Figure 5: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke. Engraving by Simon van der Passe (National Portrait Gallery, London).
Mary Sidney also edited her brother's work posthumously. She prepared an improved edition of his *Arcadia*, and assumed responsibility for its publication in 1593. In 1598 she authorised another edition that collected Sidney's works, including the *Defence of Poetry*, *Certain Sonnets*, the *Lady of May*, and the first complete editions of all the Astrophil sonnets, that corrected Thomas Nashe's corrupt edition of 1591. Furthermore, Mary Sidney finished the translation projects that her brother had initiated. She completed Sir Philip's translation of the Psalms into English, and followed him in translating Phillipe de Mornay's *Discours de la Vie et de la Mort* in 1592. Apart from this, she undertook translations of texts which met the standards outlined by her brother in his *Defence of Poesy* (published in 1595). For instance, Mary Sidney translated Robert Garnier's Senecan tragedy *Antoine* into English, thereby launching a Continental dramatic form which her brother had deemed more refined than most English drama that was performed in the public playhouses.

Editing her brother's work, being involved with the translation projects which he had commenced, and acting as a patroness to men of letters, Mary Sidney may have created the illusion that her engagement with writing was at one remove from actual creativity. A close look at her oeuvre reveals that Sidney perhaps employed her representation as the instrument of her brother's voice as the means to mask her verbal assertion. By undertaking translations for which her brother had laid the basis, Sidney could present the translated texts as more her brother's than her own, and thus veil her utterance. By committing the edited works of her brother to print, Mary Sidney not only helped to mitigate the stigma of publication in general, but also opened up the way for the publication of her own texts at a later stage.

Most works by Mary Sidney are marked by a tension between a feminine modesty and a masculine self-assertion. There appears to be a contradiction between Mary Sidney's translation of Mornay's text, which argues against ambition and showing off in public, and her urge to have her translation published under her own name, without an apology, rather than have her work circulate in the domestic sphere. Sidney's resort to a reproductive rather than creative mode of writing in her translation of Petrarch's text suggests modesty. Yet this modesty appears at odds with the vibrant, speaking Laura that can be found in Petrarch's writing, and that suggests possibilities for constructing a female voice and a speaking female

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4 This was actually "part of a series of translations of the Huguenot leader's work undertaken by Philip and his continental allies" (Hannay, 1991, 220).
5 See Mary Sidney's translation, *Discourse of Life and Death*, 1600, B4r: "Come we to ambition, which by a greedinesse of honour fondly holdeth occupied the greatest persons. Thinke we there to finde more? Nay, rather lesse".
In addition, Sidney's reluctance to have the *Psalmes* issued in print is in discord with the bold claims of authorship that she makes in her dedication as well as in the text of the translation itself. In her dedication of the text to queen Elizabeth I, "Even now that Care" (1590s), Mary Sidney emphasises her role as the translator/writer of the text by stating that her brother "but …did warpe, I weav'd this webb to end" (1998, 27). When the queen came to visit her household Wilton in 1592, Mary Sidney wrote a dramatic dialogue for the occasion, "In Praise of Astraea". Although she had the boldness to engage with the public form of drama, albeit a dramatic display which was confined to the domestic sphere of household entertainment, at the same time Sidney stresses the need to "speak in measure" and confine oneself to "silence" (1998, 58-59) in this dramatic writing.

The other original works which Sidney produced are equally marked by an oscillation between a womanly depreciation of her poetic abilities on the one hand, and a bold assertion of voice on the other hand. Choosing actively to produce literary texts rather than just reproduce other authors' writings in a different language, Sidney overstepped the boundaries of womanly propriety. Yet, at the same time, most of these original works, "To the Angell Spirit" (1590s) and "The Doleful Lay of Clorinda" (1595), belonged to the genre of the epitaph. This genre "provided non-threatening outlets for their author's learning and poetic skills" (Lamb, 1985, 120), because they reinforced the writer's central womanly concerns with devotion and dependence. Both poems are marked by a tension between two contradictory discourses. For example, in "The Doleful Lay of Clorinda, a Pastoral Ode to the Memory of Sir Philip Sidney" Mary Sidney adopts the role of the poet who appropriates the right to define Sir Philip: "Who ever made such lays of love as he?/Nor ever read the riddles, which he said" (G1v). Simultaneously, however, she distances herself from the position of poet, and even denies her own poetic activity in the commemoration of Sir Philip. By emphasising her brother's merits as a maker of love lays, Sidney shifts the attention from her poem to the literary works by her brother. The suggestion is made by the persona that the sense of mourning which she voices is not meant to be publicly heard: "Ay me! To whom shall I my case complain/ That may compassion my impatient grief?/ Or where shall I unfold my inward pain…Then to myself will I my sorrow mourn" (G1r). This representation of her elegy as a private utterance is in contrast with the idea that her voice will be heard and known throughout the universe. Sidney appears to colonise the whole world with her discourses:

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7 See Nichols, III, 1823, 529.
"The woods, the hills, the rivers shall resound/ The mournful accents of my sorrow's ground"
(G1v). Thus, the poem is essentially dialogic as far as Sidney's depiction of herself as a poet mourner is concerned.⁸

Despite the anxiety that Sidney manifested about her position as a woman poet, she was highly esteemed by many men of letters in her days. Notably, in their appraisals of Mary Sidney these male literary contemporaries depicted her as virtuous, while acknowledging her status as a poet. Nicholas Breton called Mary Sidney "the Right, Honourable, discreet, and vertuous Lady" (1601, STC3684, A2r) in his description of her literary achievements. One could argue that this portrayal of Mary Sidney as sexually and morally honourable by male poets from her period may have to do with their dependence upon her support as patroness. After all, the poet Nashe whose edition of Arcadia was rejected as corrupt, and who did not receive the patronage he sought from the Countess of Pembroke, expressed a very negative view on Sidney. He drew the common analogy between the female poet and the prostitute. He insinuated that Sidney as a patron opened her "purse" to "pedantical Parasites" (1958, 10-11), the image of the open purse also alluding to her vagina. However, the dominant representation of Mary Sidney as sexually virtuous gives the impression that her discourses of modesty, as well as her major concern with feminine literary activities, successfully helped to avert social criticism.

4.2. The Tragedie of Antonie as a Translation.

While Mary Sidney's dramatic dialogue "In Praise of Astraea" consisted of original writing, her other engagement with drama was her translation of Robert Garnier's Senecan tragedy Antoine. According to Danielle Clarke, translation was "central to Early Modern pedagogy", constituting "a primary means by which textual interpretation was undertaken" (1997, 151).⁹ A considerable number of men, such as Thomas Kyd who translated Garnier's tragedy Cornélie, engaged with translation to further a career in law or administration, the translation of particular texts offering them the means of establishing their political affiliations.

Although male writers thus committed themselves to translation, translating was identified with the female sex. In his preface to the translation of Montaigne's Essais (1603),

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⁸ A similar double-voiced discourse with regard to her role as female poet, can be found in Mary Sidney's "To the Angell spirit". As Beth Fisken has stated: "If the theme of "To the Angell spirit..." is her unworthiness, the style in which that unworthiness is expressed is an affirmation of both her ambition and her talent" (1990, 272). Mary Ellen Lamb reaches similar conclusions (1986, 207-26).

⁹ Likewise, as Suzanne Trill has suggested, "Translation may be fairly described as a central part of English Renaissance culture" (1996, 141), since, as an activity, it was taken up by many writers of the period.
John Florio suggested that translations are "reputed femalls, delivered by second hand" (1903, 5) thus associating translating with femininity. In fact, many Renaissance women, such as Anne Cooke-Bacon, Elizabeth I, Anne Locke, Joanna Lumley, Dorcas Martin, Margaret Tyler and Margaret More-Roper undertook translation, since it was a literary activity envisaged as relatively permissible for a woman. Considered a reproductive rather than a creative form of writing, translation was thought not to involve women in the expression of their own voices, but in the reproduction of men's utterances. Thus, translation was regarded to constitute a lesser threat to woman's sexual virtue.

At the same time that translation was viewed as reproductive rather than creative, anxiety existed about the literal nature of women's translations. Both the foreign text and the translation are in some way marked by their moment of production. Consequently, they are "grounded within particular social and historical contexts...the specific affiliations of the translator, as well as the time and place in which s/he translates, can affect both the choice of the text to be translated and the method by which it is translated" (Trill, 1996, 143). Therefore, in analysing the representation of the female tragic subject in Sidney's translation of Robert Garnier's tragedy *Antoine*, it is important to consider the motivation for the choice of the text that she translated. In addition, it is essential to investigate the way in which she shifted the significance of the original play in the process.

The love story between Mark Antony and the Egyptian queen Cleopatra was a narrative taken up by many European playwrights in the sixteenth century. For example, the Venetian dramatist Count Giulio Landi wrote *La Vita di Cleopatra* in 1551; his countryman Celso Pistorelli produced *Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra* in 1576, and the Spanish playwright Diego Lopez de Castro became renowned for his *Marco Antonio Y Cleopatra* (1582). Mary Sidney selected Robert Garnier's *Antoine* for translation, beginning her work on the text in the year of Garnier's death, 1590, and supposedly following the 1585 edition of his works. In her translation, Sidney transforms Garnier's rhymed French alexandrines into blank verse, and normally uses rhyme only for emphasis. Sidney's choice to translate Garnier's Senecan drama, which consisted of long speeches rather than dramatic actions, seems logical considering the fact that her drama was meant as "closet drama". Although the text must have circulated among her household in Wilton, there is no evidence that the play was ever performed in this

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10 Also quoted in Trill, 1996, 147.
11 In other words, as Trill has argued, "One of the reasons that translation has been perceived to be an appropriate form of writing for women is precisely because it is deemed to preclude an expression of their own opinions" (1996, 147).
12 As Trill claims, this anxiety "betrays deeper concerns about the 'originality' of their work" (1996, 147).
domestic setting. Yet, since Wilton was a place where the dramatists Fulke Greville, Samuel Daniel and Thomas Kyd often flocked together, and where dramatic entertainments were held for queen Elizabeth I, it is not completely unlikely that the closet drama was staged for a small audience of intimates. Considering the status of the play as closet drama, it is remarkable that Sidney consented to have her play published, since "the fact of publication…suggests that closet dramas did more than speak to public concerns in a relatively safe domestic environment" (Clarke, 1997, 153). The publication of her *Tragedie of Antonie* Sidney became the first woman in England to publish a play. There is no manuscript copy of the translation, which first appeared bound with *A Discourse of Life and Death* in 1592, issued by William Ponsonby. Within five years of publication the play went through two further editions. In analysing the play I have made use of the edition of 1595, which was based on the copy text of 1592. This copy text is merely divided into acts. Subsequent references will therefore be to the act numbers, and to make the discussion more verifiable to today's readers, I have added the line numbers given in Cerasano and Wynne-Davies's modern edition of the tragedy.

4.3. Cleopatra's "Sweet Voice" and Sexuality.

At a first glance, the tragedy translated by Mary Sidney appears to endorse the socially dominant discourse associating woman's speech with wantonness. Antonius assumes that Cleopatra is "disloyal" (I, 141) in her affections towards him. He bemoans the fact that Cleopatra's "words" (I, 100) have tempted him into a "wanton love" (I, 120), in which he is "scarce master"(I, 129) of himself. Thus creating the impression that Cleopatra's eloquent tongue has persuaded him into an adulterous relationship, Antonius implicitly draws an analogy between woman's speech and sexual looseness. Yet, this confirmation of the dominant gender discourses is countered by alternative discourses, which dissociate female utterance from sexual incontinence. As Cleopatra's secretary, Diomede, contends, Cleopatra is gifted with "training speech…forcing voice" (II, 484-85), "a sweet voice all Asia

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14 The Lord of Pembroke, Mary's husband, hosted the queen at Wilton from 3 to 6 September 1574. See Cole, 1999, 220.
15 As Coburn Freer remarks, Mary Sidney 's publication of her works was anomalous in a time when members of the nobility who wrote (and particularly women) circulated their manuscripts in private and discreetly avoided any appearance of cultivating a reading public" (1987, 484). While works by writers from the upper classes were often only issued in publication posthumously, Mary Sidney's translations were published during her lifetime, and she was acknowledged as the author on the title-pages of her works.
16 The play was published in a separate edition in 1595. See Davis and Joyce, 1992, 120.
understood" (II, 463), and proficiency in many languages: "Or hearing sceptred kings' ambassadors/ Answer to each in his own language made" (II, 487-88). However, as Diomede points out, Cleopatra disdains to use her smooth and eloquent tongue to "make a conquest of the conqueror" (II, 501). In other words, Diomede offers an alternative representation to Antonius's, by describing Cleopatra as a woman who manages to assert her voice expressively, but nevertheless is sexually virtuous. This deconstruction of the dominant association between the female voice and bawdiness is reinforced by Cleopatra's expressions of loyalty to Antonius throughout the play. For example, in defiance of Charmion's advice that her mistress should "leave off in time/ Antonie's wrack" (II, 287-88) to save her own skin, Cleopatra emphasises her infinite faithfulness to Antonius:

Sooner shining light
Shall leave the day…Than I, thee Antonie, leave in deep distress.
I am with thee…Antonie, thou shalt see
Thy princess follow thee. (II, 298-310)

As a closet drama The Tragedie of Antonie deals with subjects from two different perspectives, and therefore contains two contradictory discourses on woman's voice. In the light of this dialogic nature of Garnier's closet drama, the reason for Sidney's choice of translating Antoine seems obvious. Translating a play which balanced the dominant condemnation of female utterance with alternative discourses, Sidney could engage with a subversion of the idea that women ought to be silent, presenting it as just one way of thinking about the issue of the female voice. This alternative representation of woman's voice in the play extenuates the image of women who actively engage with discourse. The countervoices in the play implicitly condone Sidney's voice as a translator, hence her transgression of feminine silence.

Through her choice of words in her translation, Sidney appears to emphasise Cleopatra's virtue of her speeches even more than Garnier does. Garnier tends to lay more emphasis than Sidney on the relation between woman's speech and sexuality. His use of the term "amoureux charmes" (I, 736) as a categorisation of Cleopâtre's eloquence, and his description of her speeches as "mignardes", that is, those of a mistress, suggest that Cleopâtre's smooth tongue is a sexual tool. In Sidney's translation, these sexual allusions are

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18 It must be noted that in Samuel Daniel's The Tragedie of Cleopatra (1594-1623) Cleopatra does not disdain to use her charms in order to achieve what she wants. Making Dolabella enamoured with her, Cleopatra manages to make him reveal Caesar's plans with her: "What hath my face yet power to win a lover?/Can this torn remnant serve to grace me so/That it can Caesar's secret plots discover:/What he intends with me and mine to do?/Why then poor beauty thou hast done thy last,/And best good service thou could'st do unto me" (IV, 1082-89). Thus, Sidney's honourable Cleopatra contrasts with Daniel's representation of the Egyptian queen.
not present. Thus, the conventional equation of woman's voice with lust present in Garnier's tragedy, is further deconstructed by Sidney. This deconstruction of gender discourses in relation to the Cleopatra figure is notable considering the common depiction of the Egyptian queen as a lustful bawd in earlier and contemporary English literature. For example, in book VI of his Fall of Princes (1431) the poet Lydgate argues that Cleopatra "Caused Antonye that he destroyed was" (3633), because she induced him to "Folwyng ther lustis foul & abominable" (3636). Likewise, in Thomas Lodge's translation of Flavius Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews (1602) Cleopatra is depicted as "a slave to her lusts" who attempted to seduce king Herod. Her wantonness is related to speech: "she laid a treacherous snare for him, by aiming to obtain such adulterous conversations from him" (Book 15, chapter 4, S2v). This In William Shakespeare's later play Antony and Cleopatra (1607) Cleopatra is represented as a "strumpet" (I, i, 13), who slept with several men: "She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed;/ He plough'd her and she cropp'd" (II, ii, 236). At the same time she is far from "dull in tongue" (III, ii,16). Sidney's translation of a text in which the Cleopatra figure and her eloquence are dissociated from the notion of sexual looseness therefore signifies a breach with the English Cleopatra tradition in literature as well.

4.4. "The alabaster covering of her face": Cleopatra's Sexual Purity.

Despite the dialogic nature of Garnier's play and Sidney's translation, it becomes clear that the subversive gender discourse is implicitly privileged over the dominant view that woman's speech signals wantonness. Studying the character of Cleopatra in Garnier's original and Sidney's translation, one notices that the colour of her face, alabaster, is emphasised throughout the plot. Sidney's Diomede refers to Cleopatra's "alabaster covering of her face" (II, 432), as translated from Garnier's french "L'albastre qui blanchist sur son visage saint" (II, 713). Sidney's Eras expresses her admiration for Cleopatra's face made of "this fair alabaster" (II, 186). The identification of Cleopatra's face with alabaster plays a major role in the representation of her sexuality.

Suzy Beemer reveals that in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century usage "white" meant "morally or spiritually pure or stainless; spotless, unstained, innocent", and was commonly used "as a symbol of virginity" (1997, 234). By contrast, "black" was defined as "foul, iniquitous, atrocious" (1997, 234) and associated with sexual sin.19 As Dympna Callaghan

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19 Kim Hall similarly discusses the early modern association of whiteness with "order and control", and of blackness with "chaos and transgression" (1995, 63).
Mary Sidney's The Tragedie of Antonie

has remarked, women in plays often "have their moral coloring reflected in their skins" (1994, 174), in particular as far as their sexual morality is concerned. Applying Beemer's and Callaghan's claims to the texts of Garnier's tragedy and Sidney's translation, one can conclude that Cleopatra is represented as sexually and morally virtuous. That the white colour of the queen's skin signifies her sexual purity is also revealed by the fact that in sixteenth-century Petrarchan poetry the term "alabaster" is often used to describe the face of the inaccessible, chaste female lover. For example, in Sonnet 9 from Sir Philip Sidney's Astrophil and Stella (1598) the female beloved's visage is likened to a building, "Queene Virtues court" (1962, l.1), the front of which is built "of Alabaster pure" (1962, l.3). Mary Sidney's identification of Cleopatra with whiteness was quite uncommon, for usually the Egyptian queen was depicted as a black woman as the means of stressing her moral and sexual impurity. For example, in Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum (1611) Aemilia Lanyer emphasises Cleopatra's physical blackness as sign of her impurity, which contrasts with Octavia's inward and outward fairness: 20

No Cleopatra, though thou wert as faire
As any Creature in Antonius eyes; …
Yet with this Lady canst thou not compare,
Whose inward virtues all thy worth denies:
Yet thou a blacke Egyptian do'st appeare;
Thou false, shee true; and to her Love more deere. (F3r)

Cleopatra is not just identified with sexual continence, but also with marital sexuality. In Garnier's text the terms "Espouse" and "espous" (V, 556, 587) come up frequently with regard to the relationship between Cleopâtre and Antoine. Likewise, Sidney's Cleopatra defines herself as a "kindhearted…wife", urged to follow Antonius in death out of "wifely love" (II, 320, 353). Cleopatra's portrayal of herself as a spouse is remarkable, since Antonius is married to Octavia. Cleopatra nevertheless constructs an identity for herself as wife while being a mistress, which creates the impression that she has an inclination towards constancy. Thus, the woman who is attributed an enchanting, persuasive tongue by her lover, distances herself from wantonness. As a result of this, the deconstruction of the dominant ideology on the female voice is intensified. As a woman translator who probably experienced anxiety about her own illegitimate voice, Sidney may have been motivated to translate Garnier's tragedy, since it implicitly condoned woman's speech by dissociating it from sexual flagrancy.

20 While blackness was associated with transgression and impurity, Queen Anna and her ladies had their faces painted black and were staged as blackamoors in Ben Jonson's Masque of Blackness (1606). As Carol Chillington Rutter argues, Anna's masque can be read as "the traffic the performance conducts between images of blackness and images of Egypt" (2001, 97). Since women started to subvert the significance of blackness as well as engaged with representations of Egypt, it is not remarkable that Mary Sidney translated a tragedy concerned with Cleopatra.
4.5. Maternity and Female Bonding in Sidney's Play.

The Cleopatra figure in Garnier's text displays strong maternal feelings. She expresses the pain that she feels when she says goodbye to her children, her heart breaking upon hearing them say "adieu" (V, 1864). Furthermore, she compares herself to the weeping Niobe who grieves for her dead children. She beseeches Euphron to take care of her offspring after her death:

Je vous supplie, Eufron, prenez-en le souci:
Servez leur de bon père, et que vostre prudence
Ne les souffre tomber sous l'injuste puissance
De ce cruel tyran. (1835-38)

Garnier's depiction of the Cleopatra figure as motherly is interesting, because Cleopatra's motherhood is not always accentuated in representations of her and because maternity played a significant role as a legitimising strategy adopted by Renaissance women writers. Garnier's portrayal of Cleopâtre as maternal marks her out as feminine, and helps to deconstruct the image of her as the wanton, eloquent woman that Antoine draws earlier in the play. At the same time, Sidney's translation signals her alignment with the challenge that Garnier's motherly Cleopatra poses to dominant ideas on female outspokenness. Cleopatra remains mother of her children till the end of the play. As we have seen, in Renaissance tragedies outspoken women are often deprived of their maternity in the course of the play as punishment for their transgression of gender norms. Cleopatra is assertive and remains a mother, which intensifies the legitimisation of her outspokenness within the play.

A close look at *The Tragedie of Antonie* reveals that Cleopatra is mainly shown to speak up in the company of her female servants, Charmion and Eras. Her speaking parts consist of dialogues and conversations with these female servants, while Charmion and Eras are the only characters who hear Cleopatra speak directly in the play. The play does not include any conversations between Cleopatra and Antonius on the one hand, and Octavius Caesar on the other hand, communication between the parties taking place through male messengers. The only time that Cleopatra addresses Antonius directly is, ironically, when she is holding his corpse in her arms, and he will no longer be able to hear her: "Wail thee Antonie, Antonie my heart?" (V, 123). In Sidney's translation Cleopatra's discursive expressions therefore remain within the

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21 In Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* Cleopatra's maternity is not mentioned; while Chaucer alluded to the fact that Cleopatra lived together with Antonius as his "wif, and hadde hym as hir este" (*The Legend of Good Women*, I, 1977, 615), he does not address her motherhood.  
22 In this scene Sidney's Cleopatra speaks to the air. By contrast, in Samuel Daniel's version Cleopatra thinks that Anthony can still hear her words, and even talk back, because he is immortal: "If it be so, why speak I then to the air?/But 'tis not so, my Anthony doth hear" (V, 1127-28). "O pure immortal soul that design'st to hear/I feel thou aswers't my credulity" (V, 1131-1132). Daniel's Cleopatra is therefore not represented as a woman who...
confines of the private domestic sphere, appropriately failing to intrude upon and get involved with the realm of man's speech. Representing her heroine's speech as part of a domestic conversation between women, Sidney appears to have selected a play for translation which made it possible for her to suggest that Cleopatra's speech is "feminine", hence justified.

The context of Cleopatra's expressions in response to statements made by the other women characters also serve to underline her femininity. When Charmion and Eras beseech Cleopatra to abandon Antonius, Cleopatra answers that she will follow Antonius on his downfall as a good spouse, and that "nor praise, nor glory in my cares are set" (V, 404). Thus, the privilege that Charmion and Eras grant to masculine self affection, fame, power and ambition contrasts with Cleopatra's desire to embody the faithful, self-effacing woman. The dialogues between Cleopatra and the two other women make clear that the queen is indeed a "woman most unkind" (I, 17), but then in the positive sense of being more feminine than the other women presented in the play. This, in turn, supports the positive portrayal that is given of the queen as a woman who asserts her voice and is eloquent.


In the first part of the play, Antonius and Cleopatra are similar in the degree of subjectivity that they enjoy. Both lack command over their representations. Antonius experiences the divergence between the masculine ideal of the glorious hero that he wants to embody, and the reality of his servitude to Cleopatra's "feeble face" (I,16), leading to a shameful defeat by Caesar. He tries to imagine himself in a different role, fantasising about his death as that of the courageous warrior on the battlefield, "Made in a hundred battles, fights, assaults,/ My body through-pierced with push of pike,/ Had vomited my blood, in blood my life,/In midst of millions, fellows in my fall…All this whole world submitted unto me" (III, 225-32).

However, as his conditional phrase "I should have died in arms" (231) indicates, the identity that he forges in his discourses is something that he cannot realise. Antonius fails to create a representation of himself that he can impose upon his reality. Cleopatra also fails to exercise control over the way in which others view her. She cannot directly communicate with Caesar and Antonius, and, consequently, is unable to counter their charges of infidelity with a representation of herself as a constant wife.

does not communicate with men, and refrains from speech outside the domestic sphere. In this respect she is less "appropriate" and "feminine" than Sidney's Cleopatra.
Antonius and Cleopatra are not just similar in their lack of control over their representations to the outside world, but also in their failure to exercise narrative command. Having become so enslaved to Cleopatra's beauty that he can no longer loosen himself from their love knot, Antonius cannot determine his fate. Likewise, Cleopatra does not succeed in governing her fate and that of others. She commands Diomede to bring to Antonius the false news that she has slain herself out of loyalty for him in order to test out "if as yet he me bewail/If yet for me his heart one sigh forth breathe" (II, 85-86). Yet, her plan to ascertain herself of Antonius's affections through the false rumour of her death fails completely. Upon hearing the news, Antonius kills himself, so that Cleopatra's plot of restoring their relationship is upset.

In addition, both Antonius and Cleopatra miss a sense of individual selfhood. In his opening soliloquy Antonius refers to himself in the first person and in the second person: "It's meet I die...Poor Antonie...what was the day that gained thee thy love" (I, 7, 51-52). These shifts indicate that Antonius lacks a sense of individual identity as well as the perception of himself as a speaking and acting "I". Cleopatra does not experience a sense of individuality at times, which is revealed by her sense of being merged with Antonius: "He is my self" (II, 352). The only difference between the two characters in this respect is that Cleopatra's urge for union with Antonius, by following him in death, is self-willed, whereas Antonius's sense of feebleness is in conflict with the ideal of glorious masculinity that he wants to live up to. On the whole, however, one can argue that the representation of subjectivity in the play is not completely marked by the gender differences between the two major protagonists, since they equally fail to attain subjectivity in the first part of the tragedy.

4.7."Ended I have as destiny decreed": Death and Autonomy.

Omitting Garnier's report of the aftermath of Antony's defeat, Sidney draws the readers' focus to the attitude that the two protagonists display towards death. Thus, the ways in which Antonius and Cleopatra envisage and realise their endings are central to the plot. As far as the issues of death and transcendence are concerned, one cannot speak of gender differences in the play. Antonius's determination that he must "die...a noble death" (III, 375) signals his achievement of narrative control. Garnier's original play was modelled upon the tradition of

24 As Mary Ellen Lamb implies, it is no coincidence that Mary Sidney translated a play in which the issue of dying is foregrounded: "Strong evidence suggests that the countess's translation of Garnier's Marc Antoine, with its heroic portrait of a female protagonist Cleopatra, is an attempt to apply Mornay's philosophy to the situation
Senecan tragedy; a genre which was influenced by the philosophy of stoicism. One of the ideas generated by the philosophy of stoicism, which suggested the achievement of integrity through resistance, was the view of suicide as an act of autonomy through which dignity could be preserved. Suicide implies the point where man's "drive for control becomes totally and unsurpassably self-referential in a final triumph over the world outside" (Braden, 1985, 24-25), since autonomy over man's existence is reached by self-annihilation. Antonius's self-inflicted death can be seen as this Stoic act of reaching autonomy over his existence, by crossing Caesar's purpose of debasing and destroying him.

At a first glance Cleopatra's determination to die for Antonius creates the impression that he governs her existence, their union forcing her to be one with him in death. Yet, Cleopatra's desire to become united in death with Antonius has an important function as the means by which Sidney's transgressive voice as a translator is legitimised. As Mary Ellen Lamb explains, Sidney's concern with a dying heroine absolves her "as author from the charges of attempting to seduce or to gain power through her writing. ...After all, a woman who studies methods of dying has, it would seem, declared her distance from such transient concerns as illicit sexuality or other forms of control over men" (Lamb, 1990, 119). Cleopatra's self-chosen death should also be interpreted as an act through which she gains control over her representation and autonomy over her life. Her suicide impedes the fate that Caesar had in mind for her, namely to "wholly get/Into our hands her treasure and herself...That by her presence beautified may be/The glorious triumph Rome prepares for me" (III, 362-67). Cleopatra's longing to avoid being subjugated to Caesar is not so much foregrounded as in Samuel Daniel's tragedy, in which Cleopatra explicitly states that she wants to die in order to prevent having to "attend" Caesar's "Triumphant Chariot " (IV, 1091-1092). Although Cleopatra's desire to be united in death with Antonius is stressed, her intention to end her existence appears a stoic act. Her suicide crosses Caesar's purpose of publicly humiliating her, and imposing servitude upon her. Thus, Cleopatra's suicide can be regarded as her appropriation of direction over the plot from her conqueror Caesar. Cleopatra achieves narrative control, even though the urge to kill herself was founded in love and
submission to her husband, rather than the masculine ambition to retain a sense of glory. This narrative control results from Cleopatra's ability to hide her interior plans from Caesar, that is, to establish herself as the undiscoverable subject.

The narrative control that Cleopatra achieves in fashioning her own death is further emphasised by Sidney through the way in which she translated her dying speech. As Williams has correctly observed, Sidney has adapted "the present tense of Garnier's directly phrased lines 'mon ame vomissant', to a more lyrical and indirect future subjunctive, 'forth my soul may flow'" (Williams, 2000, 30):

That in this office weak my limbs may grow
Fainting on you, and forth my soul may flow [she dies]. (V, 207-08)

In my view, Sidney's alteration of the tense of the verb in her translation reinforces the representation of Cleopatra's narrative command. The present tense of Garnier's phrase suggests that Cleopatra's line is a description of her current state and experiences. Sidney's conversion of the tense to the future subjunctive creates the impression that Cleopatra voices her intention to die, successfully foresees her ending, hence authorises her moment of death. Her narrative control is underlined by the contrast between the way in which Cleopatra determines her fate and Charmion's statement that man's fate is governed by the gods: "the gods have willed it so,/To whom oft-times princes are ofious./They have to everything an end ordained;/All worldly greatness by them bounded is" (II, 273-76). However, Cleopatra's choice to end her life is not bounded by the Gods. Cleopatra's narrative command is also revealed by her control over the textual limits of the play. Like Garnier's Cleopatra, Sidney's Egyptian Queen breathes her last breath, and utters her last lines at the very moment which marks the closure of the play. This creates the impression that she directs the ending of the tragedy.

Before killing himself with the help of Lucenius, Antonius manages to define himself and assert his identity: "In only this like Hercules I am,/ In this I prove me of his lineage right…But go we. Die I must…I must a noble death,/ A glorious death, unto my succour call" (III, 369-376). This moment of self-expression seems accompanied by a restoration of a coherent self-perception, since Antonius now only speaks about himself in the "I" form. Similar to Antonius, Cleopatra asserts her identity in her final appearance on the stage, constructing a sense of self. She reflects upon her state of being: "yet me the heaven's wrath/Into a stone not yet transformed hath" (V, 102-103). Cleopatra succeeds in establishing
a self that is different from, and resistant to the forces that work upon her, thus marking herself out as a subject.

As Nicole Loraux made clear in her study of the tragic tradition, tragic women conventionally die in silence. Their deaths are not represented on the stage, but narrated by a messenger, who consequently defines these women. In Sidney's translation Cleopatra appears on stage, in front of an imaginary audience, representing herself before her imminent suicide. Through her decision to translate a play in which woman is able to express herself till her last breath, Sidney therefore proposed an image of the tragic woman as in control over her own depiction. Since this image is different from the images of women that one usually finds in tragedies from the period, it can be argued that Sidney's translation of the play served to create new models for tragic womanhood and tragic subjectivity. It is interesting that Cleopatra utters her final speech while she lies in the monument where she is to be buried. She voices her last thoughts in the monument where she is closed off from the world, and out of reach for a man like Caesar who seeks to define and control her.

Antonius and Cleopatra are similar in the extent to which they achieve transcendence over death. Antonius's remarks "like Hercules I am" and "In this I prove me of his lineage right" (369, 370), which signal his assertion of a self-defined identity, make clear that he overcomes the annihilation of selfhood that is entailed by dying. Apart from this, Antonius manages to defy the erasure of identity through death, since he is memorialised after his decease. Having witnessed Antonius's self-inflicted death, Dircetus brings the news of Antonius's "hard mishap" (202) to Caesar, the chorus and Agrippa. Subsequently, Dircetus recounts the details of his master's death on the imaginary stage. He fills the universe with Antonius's memorialised presence, telling "to rocks, and hills, and woods…To earth, to heaven, the woeful news" (195, 197). Thus, Dircetus's speech gives Antonius a place in the memory of the characters present at the scene, and helps Antonius to live on in the plot of the tragedy after his death. Dircetus secures Antonius's continuing presence in discourse, as is

27 Furthermore, Antonius's "final heroic and emphatic self-assertion is fittingly situated at the heart of the play" (Williams, 2000, 29), and, through this central position, demands much attention.


29 Sidney's depiction of a Cleopatra figure who asserts and creates her own identity is similar to Shakespeare's Cleopatra who utters a dying speech in which she is concerned with representing and signifying herself: "I am fire, and air; my other elements / I give to baser life" (V, ii, 291-92). This similarity may have to do with the fact that both Shakespeare's and Robert Garnier's tragedy were based on the same source text, Plutarch's Lives. As Eve Rachel Sanders justly suggests, Plutarch's Cleopatra is a "ruthless temptress who destroyed Antony in pursuit of her own ambitions" (1998, 96). Mary Sidney's depiction of Cleopatra as a chaste woman who privileges faithfulness to her beloved to personal ambitions therefore marks a significant deviation of the source text.
underlined by the fact that, like an actor impersonating Antonius, he directly reproduces
Antonius's speeches:30

Soon as with sighs he had these words up closed,
His armour he unlaced and cast it off,
Then all disarmed, he thus again did say:
'\text{My queen, my heart, the grief that now I feel…} (IV, 244-49)

His words being embedded as direct quotations in the messenger's speech, Antonius's
discourse outlives his silencing through death. The suggestion is evoked that he continues as a
speaking presence upon the stage beyond the grave. Cleopatra also transcends death, but in a
different way. In contrast with Antonius, she is not memorialised by others after her death,
and her words do not survive her death. However, she achieves transcendence through her act
of self-memorialisation. Placing her body inside the monument, Cleopatra not only performs
memorialising rituals for Antonius: "ere I die due rites I may thee give" (V, 184). At the same
time she ensures that she will be assigned a place in memory after death herself, by giving
burial ceremonies to herself, and entombing her own body.

4.8. The Tragedie of Antonie and Contemporary Tragedies.

Translating Garnier's drama, Mary Sidney selected a tragedy in which the representation of
the speaking, eloquent woman was distinct compared to the discourses on female speech that
can be found in other tragic plays from the period. Arden of Faversham and Titus Andronicus
confirm the dominant discourses on female utterance, in that they stage women who are not
just bold in speech and witty, but depicted as the incarnation of sexual looseness and adultery.
By contrast, Sidney's translation partly challenges the conventional equation of woman's
speech to wantonness. The portrayal of Cleopatra as a woman who is remarkably eloquent,
but who at the same time insists upon her marital fidelity to Antonius, undermines the idea
that wordy women are unchaste. Furthermore, it is not just through her choice for translating
Garnier's play, but also through the way in which she has transferred the French text to
English that Sidney suggested an alternative representation of the speaking woman. She
dissociates Cleopatra's words from the connotations with sexuality that Garnier's French
version attaches to her speeches.

The difference between Sidney's representation and the depictions of woman's speech
in contemporary tragedies is reinforced by the given that Cleopatra's words are associated

30 As Gweno Williams has similarly concluded, Dirceutus's "dramatic re-enactment requires him to reproduce
Antonie's last words in his own voice, like an actor" (Williams, 2000, 29).
with truth, whereas Alice Arden's and Tamora's speeches are related to deceit. Cleopatra's authentic expressions of grief, love and her confessions of guilt are in contrast with the fact that both Alice and Tamora use their tongues to smoothe over their sexual transgression, to dissemble, and to create the illusion that they are appropriately feminine. The contrast between Sidney's Cleopatra as a sexually virtuous female speaker on the one hand, and Alice and Tamora as wanton, wordy women on the other hand, is enhanced by the colour imagery that they are identified with. Cleopatra's alabaster skin symbolises her sexual and moral purity. Alice, on the other hand, is not related to the colour white, but to the coloured and tainted. Her brow is described as tainted with the text of her sexual transgression, and she functions as the woman who is painted, Clarke drawing a "poisoned" (I, i, 278) picture of her in "baleful…colours" (I, ii, 620). Similarly, Tamora is associated with the colour black in the play, her adultery with Aaron the Moor making her "honour of his body's hue,/Spotted, detested, and abominable" (II, iii, 73-75).

The deconstruction of the dominant view on woman's utterance in Sidney's text is accompanied by an alternative representation of female tragic subjectivity. In her study of death and gender Elizabeth Bronfen observed that women writers often "cite conventional conceptions of feminine death so as to recode these radically in such a way that death emerges as an act of autonomous self-fashioning" (1992, 401). Bronfen's conclusion can be applied to the way in which Sidney's translation signifies a recreation of the generic conventions of closet drama. Cleopatra exerts narrative control at the moment of death. She fashions her own Stoic death in opposition to the plots that the other characters attempt to impose upon her existence, and she pushes the plot of the play to the conclusion that she desires. The narrative control that Cleopatra enjoys in death distinguishes her from other women characters in English Renaissance tragedies. Both Alice Arden and Tamora are deprived of the narrative command that they possess earlier on in the play. Alice fails to bend the plot according to her wishes, and has the fate of execution imposed upon her at the tragic closure. Although Tamora manages to trick Saturninus into being directed by her, at the tragic closure, she is misled by Titus Andronicus, who subsequently determines her future.

The contrast between Tamora on the one hand and Cleopatra on the other hand as far as their authority over the plot is concerned, is further emphasised by the control that they exercise over their maternity. As part of her punishment, Tamora is unwittingly deprived of her motherhood, being ensnared by Titus Andronicus into eating her own children. Cleopatra differs from Tamora in that her isolation from her children in the final scene has issued from her own determination, and thus, emanates from her command over her own life. That
Cleopatra does not end up losing their position as mothers against their will, further underlines the representation of Cleopatra as an outspoken, yet virtuous woman. Like Sidney's Cleopatra, Bel-Imperia commits suicide, and thus, exerts autonomy over her existence. Yet, this narrative control is restricted, since she can only act out the plot of killing herself by adopting one of the roles in the drama that Hieronimo has written, and by speaking the lines that he has penned down for her to speak. In conclusion, Sidney's Cleopatra differs from Elizabethan tragic women characters, in that she exercises more control over the plot of her existence and the plot of the tragedy. Introducing a different approach to the idea of tragic subjectivity in relation to women, Sidney initiated the possibilities for reconstructing the representation of tragic subjectivity.

As we have perceived, in general female tragic characters in Elizabethan drama end up as the silenced objects of male definitions. Executed off stage, Alice Arden is not given the opportunity to establish her identity in a dying speech. In her final appearance on the stage Shakespeare's Tamora does not respond to Titus Andronicus's entrapment of her, and does not enjoy a moment in which she can assert her identity before she is eternally silenced to death. Bel-Imperia does not die in silence, nevertheless fails to assert an identity of her own in her own words before passing away. A difference is that Cleopatra's speech preceding her suicide is not covered up in silence, as in Tamora's case, nor marked by a loss of command over expression and self signification, as is Bel-Imperia's death. Unlike most tragic, eloquent women that one finds in Elizabethan drama, Cleopatra utters a final speech in which she can outline and voice a sense of selfhood. Her words "Die Cleopatra then" mark a symbolic "death" of the conventions which dominated tragedy at the time. The opportunity to create a female subject who can define and establish her selfhood before dying is fully used. Unlike most Elizabethan tragedies in which only the male characters are granted a moment of self assertion before death, in Sidney's translation Antonius and Cleopatra equally enjoy subjectivity in spite of their gender difference.

The transcendence over death that Cleopatra achieves through this final assertion of her self on the imaginary stage, is intensified by her act of self memorialisation, as dramatised by her self entombment. In this respect, Cleopatra is distinct from Tamora. Tamora cannot realise her transcendence over the obliteration of identity that death entails. She depends upon the men who survive her for her commemoration. Yet, she is denied the rituals of reminiscence. By contrast, Sidney's female protagonist is granted independence in securing transcendence over death. This shows that in choosing to translate Garnier's play Sidney at the
same time offered a revised representation of female subjectivity in relation to the issue of tragic transcendence.

4.9. Sidney's Play and the Genre of Closet Drama.

Mary Sidney can be regarded as a pioneer in engaging with closet drama and introducing the genre on the British Isles as an alternative to the dramatic forms that were used in the public playhouses. Critics have tended to disagree about the issue why Mary Sidney took up the genre of closet drama for her translation. Some believed that the countess "misled by her blind devotion to her brother's ideas on drama expressed in his Defence, fostered closet drama in order to attack the popular stage" (Hannay et al., 1998, 35). Others have viewed her concern with the genre as the result of her Protestant religious and political affiliations. In the dedication of his Antoine Garnier emphasised that his tragic plot, although set in the period of the ancient Romans, also referred to the political unrest in France in his own time: "les représentations Tragiques des guerres civiles de Rome...qui avez en telle horreur nos dissentions domestiques et les malheureux troubles de ce Royaume aujourd'hui despouillé de son ancienne splendeur et de la reverable majesté de nos Rois, prophanee par tumultueuses rebellions" (1578). Closet dramas often functioned as displaced criticism on current social affairs, the true political intent of the drama being covered up by its dialogic nature of arguments in favour of and against an issue. Therefore, Sidney may have chosen to engage with closet drama as the indirect means to comment upon the religious and political dividedness of the English nation, the central issue of loyalty in the play helping her to criticise dissenters.31

Justified though these critics may be in their explanations of Sidney's choice of closet drama, Sidney's use of closet drama as a dramatic form should also be considered in relation to her position as a woman writer. In selecting closet drama as a dramatic form, Sidney could create the illusion that her utterance remained within the domestic sphere of the household, to be circulated there instead of performed in front of an audience. Sidney's choice to translate closet drama is intriguing in the light of her depiction of Cleopatra as sexually pure and virginal; a depiction opposed to the set of preconceived notions about "Cleopatra" that a contemporary audience of readers would have. The idea of closet drama, as an "enclosed" form of speech,

31 As Margaret Hannay argues, Sidney's translations were "drawn near the outset of the dramatic movement to comment on contemporary affairs by means of Roman historic allusions, parallel to the use of the psalms as a privileged genre for political statement". It is her translation of Garnier's play in particular which stresses "the danger of privileging private passion over public duty" and warns of "civil tumult" (Hannay, 1990, 127-129).
dissociates the voice of the woman dramatist from any connotations with sexual impurity, since it evokes the idea of virginity. In Renaissance England, the image of the enclosed garden was often employed to refer to woman's sexual continence and virginity. For example, as we have seen before, in her *Divine Songs and Meditations* (1652) An Collins evokes the image of the *hortus conclusus* as the symbol of virginity in order to stress her sexual purity as a woman writer.\(^{32}\) Considering Collins's use of the trope of the *hortus conclusus*, one can imagine what may have been one of the reasons why Sidney chose to translate a closet drama. The suggestion that the drama is enclosed creates the impression that the voice of the woman translator and her sexuality are within bounds. Thus, Sidney could imply an association between her voice and sexual continence, and legitimise her transgressive utterance. Intriguingly, as a closet drama Sidney's translation of Garnier's tragedy ends with a symbolic enclosure of speech, so that the drama takes on the form of a "closet". Cleopatra's final speech in the play takes place within the monument, where Cleopatra will "be in one self tomb, and one self chest" (V, i, 175) with Antonius. Because of this stress upon the enclosed nature of the play, and the enclosed character of Cleopatra's speech, the association between the drama and woman's sexual purity and privacy is intensified.

At the same time, however, the generic conventions of Renaissance closet drama affirmed the cultural relegation of woman to absence and silence. This is particularly true for the closures of tragic closet drama. Most Renaissance closet dramas are marked by a pattern, according to which a male hero dies in Act IV, off the imaginary stage. Subsequently, this male hero's death is narrated to the other characters by a messenger. Act V consists of an exploration of the impact that the hero's death has upon the remaining characters: "the continuing power of the hero's spirit…as representative of political virtue and personal integrity" (Gutierrez, 1991, 237). This final act usually presents a woman who is concerned with mourning over the hero, and honouring him, by giving him proper burial rites. After having commemorated the hero, this woman conventionally dies on the imaginary stage.\(^{33}\) For instance, in Thomas Kyd's closet drama *Cornelia* (1595), a translation of another tragedy by Robert Garnier, the role of the hero who loses his life in Act IV, and whose off stage death is reported by a Nuntius, is reserved for Scipio:

Mess. Scipio (my deerest Maister) is deceas'd.….  
Corn. Say Messenger…Discourse the manner of his hard mishap. (V, i, 11-44)

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\(^{32}\) See my discussion in chapter 2, page 47.  
\(^{33}\) I talk about an "imaginary" stage here, since, obviously, the play was not meant to be enacted in a public theatre, but largely to be read in the private setting of the home.
The sad news of his defeat and death, as passed on by the messenger to Cornelia, is followed by Cornelia's determination to end her life after commemorating her father through burial ceremonies: "No, louely Father and my dearest Husband/ Cornelia must liue…To make your Tombes, and mourne vpon your hearse" (V, i, 455-57).

Considering the function of burial rites in Renaissance England, it is notable that the major male characters in the play, Scipio and Pompey, are commemorated through ceremonies of mourning and funeral, so they may obtain a place in memory. By contrast, although Cornelia pays her respects to the two men and secures their continuing existence in memory, it is suggested that there is no one who will arrange memorialising rites for her when she "will surrender my surcharged life;/And…Encrease the number of the ghosts be-low" (V, i, 464-66). In other words, the traditional structure of closet drama allowed male characters to achieve transcendence over death, and continuation of their identities in memory. Yet the female characters are denied any memorialising rituals. Their deaths mark the end of the text, so that no character is shown to commemorate them after their decease, and to keep their names and voices alive.

The play that Sidney chose to translate deviates slightly from the conventional plot structure of most closet dramas. At a first glance, Garnier's tragedy and Sidney's translation appear to conform to the pattern, according to which the male hero dies in Act IV, and is memorialised by the major female character in the final act. Antonius's suicide is reported by the messenger to Caesar in the fourth act. Subsequently, in Act V, Cleopatra gives "due rites" to Antonius, and "With thousand plaints thy funerals adorn" (Sidney, V, 185-87). However, as we have seen, Cleopatra not only performs memorialising rituals for Antonius, but also secures her own place in memory. Cleopatra's act of self-monumentalising thus marks a reconstruction of the tragic closure characteristic of most closet dramas, which exclude female characters of the process of being memorialised.

As is exemplified by Kyd's translation Cornelia, in closet drama the male hero's dead body is never presented on the imaginary space of the stage, since the hero's death is reported by the messenger. When Cornelia pays her respects to her father and husband, their bodies are not exposed to the view of an imaginary audience. In this way, the glory and courage of the two men is stressed, and they achieve an almost mythological status. By contrast, in Sidney's translation Antonius's corpse is a major physical presence in the final act, in which Cleopatra

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34 In this respect, there is a clear contrast between the fact that Cleopatra performs the feminine task of arranging burial ceremonies and the given that Antonius does not consider doing the same for Cleopatra when he is told that she is dead. Instead, he proves to be mainly concerned with his own representation and reputation in death: "Die I must/ I must a noble death/ A glorious death, unto my succour call/ I must deface the shame" (III, 34).
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clutches his dead limbs, and emphasises the qualities of his dead body: "Thy life, thy heat is lost, thy colour gone/ And hideous paleness on thy face hath seized" (V, 103-04). The appearance of Antonius's dead body on the supposed stage signifies a reversal of the conventional representation of the passive, female corpse as object of scrutiny. This reversal of the conventional gender patterns places Cleopatra in the position of the speaker who can define Antonius, whereas he, no longer able to respond to Cleopatra's views of him, is reduced to the role of definable object, that was usually assigned to female characters.

As I have pointed out, closet drama was generally associated with privacy of utterance and a selected, domestic audience. These connotations of private, restricted expression, while helpful for women writers in the process of making their voices seem socially acceptable, also alluded to the social limitations placed upon female speech and writings. In this respect, through her use of the image of the tomb as a site of woman's control rather than a form which delimits woman's discursive agency, Sidney appears to redefine the nature of closet drama as well. She creates the impression that the genre does not necessarily restrict or stifle woman's expression, or curb any reconstruction of gender discourses by the female dramatist. Within the enclosed space of the genre and its generic boundaries, there are possibilities for the woman writer to rewrite these generic traditions, produce alternative gender discourses and representations, and, consequently, attain power and command over discourse.

This suggestion that the generic conventions of closet drama can be manipulated, and that the genre may therefore prove liberating for the woman writer, is endorsed by the ending of the play. As Gweno Williams has noticed, the final act "significantly… is the only act which does not conclude with a chorus" (2000, 32). While in all the other acts, the speeches uttered by the characters are always followed by songs voiced by the chorus, this does not prove to be the case in Act V, where Cleopatra's last words constitute the end of the text.35 The omission of a chorus song at the tragic closure underlines the idea that the generic boundaries of closet drama can be overstepped and remapped. While in previous acts Cleopatra's voice was always "enclosed" by the choric voices, at the tragic closure her speech is unbound. This suggests the possibility of woman to express herself beyond the bounds imposed upon her voice by society.

35 By contrast, in Samuel Daniel's The Tragedie of Cleopatra Cleopatra's dying speech in Act IV is followed by the chorus. As a result, in this tragedy Cleopatra does not have the last word in the play. The tragic conclusion not coinciding with Cleopatra's last words, Daniel's Cleopatra seems to exert less narrative control in the play than Sidney's queen. Furthermore, whereas Sidney's play ends with a sense of freedom- Cleopatra's freedom to determine her own fate and the woman dramatist's freedom concerning the generic boundaries of closet drama, Daniel's play ends with a sense of confinement. The chorus at the end of Act IV emphasises the captivity of the Egyptian people: "And thus is Egypt servile rendered/To the insolent destroyer" (1257-58).
Sidney's challenge to the delimited nature and generic boundaries of closet drama is revealed by the frequent references in the play to performance. The tragedy is marked by the centrality of the word "play", as a translation of "plaissirs", as in the line: "Their time they passed in nought but love and plaies" (IV, 40). Antonius's description of his entanglement in "courtly bowers" is "reminiscent of the elaborate contemporary pastoral entertainments devised for Elizabeth I when she visited her subjects" (Williams 2000, 35). The frequent allusions to drama and acting in the play suggest its performability despite the fact that the text was presented as closet drama. The emphasis on performance in the play undermines the status of the play as a text designed for reading.

4.10. Conclusion.

Although Florio perceived translations as "reputed Femalls" (1603, prologue), in the hands of a woman it could be a powerful tool of reconstructing gender and tragedy. One can argue that Sidney's selection of Garnier's text for translation has a lot of implications for the construction of gender in relation to discourse, and for the representation of tragic subjectivity. Translating a drama by Garnier in which woman's words were dissociated from wantonness, through the association of Cleopatra with virginity, maternity and marital fidelity, Sidney could engage herself with a challenge of the dominant ideology concerning the female voice. In addition, by her choice of words in transferring the tragedy from French to English, Sidney reinforced this subversion of the idea that a speaking woman is sexually loose.

Sidney's choice of *Antoine* is significant, as this play involved a recreation of the representation of tragic subjectivity. Cleopatra's assertion of voice, narrative control and self-memorialisation contrast with the lack of subjectivity that women characters experience in other tragedies from the period. Thus, Mary Sidney's launching of Garnier's tragedy into the English dramatic tradition signified a suggestion for different portrayals of tragic subjectivity, which do no longer exclude women characters. Under the disguise of reproducing the male voice Sidney could thus construct new gender discourses in English.

Gweno Williams, who has been concerned with staging late twentieth-century performances of early modern women's plays, points out that the texts of closet dramas by Renaissance women contain "internal stage directions, detailed and precise references to contemporary theatrical practices...calls for integral stage action" (1998, 99). Therefore, in Williams's view, the women playwrights clearly had performance of their texts in mind, although they supposedly wrote their plays for private use. Williams's claim can be applied to the ways in
Chapter 4: "Die Cleopatra then": Mary Sidney's The Tragedie of Antonie.

4.1. "Philip's Phoenix": Mary Sidney as a Writer.

On October 27, 1561, Mary Sidney was born into one of the most influential families in Elizabethan England. The families of both her father, Henry Sidney, and her mother, Mary Dudley, had come to prominence under Henry VIII. Surviving the reign of Queen Mary, and returning to power in the early years of Queen Elizabeth I, the Sidneys came to play a prominent political role in furthering the Protestant cause in England and on the Continent.1 The circumstances of Mary Sidney's early life may have formed the impetus for her later literary activities. Unlike most of their female contemporaries, Mary Sidney and her sister Ambrosia received an outstanding education, following the standard humanist curriculum, which included the classics, the Church fathers, Latin, French, Italian, literature and rhetoric.2 Thus, they developed the skills to express themselves in speech and writing to a greater extent than most members of their sex. In the spring of 1575 Mary Sidney's familiarity with the world of letters increased. She left for the court of Elizabeth I, which functioned as a centre of learning and literary activities. Her wealthy husband, Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, financed the literary coterie that she desired. In addition, Mary Sidney came in contact with the literary world through her close connection with her brother Sir Philip Sidney, who was an admired poet and patron of letters.

It is mainly her close relationship with her brother that led to Mary Sidney's active participation in the world of literary networks and production. After Sir Philip's death during the military campaign in the Low Countries in 1586, Mary Sidney took over his former role of literary patron. Poets who had previously received financial support from her brother, such as Abraham Fraunce, Edmund Spenser, Thomas Moffet and Nicholas Breton, now applied to Mary Sidney for patronage. Calling her "Arabian Phenix, wonder of sexe", and "the inheritor of his wit and genius" (quoted in Hannay, 1991, 218), these writers suggested that Sidney would continue her brother's literary work. Because of the large circle of poets that Mary Sidney supported, she gained a reputation as one of the major patrons of Protestant letters: "the happie and iudiciall Patronesse of the Muses".3 In her role of patroness, however, Sidney occupied both a prominent and singular position: she became the first non-royal woman in England to receive a significant number of dedications.

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1 See Hannay, 1990, 3.
2 See Hannay et al., 1998, 3.
3 She was thus referred to by the poet Samuel Daniel in the dedication to his Delia (1592, A1v).
which Mary Sidney used closet drama. As we have perceived, for Sidney the genre may have seemed attractive, because if offered the illusion of privacy, hence "feminine" modesty, while at the same time it provided her with the opportunity to engage with writing. Thus she could suggest that she remained "in one self chest", in one restrictive gender sphere, with the rest of her sex. At the same time she could nevertheless propose alternative ideas about woman's discourse alongside the dominant views in her texts without seeming to take sides. While the genre was compatible with her aim of keeping up appearances of femininity, Sidney also rewrote essential elements of closet drama. Furthermore, Sidney creates the impression that the supposedly restrictive nature of closet drama can be transformed into a tool of liberation and recreation of gender discourses. This suggestion that the genre of closet drama can be recreated is endorsed by the frequent allusions to acting and drama in the play, which create the impression that the play is performable. Thus, as a female dramatist Sidney is not "in one self chest" with most male authors of closet drama. While playing a prominent role in introducing the genre of closet drama in England, Sidney also made the genre a space for generic experimentation.