136).[397] In place of this view of the water as intended to serve humans, Pamphilia and Veralinda enact a symbiotic bond with nature that resembles the intimate bonds that women forge with each other.

This affinity with nature is not one-sided: sometimes the natural world responds. In a particularly striking scene, on a ship to Morea, Pamphilia and her friend Orilena, write verses about

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[396] Sylvia Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 27–51. The connection between emotion and nature in Wroth's *Urania* is also explored in Sheila Cavanaugh's *Cherished Torment: The Emotional Geography of Lady Mary Wroth's Urania* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001), 78-123.

[397] Andrea Leslie, "Melancholy and identity in early modern England: Lady Mary Wroth and the literary tradition" (PhD diss., Union Institute and University, 2009), 154.

their troubles in love, "comparing the evening to the coolnesse of absence, the day break, to the hope of sight, and the warmth to the enjoying, the waves to the swelling sorrowes their brest indured" (364). These compositions resemble the common lyrical projection of human emotions onto nature, but, in this case, nature reacts with its own sympathy: "the cold Moones face writ Characters of their sorrowes for theis absence, which she with pale wan visage delivered to their eyes, greev'd as to the death, she could not helpe those amours Ladyes" (364). Grieving with the women, the moon becomes an empathetic friend, envisioning a sympathetic union between nature and women in particular. Rather than making a strictly eco-critical argument here and suggesting that Wroth is modeling a form of caring for nature (though she might well be doing this), I view this mutuality between nature and women as a facet of Wroth's investment in a utopian subversion of binaries, one of these being the division between humans and the natural world.

While pathetic fallacy is "the time honored convention of pastoral," the *Urania* is distinct in focusing its pathetic fallacies in its female characters.[398] By contrast, the mostly male characters in Wroth's immediate source, her uncle Sir Phillip Sidney's *Arcadia,* tend to displace their emotions onto nature or make demands of it rather than empathize with it. In a pastoral eclogue of *The Old Arcadia,* for instance, Philisides demands that the woods receive his sorrow: "And you O trees (if any life there lies/in trees) now through your porous bark receive/ The strange resound of these my causeful cries" (345). In Sidney's revision of this work, *The New Arcadia,* this same character personifies the natural world around him by addressing them in a demand: "Fair rocks, goodly rivers, sweet woods, when shall I see peace?"[399] While Sidney also envisions a world in which human experiences resonate with nature, Wroth imagines one in which women empathize with a nature that affectively responds thus challenging the traditional form of the pathetic fallacy.

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[398] Todd A. Borlik, *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 92.

[399] Sidney, 427.

Crucially, episodes concerning women in the natural world in Wroth's romance tend to be future-oriented rather than purely nostalgic as one might expect from the pastoral. In this, they contrast with romance portrayals of Arcadian landscapes that privilege male desire. Ironically, Pelarina, a female pilgrim, gives the most explicit description of the lost rustic ideal that Wroth's female friendships counter when she recalls a "true and perfect golden age" "when Satirs, Nimphs, and Shepheards liv'd free with one another, fearelesse of harmes." In this time, Pelarina describes, "Plenty grewe for men to reape, and they reap'd but what grew for them," and "none felt straitnesse from the best man to the lowest flower, not so much as that Cowslip look'd one whitt yellower in suspition; that the Rose, Violet, or Lilly, were sweeter, delicater, or beatifuller then themselves: all were good companions..." (528-529). While a woman offers this description, this account privileges a masculinist point of view, which can be discerned by a comparison to Ovid's Golden Age in which "the earth herself also, freely, without the scars of ploughs, untouched by hoes, produced everything from herself" (1.89-112). If Ovid offers an ideal in which the feminine gives thanklessly to those who reap from her, Pelarina's omits the earth entirely. Instead, Pelarina says that "Plenty grewe for men to reape," a view of unearned plenitude that erases the feminine.[400] Moreover, Pelarina attributes the loss of this Golden Age not to a political feud between the gods as Ovid does but to her own turn to love, suggesting that this ideal world could not tolerate human intimacy. Indeed, because no one is this world feels "straitnesse," undifferentiated companionship prevails, negating the possibility of preference for one person over another. Such worlds thus discourage friendship,

[400] A similarly erasure of work occurs in Ben Jonson's poem to Lady Mary's husband Sir Robert Wroth "To Penshurst" (1616), in which the estate seems to act as an image of rural contentment and natural innocence, but, in fact, metaphors of gender disrupt the poem's apparent harmonious vision. Gary Waller, *The Sidney Family Romance, Mary Wroth, William Herbert and the Early Modern Construction of Gender* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 45.

and implicitly limit women by only including men who reap.[401] Women's friendships in Wroth's work provide a very different model, one that looks forward to a time in which women and a feminized nature derive mutual solace.

The ways in which such desubjectifying, static worlds are limiting for women emerges even more sharply in Urania's brother Leonius's journey to Arcadia. This "Pardice on Earth" seems to offer itself up to Leonius, and he quickly transitions from taking pleasure in the landscape to appreciating the sight of a shepherdess: "…when he had seene all the varieties encrease in varying to pleasure, he was yet set vppon by a more admirable sight which was the most delightfull obiect for man to like, and this as well to be liked as any, being a faire and daintie woman, appearing a Shepheardesse" (423). The objectification of woman as a "delightfull obiect" intensifies when Leonius follows her into a grove with a group of women sitting around a majestic fountain, a sight that puts him in a state of wonder: "such possession had this sight gaind on the Prince, as he gazed even to blindnes like one too long looking on the Sunne: he admired, till he lost sens to admire, then went his senses but round, for comming to the first place, hee had sense againe to love in wonder" (424). Arcadia thus proves to be a realm that is nostalgic for a time in which men delighted in the objectified feminine: it is self-centered and backward-looking, denying space for women's community and for the future.

In contrast to the backward-looking rustic scenes that are common to the pastoral genre and present in Pelarina's memory and Leonius's experience, the landscapes in which Wroth's women collectively emote overlay past and future in a way that, as we have seen by now, is common to utopianism. When Pamphilia returns to the "pleasant plaines" of Arcadia towards the end of part 1, she first recollects a previous visit: "she had seen [these plains] in her flourishing time of fortune, when she was richer in blessings then they in plenty, fuller of happines then they of sweetnes, more

[401] Bowerbank also notes this critique of Arcadia environmentalism (50) though she does not look at in the context of friendship and utopia.

joyfull, and hopefull then they delightfull or greene" (480). Unlike Leonius's amazement at his fresh encounter with the pastoral ideal, Pamphilia's visit overlays the present with the past. Addressing the plains, she cries, "Deere Arcadia I love you yet beccause my constancy suits with yours, pitty me then that pines in that vertue, and if ever I see you decaying I will wail with you" (481). As Pamphilia, unlike male characters who objectify women within Arcadia, treats the landscape as an empathetic friend, the natural world operates in a complex temporal relationship to her interiority: it both records her past joy and evokes her own present constancy in love. Pamphilia's call for empathy also looks to the future as she promises that if she were ever to see the plains suffering, as she is now, she will reciprocate. This encounter with Arcadia is, therefore, markedly different from the nostalgia of the pastoral: instead of purely looking backwards to a lost, ideal moment, Pamphilia's amicable bond with the Arcadian fields integrates the past as a source of value for the future, evoking utopia's desire for a better future.

While *Urania*'s women's friendships, both between humans and with a feminized nature, model a symbiotic, interconnected world that yearns to dissolve boundaries, part of their utopianism lies in the fact that they fail to do so fully. As women's relationships in Wroth's work encode difference, rivalry and contention alongside empathy and likeness, they model a utopianism that is critical of its own aspirations. The romance registers differences between women at many of the same moments that establish unity. When Celina describes her group of shepherdess friends as a cloth as "full of much worke," she conveys their united purpose, but she also emphasizes their divisions, as "much worke" suggests individual decorative details. At other points in the text, difference between women devolves into rivalry. As Nandini Das argues, Wroth frequently uses "jealousy and competition as narrative tropes through which subjectivity and agency, particularly female subjectivity and female agency, are articulated and explored."[402] For instance, after Celina falls

[402] Das, 170.

in love with the drowning man through her imitation of Rossalea, she feels "jealousie…in yellow mantle drest" (643) towards her friend. An even more dramatic example of rivalry occurs between Antissia and Lucenia, who forge a bond through their animosity towards each other as well as towards Amphilanthus, who has spurned their love. After they meet, Lucenia leaves Antissia "a more unquiet woman then shee found her, adding to the aptnesse of her amorous nature, correcting her thoughts, and making dangerous additions to her passion" (362). Such contention, however, rather than being antithetical to friendship, seems foundational to it: through animosity, these two women forge a "vertuous friendship" (362). As these examples suggest, women's friendship in Wroth's work, differently from the classical model of friendship, includes zones of difference, animosity and competition that maintain a level of distinction between self and other that her friendships also strive to dismantle. The text, therefore, troubles the very vision of harmony it projects through female friendships, presenting these bonds as forms of utopias that doubt their own aspirations. Such episodes of rivalry or contention serve as sites of recharge for the utopian project; they act as occasions to start over and reimagine future outcomes. They thus expand the critical utopian project: in this sense, a critical utopia is not just, as Tom Moylan observes, a utopia "aware of its own limitations," but it is also one that draws on its own limits as a sources of strength.

This failure to dissolve boundaries fully is equally apparent in the relationship between women and nature. Not only do the pathetic fallacies, despite showing nature's empathy for women, maintain a human-centric point of view, tending to frame the landscape as a response to women's emotions rather than a fully independent actor, but female characters actively harm to nature by carving trees to express their fraught emotions. In a moment that revises an episode in the *Old Arcadia* in which the eloping lovers Pamela and Musidorus "engrave" duet poems into the bark of pen trees, Pamphilia engraves one of her sonnets onto an ash tree: "taking a knife, shee finished a Sonnet, which at other times shee had begunne to ingrave in the barke of one of those fayre and

straight Ashes, causing that sapp to accompany her teares for love, that for unkindnesse" (65-66). While this tree, by absorbing Pamphilia's suffering, serves the function of an empathetic 'friend,' as Vin Nardizzi and Miriam Jacobson observe, Pamphilia does violence to this being when she calls it to "imitate the Torments of my smart" (93).[403] This violence is heightened by her competitive relationship with Antissia, who, after having observed Pamphilia, at the height of her jealousy, goes into the woods and writes her own sonnet: "under the same Ashe, wherein the other affectionate afflicated Princesse had written the Sonnet, she was invited either by her own passion, or the imitation of that excellent Lady, to put some of her thoughts in some kind of measure, so as shee perplexed with love, jealousie, and losse as shee beleev'd made this Sonnet" (114). Here, the imitative impulse of friendship is directed towards jealousy and destruction, as Antissia writes on the tree that has already suffered from Pamphilia's carving. Later in the narrative, Musalina, yet another rival for Amphilanthus's love, similarly imparts suffering onto a tree as she writes her "sad rimes" on it, making "the poor tree [feel] the cruelty which she said was inflicted on her" (498). These women's carvings, which ironically restage the violence that, in Nancy Vicker's theorization, the male sonneteer enacts on the female body, bind women to each other and the natural world but in a manner that foregrounds division and violence rather than unity.[404] These 'friendships' between women and the natural world thus, even as they model an erasure of boundaries, also countermand this blurring of divisions between self/other and human/nature and reify these divisions as sites of contention and discord. Unlike the more radical and optimist utopias of Kempe and Ward, Wroth, through the vehicle of women's friendship, models a critical utopia that registers the challenges to

[403] Vin Nardizzi and Miriam Jacobson, "The Secrets of Grafting in Wroth's *Urania*," in *Ecofeminist Approaches to Early Modernity*, ed. Jennifer Munroe and Rebecca Laroche (New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2011), 175–94.

[404] Nancy Vickers, "Members Only: Marot's Anatomical Blazons," in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3-22.

forging harmony in a world that includes difference and individual desires. Her protestant, secular romance lacks the hope that women's religious community offered the nuns of Syon and Mary Ward; instead we find a model of friendship that steps back from utopianism even as it proposes it.

Women's Friendship as an Alternative Utopia in Cavendish's *Blazing World*

In the second part of the *Urania* (c.1621-1630), Veralinda advises Pamphilia that she should "be the Emperess of the world commanding the Empire of your owne minde" (II.112).[405] If read out of context, this quotation might seem to come from an altogether different source: Cavendish's *The Blazing World,* in which two friends work together to build worlds in their own minds. While the blurring of binaries in *The Blazing World* has been explored, the role of women's friendship in this phenomenon has not. Indeed, friendship has not often been a point of focus in studies of *The Blazing World*, an omission that may be attributable to the facts that the Duchess and the Empress are read as different aspects of the author rather than as fully separate people and that the narrative, therefore, seems to be focused on the desires of one woman. What is often forgotten is that this woman's desires come to fruition through the support of a female friend. Not only is *The Blazing World* dedicated "To All Noble and Worthy Ladies" but it portrays the friendships between the Empress and the Duchess as the most important relationship in the narrative. Reading Cavendish through Wroth elucidates how the friendship between the Duchess and the Empress serves as a utopian alternative to the Blazing World itself. Moreover, this pairing spotlights how the former's portrayal of women's friendship, even as it exemplifies an interconnected natural world that resonates with Cavendish's vitalistic natural philosophy, also troubles this vision by including competition and jealousy, enacting a skepticism that is not generally noted in Cavendish's work.

The Blazing World's narrative is replete with hybrid forms. The story begins with a romance-like abduction and shipwreck, as a merchant kidnaps a young lady and brings her aboard a ship that

[405] *The Second Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania,* ed. Josephine A. Roberts, Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1999).

is blown to the North Pole, where all the men onboard freeze to death. The lady, however, survives and travels to a new paradisiacal world, the Blazing World, where she marries and becomes empress. The subsequent portion of the narrative transitions to a more utopian plot, in the manner of More or Bacon, exemplifying generic hybridity. Not only is this new world attached at the North Pole to the earth, rendering it at once part of and other to the known world, blurring the binary between known and unknown, but its architectural spaces fuse the spatial categories of inner and outer, public and private. The Emperor's palace contains "a Cloyster, the outward part whereof stood upon Arches sustained by Pillars, but the inner part was close" (161), a description that blends the concealment of private space with the exposure of the public.[406] The Emperor's apartment equally overlays public display and private concealment as it is "no more inclosed then the rest; onely an Imperial Throne was in every appartment, of which the several adornments could not be perceived until one entered, because the Pillars were so just opposite to one another, that all the adornments could not be seen at once" (161). This apartment is both open and closed, modeling utopia's desire to imagine something new that exists beyond available categories. This play between categories manifests on a different register in the hybrid men-beasts whom the lady encounters: "some were Bear-men, some Worm-men, some Fish-or Mear-men, otherwise called Syrens; some Bird-men, some Fly-men, some Ant-men, some Geese-men, some Spider-men, some Lice-men, some Fox-men, some Ape-men, some Jack daw-men, some Magpie-men, some Parrot-men, some Satyrs, some Gyants, and many more" (163). Mixing the animal and the human, these beings disrupt divisions between categories to imagine something different. Such spatial and existential hybridities enact utopia's critique of established categories, which, in the *Urania,* is situated in women's friendships.

While the utopia in *The Blazing World* is generally understood to be the Blazing World itself, when read in context of Wroth's work, women's friendship emerges as an alternative utopia that at

[406] All quotations are from *Paper Bodies: a Margaret Cavendish Reader,* ed. Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press 2000).

once resembles and improves on the hybridity of the geographical space. The intimacy of the Empress and Duchess's friendship figuratively reproduces the mixings of inner and outer, self and other that we find in the Blazing World's architecture and population. After the invisible spirits bring the Duchess to the Empress to assist in writing the Empress's Cabbalah, the two quickly become friends: "their meeting did produce such an intimate friendship between them, that they became Platonick Lovers, although they were both Females" (210). As in Wroth's romance, this friendship blurs the lines between the women's individual selves as they become like "several parts of one united body," an image that evokes Celina's comparison of her friends to a single cloth. Cavendish's friends fuse with each other literally as well as figuratively when, on multiple occasions, they travel between the Blazing World and the known world by entering each other's bodies. As their friendship develops, the Empress invites the Duchess's soul to reside in her own body: "Your Soul, said the Empress, shall live with my Soul, in my Body; for I shall onely desire your Counsel and Advice" (234). As the Duchess's soul enters her friend's body, the women inverse classical friendship's image of "two bodies, one soul" and instead become two souls in one body, introducing a hybrid model of female friendship that both simulates and revises traditional male friendship theory.

Just as women's friendship in *The Floure and the Leafe, The Assembly of Ladies* and the *Urania* challenges traditional friendship's emphasis on a pair as these bonds extend outward to include larger groups of women, the Empress and Duchess's friendship expands to accommodate the Duchess's husband. When the Empress and Duchess visit the Duke, both of their souls enter his body: "And then the Duke had three Souls in one Body; and had there been some such Souls more, the Duke would have been like the Grand-Signior in his Seraglio, onely it would have been a Platonick Seraglio…The Conversation of these three souls was so pleasant, that it cannot be expressed" (222). This cohabitation of the Duke's body expands the women's friendship, both

challenging the notion of what a body is and merging the eroticism of triangulated desire with the Platonic, a common blend in early modern friendship, but one far more often applied to male relationships.[407] In this spiritual threesome, Cavendish renders a hybrid form not unlike the beast-men bodies of the Blazing World's inhabitants, but, as this bond ultimately proves more sustaining for both women than the Blazing World itself, women's friendship, which in this case is triangulated with erotic heterosexual desire, emerges as a superior form of utopia.

The role of the friendship between the duchess and empress as a utopia, a good place that is no place, further emerges in the world-making activities in which the women engage through each other's influence. While the Blazing World comes to the Empress ready-made, the Duchess's influence enables her to create her own world. This desire to make a new world comes, unsurprisingly if we have read Wroth, from melancholy: "One time, when the Duchess her Soul was with the Empress, she seem'd to be very sad and melancholy" (210). When Empress asks her "the reason of her Melancholick humour," she declares, "my ambition is, that I would fain be as you are, that is an Empress of a world" (210-211). After she is advised to create her own "celestial world" (212), the Duchess initially seeks to model this world after doctrines of famous philosophers but eventually decides to make "a World of her own Invention:"

> and this World was composed of sensitive and rational self-moving Matter; indeed, it was composed onely of the Rational, which is the subtilest and purest degree of Matter; for asthe Sensitive did move and act both to the perceptions and consistency of the body, so this degree of Matter at the same point of time (for though the degrees are mixt, yet the several parts may move several ways at one time) did move to the Creation of the Imaginary World. (215)

This world, like a utopia, unites opposites: it is composed only of one type of matter, but this matter contains parts that move in multiple ways; it is both "well order'd" and "full of variety." Catherine

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[407] The seminal study of triangulated desire is Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). For exceptions to the traditional application of triangulation to men, see Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

Gallagher has read world making in *The Blazing World* as a manifestation of the Duchess's desire to be the absolute monarch of herself, but, crucially, the Duchess's admiration of the Empress catalyzes the world's creation, and its forms mirror their relationship: just as their souls move in one body, the rational parts of matter move together to create the imaginary world.[408] World building thus serves as a figure for female friendship just as female friendship enables the building of worlds.

Friendship also inspires the Empress to create her own imaginary world. After she sees the Duchess's world, the Empress is "so ravished with the perception of it" (216) that she desires to inhabit it. This ravishment evokes wonder, which Bloch sees as a precondition for utopia. Wonder, which was included as a passion by René Descartes in the early modern period, Bloch argues, is the necessary cognitive shock that precipitates "the cracks and crevices in ordinary, conventional perception" that lead to utopian foresightedness.[409] For Bloch, wonder allows people to see beyond the static present and to gain purchase on the future. In the Empress's case, wonder at her friend's creation allows her to see beyond her present life in a world that belongs to her husband to the possibility of her own world. While she initially seeks to inhabit the Duchess's world, her friend advises her instead "to make such another World in her own mind; for, said she, your Majesty's mind is full of rational corporeal motions; and the rational motions of my mind shall assist you by the help of sensitive expressions, with the best Instructions they are able to give you" (216). This depiction performs the blending of forms to make a single whole, challenging the distinction between the two women's minds as well as, again recalling Wroth, between the real and the imaginary. The friendship between the Duchess and Empress thus not only resembles the Blazing World in its hybrid forms, but it proves to be more empowering for the women, as it enables them to make their own worlds. As in Wroth's romance, Cavendish's friendship challenges the established

[408] C. Gallagher, "Embracing the Absolute," 24-39.

[409] Bloch, *A Philosophy of the Future*, 4. On Descartes' treatment of wonder, see René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul and Other Late Philosophical Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

categories of the present to imagine something better for women. Critics have often observed that *The Blazing World* exemplifies Cavendish's natural philosophy of a vitalistic feminized natural world, which is delineated in a work attached to the utopian text, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy.*[410] Because nature is ever-changing, constantly moving and creating itself anew, contrary to experimental scientists, Cavendish argues that the natural world was impervious to scholarly dissection. She produces a theory of ecology as she argues that "sense and reason are the same in all creatures and parts of nature," where "all creatures" include humans, animals, vegetables, and minerals as living beings (*OEP*, 128). In this same work, Cavendish argues that Reason is "nothing but corporeal self-motion, or a particle of the purest, most subtil and active part of matter." Why then, she asks, should the human "be the onely Creature that partakes of this soul of Nature," and why the rest of Creation "should be soulless or (which is all one) irrational." She contends that the Reason permeates all nature: "I do not deny that a Stone has Reason" (*OEP*, 45-46).[411] It has already been noted that Cavendish's view of nature as possessing worlds within worlds "reflects the *mise en abyme* that takes place in the multiple (and possibly endless) division and regression of female

[410] *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, ed. Eileen O'Neill (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001). On Cavendish's natural philosophy, see Sylvia Bowerbank, "The Spider's Delight: Margaret Cavendish and the Female Imagination," *ELR* (1984): 392-408; Sarah Hutton, "Anne Conway, Margaret Cavendish, and Seventeenth-Century Scientific thought" in *Women, Science and Medicine, 1500–1700*, eds. Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 218–34; Eve Keller, "Producing Petty Gods: Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Science," *ELH* 64.2 (1997): 447-471; Rebecca Merrens, "A Nature of Infinite Sense and Reason," *Women's Studies: An inter-disciplinary journal* (2010): 421-438; John Rogers, "Margaret Cavendish and the Gendering of the Vitalist Utopia," in *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 177-211; and Lisa Sarasohn, "A Science Turned Upside Down, Feminism and the Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 4 (1994): 289-307.

[411] As Sylvia Bowerbank argues, "these insights into nature's vital connectiveness resemble the ideas of Anne Conway and others." Bowerbank, "the Spider's Delight."

subjectivity within the souls and created worlds of both the Duchess and the Empress."[412] Equally, some scholars have observed that the relationship between the women friends exemplifies this theory: just as *The Blazing World* depicts the Empress and the Duchess as "several parts of one united body" (210-211), in Cavendish's scientific theory, nature's parts, even as they possess individual, interior self-knowledge, share "one Infinite natural knowledge," in which movement occurs through mutual perception and sympathy between parts (119). However, even as Cavendish's portrayal of female subjectivity reflects her view of nature's harmony, the relationship between the Empress and the Duchess also challenges this theory.[413] Attending to this dimension of the work can elucidate an additional complication within Cavendish's natural philosophy as well as in her theory of women's friendship.

While the Empress follows the Duchess's advice to dissolve disputing societies and leave the Blazing World "ordered and settled…to the best advantage" (230), the Empress and Duchess's friendship, like the *Urania*'s female bonds, includes jealousy and rivalry. These impulses activate a critical utopia in that they act as fissures in the text's vision of harmonious amity. They reveal the dark side of ideal structures of social becoming, but in doing so they lay the groundwork for reparative work in the future. The tension or division between *The Blazing World*'s friends is visible, first, in the fact that the women create their own imaginary worlds rather than choosing to inhabit each other's. More overtly, when the Duchess and Empress enter the Duke's body, the former initially grows jealous of her friend: "the Duke's Soul being wise, honest, witty, complaisant and noble, afforded such delight and pleasure to the Empress's Soul by his conversation, that these two souls became enamoured of each other; which the Duchess's soul perceiving, grew jealous…" (223).

[412] Daniel Richard, *Spectacle, Sex, and Property in Eighteenth Century Literature and Culture* (New York: AMS, 2015), 83. C. Gallagher, Sherman, Trubowitz and Sarajohn have all written about female subjectivity in *The Blazing World* and have argued that like nature, it is open to infinite alteration.

[413] On the Blazing World's reflection of Cavendish's natural philosophy, see Angus Fletcher, "The Irregular Aesthetic of The Blazing-World," *SEL* 47.1 (2007).

The duchess eventually recovers from this jealousy, "considering that no Adultery could be committed amongst Platonick Lovers" (223), but its trace lingers in the narrative. Indeed, a different kind of jealousy echoes in the epilogue, in which Cavendish addresses her readers:

> And if any should like the world I have made, and be willing to be my subjects, they may imagine themselves such, and they are such, I mean in their minds, fancies or imaginations but if they cannot endure to be subjects, they may create worlds of their own…let them have a care, not to prove unjust Usurpers, and rob me of mine" (251).

This epilogue celebrates the integration of future friends into the Duchess's world but also jealously guards against its infiltration. Thus, not only does the friendship between the Empress and Duchess produce jealousy, but this sense of rivalry pervades later parts of the book, projecting into the future.

This competitive and exclusive aspect of the women's friendship in *The Blazing World* accompanies an aggressive treatment of the natural world that counters Cavendish's anti-atomistic natural philosophy. As Daniel Richards argues, "while Cavendish repudiated the dominance that experimental philosophers sought over nature, [in *The Blazing World*] it is the physical utilization of nature the eventually mobilizes the female subject to a position of complete power and dominion, revealing…an uncontested Baconian rise to power over nature."[414] Crucially, the Empress's Baconian harnessing of nature arises from her cooperation with the Duchess. When her native country is invaded, the Empress follows the Duchess's advice because she "loved the Duchess as her own soul" (234) and sends her hybrid men to wreck havoc on surrounding nations to "give them a proof of her Power, and check their Obstinacies by burning some of their smaller Towns" (240). The Worm-men use natural resources by laying fire-stones that burn towns when rain falls, forcing nearby kingdoms to submit the Empress's native country. When one nation resists, it is punished by "a flowing Tide" that causes "not onely a destruction of their Houses, but also a general barrenness over all their Countrey that year" (241). The Empress's domineering channeling of nature in these instances as a weapon against other humans opposes Cavendish's depiction

[414] Richard, 84.

elsewhere in her oeuvre of a matter that moves sympathetically. Instead, such examples create a sense of division between beings that is prefaced by the divisive relationship between the Empress and her friend.

In addition to understanding these at once divisive and intimate friendship in terms of questions of female subjectivity and theories of nature, we could also read them in terms of the different political climates in which Wroth and Cavendish were operating. Wroth was working in the midst of the European conflicts that resulted in the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648).[415] Josephine Roberts argues for the centrality of the "political fantasy" of the return of the Holy Roman Empire in the West to the *Urania,* demonstrating how Wroth casts her central male character, Amphilanthus, in the role of an emperor who unifies the western world.[416] If we read her female friendships as operating within this nexus, we can then see how they add a further layer to this fantasy: even as they envision harmony between entities, between women but also between states, they forecast the breakdown of a such a vision. Cavendish was responding to a different political problem: the English Civil Wars, which had led to her own exile from her country. Thus, where Wroth's divisions connote the rifts between nations, the rivalry between Cavendish's friends, who have often been read as different facets of her own being, dramatize the ruptures within a self—and thus figuratively within a single nation. Female friendships in both texts, therefore, act as figurative utopias that are each aware of their own limits but function differently according to the disparate political situations

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[415] Several scholars have explored how the *Urania* engages with these conflicts. Julie Crawford argues that Wroth's agenda included "a militant and internationalist Protestantism; a limited or mixed monarchy, particularly the political rights of the aristocracy, including the right to counsel; and the value of what has been called 'practically active' or 'political' humanism." *Mediatrix: Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 8-9. Bernadette Andrea argues that the *Urania* engages with the threat posed to Christian Europe by the Ottoman empire. "Pamphilia Cabinet: Gendered Authorship and Empire in Lady Mary Wroth's 'Urania'" *ELH* (2001): 335-358. See also Paul Salzman, *Literature and Politics in the 1620s: "Whisper'd Counsells* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[416] Roberts, "Critical Introduction," *Part One*, xlvii.

in which their authors found themselves. The critical aspects of their utopian friendships, however, do not negate the utopian vision: rather, they allow for alternative forms of utopia that remain open to revision.

Towards a New Model of Utopia

Though Cavendish may have dismissed Wroth as "the Lady that wrote the Romancy," her utopian work participates in a parallel project to that of her predecessor that also draws on romance: both women frame female friendship as a form of utopianism that remains aware of its own limits—and, thus, opens spaces for contingencies that do not foreclose the narrative outcomes of utopian imagining. It is impossible to ascertain the degree to which Cavendish deliberately borrowed from Wroth, but it seems clear that the later author was interested in modeling speculative thinking within women's friendships and thus would have drawn, consciously or unconsciously, on one of the only English sources to have already done so. Their work, in conversation with the medieval romances *The Floure and the Leafe* and *The Assembly of Ladies*, conveys how women's friendship can act as windows onto larger utopian philosophical and political ideals. Moreover, these works draw on the capaciousness and liminality of romance to chart an alternative path for utopia that transcends the narrow literary genre. By articulating a form of future-oriented thinking that is grounded in affinities between particular women and that values difference, contention and rivalry, Wroth and Cavendish craft a utopianism that diverges from those who followed them. Later women's utopian works, such as Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), Sara Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762) and, much later, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), represent homogenous separatist communities of women that deny preference for particular individuals and thus devalue friendship. This view of utopia has persisted into the present: feminist utopian scholar Frances Bartkowski writes, "community is the keyword of the 'entire utopian mode.'"[417] These romances root their utopian

[417] Bartkowski, 5.

thinking in friendship rather than homogenous community and so offer a variant model that incorporates individuality and division, preserving boundaries even as they dissolve them. In this, they present a corollary to the Augustinian notion of the secular that also emerges in the writings of Kempe and Ward: they imagine a space that holds difference in balance with unity, bringing unlike subject together to find a kind of unity. Romance utopias, however, different from what we find in religious women's communities, exemplify a mode of utopia that lacks some of the unbounded optimism that appears in other feminotopias. This mode of critical utopia manifests greater awareness of its own limitations. Rather than conveying pessimism or the renunciation of possibility, however, these works articulate a form of hope, as the connection between these writers of women's romance, some of whom would not have known each other's works, looks forward to the possibility of a women's literary community that transcends time and space.

Conclusion

Sisters of the Future

This dissertation has traced diverse strains of utopian thought in a wide array of medieval and early modern women's sources— religious and non-religious, fictional and historical, visual and textual. I have argued that Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* enacts a *bricolage*-mode of utopianism that synthesizes competing viewpoints. Her work gathers strength from the opposing discourses that it integrates and produces radical models of gender and authorship that retain some of their more conservative foundations. This feminotopian bricolage strategy carries over into Brian Anslay's English translation of the *City* and destabilizes Anslay's presentation of autonomous male authorship and courtly identity. The nuns of Syon Abbey used a similar bricolage tactic as they reworked male-authored representations of themselves as weak women to claim spiritual authority and position their community as the bearer of a once-and-future English Catholicism. Religious radicals Margery Kempe and Mary Ward established a feminotopianism that used queer modes of temporality to establish an Augustinian secularity as an alternative mode of communal belonging in the form of a nationhood that centers on women's community. Finally, English women's literary fictions, *The Floure and the Leafe, The Assembly of Ladies,* Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* and Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World,* continued these feminotopian synthesizing practices, but, by focusing on women's friendship, they produced 'weaker' models of utopia that incorporate skepticism of the challenging of norms and blurring binaries that utopian thinking promises. These women developed feminotopias that differ in their contours but partake in shared strategies of bricolage, inversion, besideness, plurality and non-dualism to produce women-centered models of agency, subjectivity, friendship and community. In a time when women were not widely considered to be political subjects, feminotopianism functioned as a heuristic for thinking through new possibilities for women's political belonging.

While these works have clear implications for understandings of early women's politics and responses to historical situations, they also have the transhistorical potential to shed light on more recent women's utopian writings. While utopia is widely recognized as a mode of feminist critique in the twentieth century, modern women's utopias are usually read as emerging solely from the feminist movement. I suggest, however, that reading such works also in terms of a longer history of women's utopian writing, including the one this project has delineated, can offer new avenues of exploration. Rather than reading earlier works as back-formations of twentieth-century utopias, I argue that these works mutually speak to each other. Attending to their conversations reveals both the utopianism of the earlier works and the unrecognized complexities of the later works' utopian visions.

For instance, reading Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* in conversation with Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies* elucidates the comprises that feminotopias often make and the ways in which even the most radical women's visions can contain regressive elements. By spotlighting its own bricolage of misogyny Christine's ideal city brought traces of anti-woman materials into its vision of female virtue, and by foregrounding examples of historical and mythological evidence, Christine created a city that seems to exist solely of aristocratic women to the exclusion of other voices. Similarly, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland,* one of the first women's utopias of the twentieth century, represents an ideal world of women but also reinforces women's roles as reproducers and reflects Gilman's eugenics background. As Gilman narrates the story of three men who discover an isolated land populated solely by parthogenically-reproducing women, she critics the relegation of women to a life of domesticity, but she also emphasizes racial sameness promoting a white-supremacist viewpoint. Produced at around the same time, Bangladeshi author Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain's "Sultana's Dream," rather than dismantling gender norms, reverses them to produce a society in which men stay indoors and women rule. These early twentieth-century works enact a similar bricolage to that of Christine—they use pieces of the values they aim to dismantle to portray

worlds in which women are superior to men. While these works represent radical forms of female agency, they also reproduce the oppression they aim to dismantle in different forms. Looking at these early twentieth-century utopias in terms of Christine's helps illuminate their use of bricolage to challenge the status quo and the complications that develop from this strategy.

While these utopias reveal weaknesses that were likely not the principle intention of their authors, Ursula Le Guin, writing in the midst of second-wave feminism, produced an ambiguous utopia that resonates with the critical utopias of Wroth and Cavendish. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974) presents two worlds, Anarres and Urras. While Anarres initially seems to be the more utopian of the two, as it privileges women's rights and environmentalism, the novel is also critical of the anarchy that governs the planet, drawing comical attention to the impossibility of decision-making in this world. We can see Le Guin's exploration of utopian ambiguity as a feminist strategy when we look at it in conjunction with Cavendish's and Wroth's self-critical utopias. Like these writers, Le Guin produces a utopia that, while it offers hope for a better future, is also critical of zealous idealism.

Octavia Butler is another writer who intermingles utopia and dystopia, adding religion to this mix in her *Parable series*. This two-book series focuses on Lauren Oya Olamina, a woman who possesses hyper-empathy—the ability to feel the pain of others. Growing up in the remnants of a gated community near Los Angeles, she develops a new belief system, which she calls Earthseed. When her home is destroyed and her family is murdered, she travels north and encounters a chaotic society rife with animosity between races and religions. As a reaction to this strife, Lauren gathers followers to found a community based on her new belief system: the first Earthseed community, Acorn, in Northern California. Butler, different from many feminist dystopias, argues for the

positive influence of Christian fundamentalism as a non-dogmatic belief system on world making.[418] While some construe her turn to religion as an anomaly among science fiction writers, this recourse to faith is less surprising in light of premodern women's utopianism. Just as for Catholic women Margery Kempe and Mary Ward as well as the nuns of Syon, spiritual community offered a means of escaping hegemonic masculinity, faith offered Lauren a means of moving beyond the oppressions of the present and of viewing the world otherwise. Considering these earlier women's communities in light of Butler's work draws attention to the ways in which the women in my project did not simply reproduce religious dogma; rather, they reinvented religion for their own purposes, using its tenets to make the case for female authority.

The critical utopias in my project also foreshadow the emergence of a genre that is often considered utopia's inverse: dystopia. Dystopia would become a preferred genre for feminist writers in the West from the 1970s onward, with Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) as one of the better-known examples. In the story of Offred, a woman who is becomes a breeder in a world ruled by religious fanatics, Atwood enatcs the inverse of Butler's hope surrounding religion. However, as the failures of Syon Abbey and the critical utopias of Wroth and Cavendish show, utopia and dystopia are not as clearly divided as they might appear: dystopia in polarity necessarily points to its opposite. Its despair acts as a call for change that is itself utopian. The narrative structure of this novel, which moves back and forth between Offred's life before the totalitarian regime and after so that Offred's present is never truly separate from her past, recalls the queer temporality of premodern utopias that asynchronously draw on the past to model different futures.

[418] On Butler's use of religion, see Donna Spalding Andréolle, "Utopias of Old, Solutions for the New Millennium: A Comparative Study of Christian Fundamentalism in M. K. Wren's *A Gift upon the Shore* and Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*," *Utopian Studies* 12.2 (2001): 114-123; Philip H.Jos, "Fear and the Spiritual Realism of Octavia Butler's Earthseed," *Utopian Studies* 23.2 (2012): 408–429.

The political power of literature like Atwood's dystopian novel is manifest in its citation in signs at the 2017 Women's March.[419]

Premodern women's utopias show that utopia is far from straightforward—to envision a woman's utopia was and is a radical act that necessitates self-preservation and caution alongside dissent and subversion. The commonalities between these twentieth-century authors and the writers in this dissertation bear witness not to direct influence but rather to common strategies for resistance to oppression and efforts to give political value to unheard voices. This project has endeavored to do the same.

[419] The novel has seen a 200% rise in sales since the presidential election last November and has recently been adapted for television with a Hulu series slated to run for several seasons.

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