Figure 6: Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland. Portrait by Sunderland (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).
Chapter 5. "Each word she said…shall be the food whereon my heart is fed": Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam* (1613).

5.1. "Whenever conscience and reason will permit it": Elizabeth Cary as a Writer.

Elizabeth Cary (1585-1639) advised her eldest daughter Catherine upon her marriage always to "prefer the will of another to your own….whenever conscience and reason will permit it" (quoted in Fischer, 1985, 226). Ironically, Elizabeth Cary's life appears to be marked by a series of conflicts between, on the one hand, her desire to subjugate her will to others, and, on the other hand, her attempts to exert and express her own will in defiance of social demands.

Cary was born in Oxfordshire, as the only child of Elizabeth Symondes and Lawrence Tanfield. Tanfield was described by Cary's daughter in the biography of her mother as “a lawyer, afterwards a judge, and Lord Chief Baron” (*Her Life*, 1994, 183). Although she was a girl, her “father…loved very much to have her read”(*Her Life*, 1994, 188). Consequently, she gained an advanced level of literacy at a young age, enjoyed reading very much, and became proficient in many foreign languages: she taught herself Latin, French, Spanish, Hebrew, and translated the Epistles of Seneca, and the works of Blossius out of Latin. In contrast with the dominant ideological discourses, which conferred women to silence, Elizabeth was schooled to speak her mind. As a result, the young Elizabeth evidently was not hesitant to use her voice on public occasions. She boldly spoke up at a witchcraft trial presided over by her father in order to avert the death of an innocent woman.¹

The daughter who wrote Cary's biography may have idealised her mother, depicting her as a woman who had to face many impediments during her life. Nevertheless, the biography makes clear how Cary's engagement with language was restricted by her relatives, thus emphasising the problematic nature of female utterance. When Elizabeth was newly married to Sir Henry Cary, Viscount of Falkland, but still resided at her parents' home, her parents restricted her self-expression. They arranged for her letters to her husband, to be written by another in Elizabeth's handwriting, rather than have Elizabeth voice her own sentiments and display her erudition, for fear that her writings would be unseemly for a young woman.² Coming to live in the mansion of her husband's family, Cary encountered further

¹ See Zimmerman, 1999, 356.
² See *The Lady Falkland, Her Life, by One of her Daughters*: “And those letters he had received from her had been indited by others, by her mother’s appointment” (1994, 188).
restrictions upon her engagement with discourse. Her mother-in-law "took away all her books, with command to have no more brought to her" (Her Life, 1994, 189), since she found it unfit that Cary should devote all her time to reading. In one of his own letters to secretary Coke, Henry Falkland enclosed an extract from one of lady Falkland's letters, which he hoped would give personal offence to the king due to the Roman Catholic sympathies expressed in it. Falkland's exposure of the thoughts of his "apostate wife" (Various, The Lady Falkland Her Life, from a MS in the Imperial Archives at Lille, 1861, L1r) against her will, reveals his urge to deprive Elizabeth of control over her words, and to restrict her discursive agency.3

Elizabeth Cary evidently reacted ambivalently to these constraints. On the one hand, when she had written texts which propagated views which were disliked by her husband and his family, occasionally she obediently withdrew her works from public view.4 According to her daughter, she wrote mainly for "private recreation" rather than publication, and when one of her manuscripts was stolen out of her "sister-in-law’s… chamber and printed" this text "was called in" again "by her on procurement" (Her Life, 1994, 190). In other words, Cary endeavoured to keep her writing away from the masculine arena of publication. Moreover, as a writer Cary often confined herself to generic modes which were more appropriate for women than others. She wrote verse lives of women saints, and a text similar to the mother's legacies produced by Elizabeth Joceline and Dorothy Leigh.5 As her daughter remarks, “Being once like to die, whilst she had but two or 3 children, and those very little, that her care of them might not die with her”, Cary addressed to her two eldest, a daughter and a son) "a letter of some sheets of paper …full of such moral precepts as she judged most proper for them" (Her Life, 1994, 192-93). In addition, Elizabeth Cary was responsible for a number of translations, among which her translation of The Reply of the Most Illustrious Cardinall of Perron, to the Answeare of the Most Excellent King of Great Britaine (1630). When texts or translations from her hand were published after all, Cary presented herself in appropriately feminine terms, suggesting that she did not aspire to fame by writing. As she maintains in the preface to her translation of Perron's work: "To looke for glorie from Translation is beneath my Intention, …I desire to have noe more guest at of me, but that I am a Catholique, and a Woman" (A2v). She generally depreciates the quality of her translation and writing, creating the impression that the weakness of her writings results from a womanly weakness of mind. As she claims of her translation of Perron, "if the worke be but meanely done, it is noe

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3 The Viscount of Falkland's association of his wife's letters with apostacy, also suggests an identification of female utterance with treason.
wonder, for my Sexe can raise noe great expectation of anie thing that shall come from me” (A2v).  

Yet, at the same time Cary clearly resisted the dominant belief that women should curtail their utterances. When her mother-in-law forbade her books, Cary defied the familial and cultural demands for the silent, compliant woman by setting herself to make verses. Furthermore, in her choice of the texts which she translated, Elizabeth Cary was making radical political statements which were in discord with the religious affiliations of her husband and family. For example, her translation of the pro-Catholic treatise by cardinal du Perron was quite controversial in the predominantly Protestant environment in which she lived. Consequently, Cary found her book confiscated and publicly burned. Cary was also the author of some original drama. Apart from a play which was set in Syracuse, but which has been lost, Cary wrote The Tragedie of Mariam (1613). Curiously, this text is never mentioned in the biography written by Cary's daughter, whereas numerous of her translations are. Possibly this indicates how socially unacceptable Cary's writing of the tragedy was: Cary's transgression of the norms of femininity by taking up a genre which was identified with the male sex remains the "unspeakable", repressed part in her daughter's narration of her life. Cary did not confine her manuscript of her tragedy to her cabinet. From a dedicatory letter in his The Muses Sacrifice (1612) by Cary's tutor John Davies, it becomes clear that The Tragedie of Mariam was known to him, since he proudly refers to his “'Pupill’s' plays-specifically a drama set in Palestine (Mariam) and another play set 'in Syracuse', now lost” (Weller and Ferguson, 1994, 6). The plot of the Second Maiden's Tragedy, staged in 1611, appears to be clearly derived from the plot of Cary's tragedy, which was probably written between 1604 and 1609. It appears that Cary had the manuscript of the play circulate in a larger circle than one may have expected, until she agreed to have it published under the initials E.C. rather than her full name.

5.2. The Tragedie of Mariam, the faire Queene of Iewry: a Textual History.

Although supposedly written between 1604 and 1609, Cary's tragedy was entered into the Stationer's Register on December 17 1612. The text was published in 1613 by Richard

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5 See my discussion on the trope of maternity in chapter 2.
6 Cary argued: “If so you hap to view it, tax not my Errours; I my self confess them” (quoted in Brackett, 1996, 7).
7 Margaret Ferguson makes a similar point: “This daughter however does not mention the fact about her mother that contributes most to her …claim” (1999 b, 235).
8 According to Harbage's Annals (1964) the play was written around 1604 (between 1602-1605).
Hawkins, who worked in Chancery Lane, and The Tragedie of Mariam was his first entry into the Stationer's Register. Thomas Creede, who had previously printed a great number of tragedies, - the first and third quartos of Shakespeare's Richard III in 1597 and 1602, and the second quarto of Romeo and Juliet in 1599-, was the printer of Cary's text. No manuscript of The Tragedie of Mariam exists. This means that in our reading of Cary's tragedy we can only rely upon the printed editions of the texts, in which the spellings reflect the preferences of the printing house as authorial choices. Analysing the play today is further complicated by the existence of two different first editions of the play. Some of the 1613 editions are so-called "extant copies" (Weller and Ferguson, 1994, 49), in that they include Cary's dedicatory sonnet to a woman who was probably her sister-in-law, as well as a list with the names of the characters. These extant copies can be found in the Huntington and Houghton libraries. For the analysis in this chapter I have made use of the 1613 edition of the play in the British Library.

There is no formal evidence that Cary's tragedy was ever performed. Written as closet drama, the tragedy nevertheless contains elements, such as internal stage directions and stage action, which suggest the performability of the play. At the time when Cary wrote her play, many noble families possessed houses which were particularly suitable for small household performances. Queen Elizabeth I's progresses included visits to the families that Elizabeth Cary later became related to by marriage. Elizabeth I possibly visited the family of her mother-in-law Lady Katherine Paget, and relatives of her sister-in-law Lady Jane Barrett. The houses of the Barrett and Paget family may therefore have provided possibilities for dramatic performane, and perhaps Cary's play was staged in one of the houses as domestic entertainment. However, these are hypotheses, not certainties.

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9 This woman is addressed by Cary as "Diana's Early Deputress, and my worthy sister, Mistress Elizabeth Cary" (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, 1996, 49), who was the wife of her husband's brother, Sir Philip Cary.

10 A second problematic factor is that the 1613 editions have no line numbers, whereas, in modern editions of the tragedy by Weller and Ferguson or Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, line numbers have been added to the original text. In my textual references the line numbers mentioned are those suggested by Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, which should not be assumed to have been the author's original direction. In order to increase the readability of quotations from the text, I have also chosen to follow the modernised spelling that is suggested by Cerasano and Wynne-Davies in their edition. After all, the spelling that can be found in the 1613 cannot be taken for the spelling intended by Cary. Since Cerasano and Wynne-Davies have used the 1613 edition from the British Library alongside the extant copies from Harvard and Huntington, I decided to use the 1613 edition as the main source of reference.

11 As Mary Cole Hill argues, during the Elizabethan era, many noble families started to redesign their homes in order to make them suitable for dramatic entertainments: "In their efforts to impress Elizabeth, other important hosts moved beyond fruit and walls to fashion entire houses for the queen's use" (1999, 166).

12 Queen Elizabeth was hosted by Lord Paget at his home Beaudesert in Staffordshire on July 30th 1575, and by Thomas Barrett at Belhus in Aveley from 8 to 10 August 1588. See Cole 1999, 207, 220. Both men may have been relatives of Cary's in-laws.
The source for Cary's tragedy appears to be the Jewish historian Josephus's account of Herod the Great's marriage to Mariam, a Jewish woman of royal descent, in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (ca. A.D.93). This account, which relates of Herod's murder of his wife Mariam on suspicion of adultery after he has returned from a visit to Caesar in 29 B.C., can be found in the fifteenth book of his *Antiquities*. Cary may have read the text in the original Greek, although many translations of Josephus's work were available in Latin, French, Italian and German, and although an English translation of the *Antiquities of the Jews* by Thomas Lodge was printed in 1602. Cary was not the only Renaissance playwright who took up the story of the disastrous marriage between Herod and Mariam as the subject of her play. In Germany, Hans Sachs had written his *Tragedia...der Wütrich König Herodes* in 1552. The Italian playwright Ludovico Dolce had dealt with the story from Josephus's book in his tragedy *Marianna* in 1565, and the French dramatist Alexandre Hardy had staged Mariam's woeful fate in his play *Mariamne* around 1600.

In England the figure of Herod was a prominent character in the mystery plays, which stemmed from medieval liturgical drama based on biblical stories, such as the York, Chester and Coventry plays. Within this tradition Herod was conventionally portrayed as the brutal, relentless murderer of innocent people. This is the case in book X of the Chester plays which is aptly called "The Slaying of the Innocents". Apart from this, Nicholas Grimald's *Archipropheta* (ca. 1546) and George Buchanan's *Baptistes, sive calumnia* (ca. 1544) centred on Herod's murder of John the Baptist as an allegory of the destruction of Christian innocence by pagan tyranny. Thus, Cary is likely to have drawn upon Josephus's historical work, earlier tragedies on the marriage between Herod and Mariam, the tradition of the mystery plays and the humanist plays from the 1540s in which Herod is frequently staged as the impersonation of cruelty. Cary's tragedy belongs to the tradition of closet dramas, and circulated as a manuscript within intimate circles before it was published as a text in 1613.

5.3. Woman's "public voice" and Adultery.

Recent criticism of Cary's tragedy has moved in two main directions. One group of critics interprets the play in relation to details about Cary's life, suggesting that Cary's depiction of the domestic conflict between the tyrannous Herod and his wife Mariam reflects Cary's problems within her own marriage. For instance, Elaine Beilin argued that Cary's tragedy is

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13 It is likely that Cary had read Josephus's *Antiquities*, for the text was highly propular in seventeenth-century Europe: "Il fut un temps où en France, en Hollande, en Angleterre, chaque famille chrétienne avait son Flavius Josèphe comme elle avait sa Bible" (Hadas-Lebel, 1989, 9-10).
concerned with the difficult position of a woman in marriage, since “she wrote *Mariam*
sometime during the first decade of her marriage, when she was beginning to live under her
husband’s authority” (Beilin, 1980, 47). On the other hand, critics such as Stephanie
Hodgson-Wright have been wary of analysing the play in the light of Cary's experiences,
claiming that overemphasis on biographical details in a reading of the play will impede any
placement of the text in its literary context, and fails to challenge its exclusion from the
literary canon.

However, considering Cary's position as a woman writer in the patriarchal society of
that period does not necessarily involve a restrictive interpretation of her tragedy on
biographical grounds. When one compares Cary's tragedy with Josephus's narration in his
*Antiquities of the Jews* (translated by Thomas Lodge, 1602), Alexandre Hardy's version of the
tale in his tragedy *Mariamne*, and even the later *Tragedy of Herod and Antipater* (1622) by
Gervase Markham and William Sampson, one notices that the issues of woman's transgressive
speech play a far less significant role in these other texts than in Cary's tragedy. Whereas
Josephus suggests that Mariam "had … a certaine womanlie imperfection and naturall
frowardnesse" (O1r), the main reason that his Herod becomes incensed with Mariam is her
refusal to sleep with him, and the supposition that Mariam attempted to poison him with a
drink. Furthermore, Herod assumes that his spouse is adulterous with Sohemus because of the
fact that she will no longer satisfy Herod sexually, rather than because she asserts her voice.
In Alexandre Hardy's version of the historical events, it is again in the first place Mariam's
unwillingness to lie with him, "le devoir d'une femme au mary refuser" (III, i, 716), the
slander that she intends to poison him, which instigate Herod's suspicion of adultery. It is
only later in this scene that Herod expresses his wrath at Mariam's answers to his accusations:
"response arrogante… Je te feray cracher/ Cette langue impudente, ou tels mots retrancher"
(III, i, 969-1017). No overt connection is made between Mariam's assertive voice and the
suspicions of sexual incontinence that she arouses. In Markham and Sampson's version of the
story, Herod's fury with Mariam is represented as a subordinate plot, issuing from his bastard
son's intention to whet his father's fury against Mariam. In addition, Herod's decision to
execute Mariam on grounds of adultery is fuelled by the Mariam's awareness of the plot that

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14 As Meredith Skura has pointed out, it is problematic to read Cary's tragedy in relation to her own marital
difficulties, since “when Cary wrote the play she had lived only briefly- perhaps never at all- with her husband,
though she had certainly felt the constraints of an arranged union with someone who married her “only for being
an heir” (1997, 28).
15 See Wright, 1998, 58, 60-64.
16 In this respect I agree with Nancy Guttierez who argues: "Cary’s play should be studied… in the light of her
position" (1991, 233).
Herod had been scheming with Sohemus. Thus, in Markham and Sampson's play the connection between Mariam's outspokenness and her condemnation of wantonness is not made explicitly. By contrast, the issue of woman's transgressive voice is central to the plot of Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam* (1613).\(^{17}\) In the domestic setting of the Palestinian court,\(^{18}\) Cary explores the conflict between a woman's desire to speak her mind and society's ban on woman's "unbridled speech" (III, ii,1147).\(^{19}\) Obviously, one could argue that the centrality of the issue of woman's right to speak in the play may have do with the fact that the tragedy is written in the Senecan mode, where "the reasons or grounds for speaking" (Braden 37) are explored in speeches. Yet, the fact that this issue of the female transgressive voice constitutes such a central element of the plot, whereas this is not the case in other textual variants of the narrative, reveals that it is important to study the play in relation to Cary's position as a woman dramatist.

*The Tragedie of Mariam* contains a great number of contradictory views and oppositional voices, mainly concerned with the issue of woman's self-expression. On the one hand, Cary appears to undermine the cultural silencing of women, by allowing her heroine to unfold her mind and express her thoughts through long soliloquies. On the other hand, these alternative discourses on woman's speech are countered by dominant discourses. Mariam's forwardness in speech is condemned by several speakers in the play, including the chorus and Sohemus. Although Mariam's guardian Sohemus displays affection and respect for her, he voices strong disapproval of Mariam's outspokenness: "unbridled speech is Mariam's worst disgrace" (III, iii,1147). This condemnation of Mariam's unrestrained speech is reinforced by the fact that throughout the play Sohemus is represented as a sympathetic character who desires the best for his mistress.

In addition, the chorus of Jewish men implicitly criticises Mariam's assertion of voice by arguing that a woman "usurps upon another's right/ That seeks to be by public language graced" (III, iii,1203-1204), and by claiming that "in a wife it is no worse to find/ A common body than a common mind" (1207-1208). The chorus can have different functions in tragic drama. They may reflect the reactions and opinions of a particular social group, the "medium through which the poet's own thoughts are expressed" (Kaimio, 1970, 9), an ideal spectator

\(^{17}\) Another difference between Cary's play and other dramas about the ill-fated love of Herod and Mariam is that the former centres on the marriage relationship and analyses "the stirrings of personhood or independence in the wife as well as the jealousy of the husband" (Travitsky, 1987, 185).

\(^{18}\) Alison Findlay has highlighted the essentially domestic setting and issues that come up in the play. See Findlay, 1999, 152-57.

\(^{19}\) Margaret Ferguson argues that Cary "test[s] ..the rule proscribing 'public voice' for women" (1991 a, 239), the heroine Mariam signifying "evidently…an aspect of the author's own conscience or superego" (1991 a, 240).
"who reacts to the events of the drama as the audience is supposed to react" (Kaimio 1970,9), or "not really an individual, but…the community surrounding the actor" (Kaimio, 1970, 241), forming the background against which the protagonist's actions are measured. This latter type of chorus may display a "hostile attitude towards an actor, and thus strongly favour another view" (Kaimio, 1970, 248). Considering the fact that the chorus appears to speak with one voice, it seems just to interpret the chorus as the voice of the community around Mariam, and, by extension, as the voice of English Renaissance society criticising woman's speech. The conflict between Mariam's behaviour and the conduct standards set by the chorus, which create a tension within the play, thus appear to refer to the anxiety Cary may have felt about writing in the face of social constrictions.

While Mariam is seen as unusually outspoken, the culturally established equation of woman's speech with lasciviousness is frequently deconstructed in the play. Mariam states that despite her resentment towards Herod, she was never tempted to adultery: "too chaste a scholar was my heart,/To learn to love another than my lord" (I, i, 27-28). In addition, it is not just Mariam herself, but also other characters in the play that view her as a sexually continent woman. For instance, Sohemus describes Mariam as a "chaste queen", and claims that he never saw a woman "with so pure a heart" (III, iii, 1169-1172). Through this portrayal of Mariam the semantic link between woman's outspokenness and sexual promiscuity is dissolved.

However, the play powerfully evokes the cultural spectre of the lewd, eloquent woman through the character of Salome. Using her skills of persuasion to talk herself in and out of relationships and thus to have her way, Salome represents the prototype of the sexually insatiable, fickle woman. In addition, Salome's reference to her recurring adultery and sexual "shame" as a text that is "written on [her] my tainted brow" (I, iv, 283) endorses the cultural association between words, writing and female wantonness. It is only in Cary's play, and not in the source text by Josephus or any of the other dramatic versions of the Herod-Mariam narrative, that Salome is depicted as sexually incontinent. In fact, in Markham and Sampson's play Salome is even portrayed as a woman who is upset by the false supposition that her husband Joseph would commit adultery with Mariam, and therefore, as a woman who valorises the marriage vows:

Antip. Are they not kissing, Madam?
Sal. Yes; may poysen flow between them...I will make the world in blood, text downe my crueltie…Ile be revenged. (I, iv,106-124)
Thus, Cary's representation of Salome as both wanton and wordy appears to be a choice of the author herself. This choice points to Cary's discussion of the issue of woman's voice from different vantage points in her play, exposing Cary's own anxiety about the matter.

The complexity of Cary's play in relation to woman's speech is further enhanced when one considers the character Graphina. This character does not appear in the source text or any of the other dramas on Herod and Mariam. Graphina appears to conform to the image of the culturally venerated voiceless woman, as becomes clear from Pheroras's question "Why speaks thou not, fair creature?" (II, i, 569). Yet, Graphina's name, which appears to be derived from the Greek for to write, "graphein", suggests that Graphina's silence covers up a woman who expresses herself through writing. The name creates the impression that the culturally idealised silent woman is only an illusion and does not exist in reality, as women secretly find ways to express their voices in less conspicuous forms. In this respect Cary's plays upon the contradiction in Renaissance culture which both idealised and feared female silence.

Cary's Pheroras is a remarkable character in the play, as he urges his betrothed Graphina to speak up rather than remain silent: "Move thy tongue/ For silence is a sign of discontent" (II, i, 569-570). However, even this statement is ambiguous and can be interpreted in multiple ways. In relation to his earlier allegation that he prefers Graphina to the dumb infant bride whom Herod had selected for him, Pheroras's remark implies that he does not desire a silent woman at all, but one with whom he can communicate. Read in this way, Cary appears to make woman's speech seem acceptable by showing that men do not really desire mute wives. Yet, a completely different interpretation may ensue when one reads Pheroras's admonition in relation to Graphina's assertions that "my wishes ever yours did meet" and "me your handmaid have you made your mate" (II, i, 576, 587). The image of the "handmaid" gives the impression that Pheroras "does not really want an utterly silent wife; he wants, rather, a woman whose speech answers obediently to his own desires." Thus, the dialogue between the lovers also suggests that a woman can and may only speak up when her words satisfy her male listener. Graphina's compliance with her lover's desires brings us to

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20 In contrast with the potential for gender disruption which Graphina's name suggests, she is indeed the only female character who does not "engage in…spectacular acts of cultural violence" (1997, 110), as Hiscock also suggests.

21 For a discussion of the restrictions upon expression that the female characters in the play experience, see Quilligan, 1993, 224-230.

22 See Margaret Ferguson, 1991, 155.

23 Shari Zimmerman has also argued that Pheroras displays an ambiguous attitude towards Graphina's voice, since he seems to condone her speech as well as reveal a desire that Graphina "need only smile" (1999, 568), that is, be silent.
another possible interpretation of her name: it suggests that she is written upon by, or inscribed with male gender ideology.

5.4. Cary's Negotiation of Female Sexuality.

Among the divergent views on woman's voice in the play, which had Cary's greatest sympathy? Did she merely explore the possibilities for female self-expression in order to endorse the cultural demand for female voicelessness? Or, by contrast, does her play contain a plea for woman's speech and writing despite patriarchal oppression? Cary's tragedy is written in the form of closet drama. Thus one could allege that the double-voiced discourses on woman's speech that mark the play can be attributed to Cary's adoption of a generic mode which implies a discussion of arguments on both sides of a dilemma. In Cary's tragedy both sides of the issue whether woman can "run on" with "public voice" (I, i, 1) are explored. However, despite the essentially rhetorical nature of the text, the instances of lip-service to the socially constructed ideal of the mute woman are countered by views which support freedom of utterance for women. Thus, the play tends to legitimise woman's speech and writing. This becomes clear when one considers the discourses of sexuality that Cary alludes to in her text.

As I have already pointed out, Cary depicts Mariam as a woman who is reputed for her constancy and sexual purity. Therefore, the conventional equation of the outspoken woman with the adulterous whore is undermined. Yet, Cary does not just associate Mariam with sexual purity by emphasising her spotless reputation, but also by connecting her utterances with purity. For example, when Salome unjustly accuses Mariam of unfaithfulness to her husband, thus trying to slander her and elicit a quarrel between them, Mariam replies: "With thy black acts I'll not pollute my breath" (I, iii, 244). Mariam's refusal to slander Salome in return by summing up her evil deeds is thus represented as her determination to keep her discourses pure rather than have them polluted by "black acts". The fact that Salome's "black acts" consist of adultery, reinforces the dissociation of Mariam's female speech from wantonness that is evoked throughout the play:

24 In her stage production of the play (Findlay et al, 1999 b) Stephanie Hodgson-Wright accentuates the dialogic nature of the play, in particular the contradictory opinions voiced by the chorus, by dividing the lines uttered by the chorus over its two different representatives, the sculptor and gravedigger. Each of these characters voices a different opinion about Mariam and Herod, so that the double-voiced discourses of the chorus take on the form of a dialogue.

25 In this respect I disagree with Elaine Beilin who has argued that the closet drama "is by nature impersonal" (1980, 45).
Mariam wishes her speech to remain virginally white rather than tainted by Salome's promiscuous sexuality.  

We have seen that the strategy of virginity in seventeenth-century women's texts and speeches often takes on the form of a binary opposition between virgins and harlots. Like Mariam, her sister-in-law Salome does not always observe the cultural demands for woman's silence, and openly expresses her dislike for the restricted bonds of her marriage. Yet, here the similarity between the two women ends. In contrast with the chaste Mariam, Salome personifies the adulterous, insatiable woman. She seeks to "divorce" Constabarus from her bed "That my Silleus may possess his room" (I, v, 317-318), in the same way as she had previously had her husband Josephus eliminated to give in to her lust for Constabarus. Whereas Salome uses her eloquent tongue to slander and tell lies, Mariam is a "true speaker", in that she refuses to feign, and insists upon telling the truth:

I know I could enchain him with a smile  
And lead him captive with a gentle word.  
I scorn my look should ever man beguile,  
Or other speech, than meaning to afford. (III, iii, 1127-30)

Thus, the opposition between Mariam as sexually pure and Salome as a bawd is reinforced by the portrayal of their speeches as pure and truthful, or vile and concerned with adultery, respectively. This link between the two women's speeches and sexual reputations in turn enhances the positive image that Cary creates of the outspoken Mariam.

The contrast between Salome and her heroine Mariam is expressed by the colours that the two women are associated with in the play. Mariam refers to Salome's past conduct as "black acts" (I, iii, 244), and Salome is identified by the colour black throughout the play. For instance, Herod calls Salome his "black tormentor" (IV, vii, 1724) and argues that, compared to fair Mariam, Salome looks like a "sunburnt blackamoor" (IV, vii, 1675). Mariam, however, is frequently connected with the colour white. This is revealed by Herod's comparison of Mariam to a "fair dying swan" (V, i, 1941), and his references to the whiteness of her skin: "Oh what a hand she had, it was so white; It did the whiteness of the snow impair" (V, i, 2027-28). Thus, Cary uses the colour of virginity to mark Mariam out as an assertive, yet sexually pure woman. She deconstructs the patriarchal signification of female silence as white and sexually pure, and speech as black and wantonness. This deconstruction is further effected by the fact that the

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26 Interestingly, in her preface to the play Cary expresses a similar desire to associate the text of the play that she has written with sexual purity, by dedicating her work to her sister-in-law, who is the "earthly deputess" of Diana, goddess of chastity, and who she describes as "Lune-like, unspotted, chaste, divine" (1996, 10). In other words, Cary the author and Mariam the speaker are related in that both attempt to discursively construct their utterances as chaste or spotless, and thus, legitimise their voices.
apparent embodiment of feminine silence, Graphina, is also associated with a white skin, a "brow…as white" (II, i, 568). Representing what society in those days saw as the two poles of womanhood, the white, virginal, silent Graphina and the black, adulterous, eloquent Salome, Cary's creation of a protagonist that falls in between these two poles means that she opens up the possibility of a chaste, speaking heroine.

English women writers such as Jane Anger and Isabella Whitney frequently contrasted woman's sexual purity and innocence with men's wanton words, upsetting current gender notions by linking sexual incontinence to man's speech instead of to woman's words. Similarly, Cary creates a contrast between Mariam's speeches, which issue from a pure sexuality and mind, and Herod's words, which are associated with adultery and sin. Using his voice to command his legitimate wife Doris to be divorced from his bed, and appoint Mariam as his queen in her stead, Herod's discourses are involved in adultery and unfaithfulness. Furthermore, Herod uses Petrarchan discourses which suggest his Platonic devotion for Mariam: "be my commandress, be my sovereign guide,/To be by thee directed I will woo" (IV, i, 98-99). However, his words mask his lust for Mariam, and his desire to subjugate her sexually rather than respect her rejection of the marriage bed. Through her association of Herod's voice with lust Cary's implicit legitimisation of the female voice is further intensified.

5.5. "Let all the stars be dark": Cary's Use of Religious Discourses.27

A close look at the play reveals that references to the scriptures and to heaven and hell make up an essential part of the discourses that the characters use in relation to one another. For example, Herod signifies women by categorising them under the heading of either "hell" or "heaven". He considers Mariam a "fair fiend" (IV, iv, 1426) when he distrusts her honour, but "like heaven" and "heavenly true" when he changes his vision of her (IV, vii, 1665).

Herod's division of women into good and bad kinds through religious discourses is analogous to the sexual discourses that Cary employs in relation to her female characters. In fact, with regard to Salome and Mariam the discourses of sexuality and religion closely intersect, in that Cary uses biblical references to the fall of mankind and discourses about the virgin Mary in order to contrast the two women's sexual moralities, and legitimise Mariam's outspokenness. Throughout the play Salome is associated with the figure of Eve. According to Constabarus Salome's mouth is "serpent-like" and "like a serpent, poisons where it kisses" (II, iv, 861-62).

27 See also Corporaal, 2002a, 11-14.
Thus, Salome is brought in connection with the animal shape that Satan took on when he persuaded Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit. In addition, pondering upon his wife's evil deeds, Constabarus identifies the whole female sex with Eve: "Cham's servile curse to all your sex was given/ Because in Paradise you did offend" (IV, vi, 1554-55). Since Constabarus's association of the whole female sex with Eve appears to be inspired by Salome's behaviour, a link is suggested between Salome and Eve. By contrast, Mariam appears to be identified with the Virgin Mary. Not only does her name playfully allude to the name of the Holy Virgin, references to Marian iconology are made in relation to her as well. As Danielle Clarke has observed, the image of the blush was an essential element of Marian iconology. This image of the blush comes up in the discussion between Herod and Salome about Mariam. Herod asks his sister whether she had marked Mariam's virginal, blushing cheek, and Salome responds by saying that Mariam's cheek shows a "crimson bush", not a "blush" (IV, vii, 1614, 1618). In the Nuntio's description of Mariam's death, another Marian image, namely that of the phoenix, comes up: "I went amongst the curious gazing troop/ To see the last of her that was the best/ To see if death had heart to make her stoop/ To see the sun-admiring Phoenix nest" (V, i, 1898-1901).

It may of course be argued that Cary's depiction of a heroine who resembles the Virgin Mary originated from her at that time still secret Roman Catholic sympathies. At the same time, Cary's choice for a heroine who reminds one of the Virgin Mary in contrast with an Eve figure can also be explained differently. As I have pointed out, despite the dominant Protestant climate, identification with the Virgin Mary or presenting a female speaker who is like the Holy Virgin was attractive to Renaissance women writers, because she signified (pro)creative powers without sexual defilement. Cary's motivation for creating a heroine who is represented in Marian imagery can therefore be read as an attempt to dissociate the female speaking voice from lasciviousness.

In the light of the fact that Eve was associated with evil and temptation, and that the Virgin Mary was often seen as the second Eve who came to atone for the sin committed by her foremother, Cary's discursive relation of her heroine to the Virgin can be seen as a strategy to redeem the image of the speaking woman as well. That this is the case is revealed by the Constabarus's identification of Mariam as the grace of women: "my curse to you I leave,/You had but one to give you grace:/And you yourselves will Mariam's life bereave" (IV, vi, 310-13). She sought to replace the conventional image of the dangerous, tempting, eloquent female

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29 See Beilin, 1987, ix.
as represented by Eve, the woman of the Old Testament, by a positive portrayal of the outspoken woman that is free from sexual blemish, symbolised by the New Testament woman Mary.30

Renaissance women writers in England, such as Anne Wheathill, Anna Trapnel, Elizabeth Hooton, identified themselves with Jesus Christ in their writings. The figure of Christ is also alluded to extensively in the text of Cary's tragedy. Several references are made to King David, the ancestor of Jesus Christ, and the play is set among the Jews who were responsible for Christ's crucifixion. Besides, the chorus voices points of view that are related to ideas that Christ himself expressed, by emphasising that "the fairest action of our human life/ Is scorning to revenge an injury" (IV, viii, 1843), and that it is necessary to forgive one's enemy "without a further strife" (IV, viii, 1844).

In the source text by Josephus, Mariam is merely said to meet her death "without chaunge of colour" and "manifest courage and nobilitie" (B1v). In Alexandre Hardy's Mariamne the female protagonist is described to have died bravely, "de courage franc" (V, i, 1554). Cary's source as well as Hardy's earlier tragedy on Herod and Mariam lack the Christian context, as well as the depiction of the heroine as Christ-like, that is so predominantly present in Cary's play. The Nuntio's description of Mariam's execution contains various references to Christ's crucifixion. Mariam's dignified and victorious appearance despite her suffering, her willing submission to death, and the fact that she was not "debased by fear" (V, i, 1903) are a clear expression of a Stoic indifference and fortitude, in contrast with Herod's immoderate passions which cloud his judgement. Yet, the way in which she undergoes her fate also reminds one of Christ who was glorious in being slaughtered like a lamb, and did not resist his executors.

Moreover, the Nuntio contends that, when he came from Mariam's death:

I saw upon a tree
A man that to his neck a cord did tie,
Which cord he had designed his end to be
...And thus with fearful voice he cried aloud:
Go tell the King he trusted ere he tried,
I am the cause that Mariam causeless died. (V, i, 1980-87)

The image of the servant who commits suicide out of shame for unjustly slandering and betraying his mistress, is reminiscent of Judas Iscariot, Christ's disciple. Furthermore, an allusion to scriptural discourses dealing with Christ's crucifixion can be found in Herod's exclamation: "Why shine you, sun, with an aspect so clear?/ I tell you once again, my Mariam's dead...Deny

30 Meredith Skura proposes another interesting reading of the three women in the play, suggesting that each of the women corresponds to one of the women whose saints' lives she wrote. St Elizabeth was a woman who was "oppressed by her husband" (1997, 44) and therefore corresponds to Mariam. St. Agnes was a woman who refused to marry any man, and should have been the model for Graphina. Finally, St Mary Magdalene who "rebelled by sleeping with all men" (1997, 44) resembles Salome.
thy beams, and moon, refuse thy light/ Let all the stars be dark" (V, i, 2070-77). Herod's desire that the daylight should disappear and the sky turn dark in the middle of the day to mourn Mariam's death, plays upon the darkness that fell on the earth when Christ had passed away.31 In addition, in her final words Mariam suggests to the Nuntio that "By three daies hence" Herod "if wishes could revive" would wish her "oft alive" (V, i, 1954-55); a remark which alludes to Christ's resurrection after three days.

Mariam's Christ-like submission to Herod's death sentence has disturbed many critics who feel that Mariam's meekness at her death makes her pathetic, and suggests that women are unable to resist oppression.32 However, rather than thinking that through identifying Mariam with the passive, suffering Christ Cary makes the point that woman's desire for self-expression does and should not succeed in transcending and defying patriarchal restrictions, I wish to argue that Cary's representation of her heroine as a Christ-like figure serves to legitimise Mariam's actions.33

The parameters of conduct that Renaissance society set down for women encompassed qualities which were considered to be essentially Christ-like, namely, the passive qualities of piety and obedience.34 Considering this, Cary's depiction of a Christ-like heroine can be seen as a strategy to make woman's voice seem appropriate, despite the condemnation expressed by the chorus in the play. Christ's words have come to us in the Holy Scriptures. Consequently, Mariam's Christ-like appearance in the text creates the impression that Mariam's outspoken voice is "holy" as well. This impression is endorsed by the fact that the Nuntio has to pass on every last word Mariam uttered to Herod, as "the food on which my heart is fed" (V, i, 1949). Herod's comparison of Mariam's voice to food for the heart is a playful allusion to the function that Christ's word has according to the Scriptures: like Christ's discourses Mariam's words become the means to satisfy the hunger for spiritual well-being and redemption.

The idea of a New Order, that is initiated by Mariam as a Christ-like figure, is also suggested by Cary in her tragedy.35 Just as Mariam prophesied before her death, Herod comes to regret his elimination of her, and this regret is accompanied by his worshipping of Mariam's last

31 Mary Sidney also emphasised the darkness that fell over the earth when Christ died. As she wrote in "Our Saviour's Passion" (1590's): "The dayes like night all darkned in distresse"(1862, 5).
32 Nancy Cotton comes up with this argument. See Cotton, 1980, 34.
33 According to Diane Purkiss "Mariam's death is a signifier of tyranny and also a sign that a more just state may ensue (1999, 42).
34 See Beilin, 1987, xv, and my discussion on women writers' identification with Christ on page .
35 My reading that Cary depicts Mariam as the Christ-like representative of a new order is supported by the fact that the margins in Lodge's 1602 translation of Josephus's text contain "notations of the number of years remaining until the birth of Christ", so that "Cary would thus be continually reminded as she read the Antiquities these were the last years of the old dispensation" (Beilin, 1980, 61), the old law.
words and voice. Instead of being pleased with having silenced the transgressive female speaker, Herod wishes to recapture and revive Mariam's lost voice through the Nuntio's report: "Tell all, omit no letter…. O say, what said she more" (V, i, 1942, 1948). Furthermore, Herod comes to realise that he had Mariam killed unjustly, stating "I am the villain that hath done the deed" (V, i, 2064), and suggesting that woman's speech is not always a sign of sexual incontinence: "I hold her chaste even in my utmost soul" (V, i, 1953). In other words, the final scene of the play displays a change to the old situation, a new gender order almost. Mariam's death has resulted in the replacement of the old discourses which idealise the voiceless woman and associate female speech with lewdness by a "new world" where woman's voice is cherished and loved, and where woman's utterance is not automatically seen as proof of wantoness. In addition, Mariam's silence at her execution, which is marked by a "a dutiful, though scornful smile" (V, i, 52), involves a recreation of the dominant ideology of woman's voice, in that she depicts woman's silence as justified, secret defiance, instead of a sign of submission.

5.6. "Curse not my infants": The Role of Maternity in the Play.

When the Nuntio reports of Mariam's execution, he describes how Mariam's mother, Alexandra, denounced her daughter: "she did upon her daughter loudly rail" (V, i, 36). Alexandra's overt rejection of Mariam shows that in the play the relationships between mother and daughter are marked by hostility and rivalry, for Alexandra clearly seeks to save her own life and win Herod's favour by openly disapproving of Mariam's conduct. Although the portrayal of the mother-daughter bond is rather negative, at the same time maternity plays a significant part in the text. The female characters in the play are almost all mothers. The wronged mother Doris has a more central role, which includes a speaking part, in Cary's drama than in Josephus's text where she is a mere peripheral figure.36 Whereas Mariam's position in the Antiquities is limited to her role as Herod's wife, with no consideration of her maternal responsibilities, Cary emphasises Mariam's motherhood.37 The discourses of maternity in the play operate as strategies to legitimise transgressive female speech. Act IV of the play consists of a scene in which Mariam is faced with Herod's first legitimate wife Doris, who was abandoned for Mariam. When Doris, out of anger for her destroyed marriage, curses Mariam and her offspring, Mariam exclaims: "Curse not mine infants, let it thee suffice/That heaven doth punishment to me allow" (IV, viii, 605-607). Mariam's motherly concern further helps to attenuate the selfless view that is presented of her in the play. Moreover, Mariam herself attempts to legitimise her outspoken, transgressive voice in

36 On this point, see also Meredith Skura, 1997, 29.
front of Herod, by claiming "In heaven shall Mariam sit in Sara's lap" (IV, viii, 573). Mariam evokes her position in a chain of mothers, and the supposed sanction of a foremother to morally justify herself and challenge Herod's condemnation of her outspokenness.\(^{38}\)

In an intriguing study of the representation of motherhood in *The Tragedie of Mariam* Naomi J Miller argues that "whereas the men tend to perceive motherhood as a physical state which bears witness to their own sexual potency, the women claim maternity as a condition for speech" (1997, 361). I would like to push the matter a bit further by suggesting that Cary does not represent maternity as a condition for speech, but even as a legitimisation for woman's utterance. The "curse" with which Alexandra pursues Herod's supposedly "breathless trunk and spirit" (I, i, 83) appears justified from a maternal perspective, in the light of Herod's cruel murder of her son, Aristobolus. Likewise, the "curse" that Doris pronounces, her tongue "inflamed with poison's power and steeped in gall" (IV, viii, 600-610), is understandable considering Doris's difficult position as an abandoned mother, who hates to see her sons robbed of their royal privilege. The only problem is that Doris directs her curse towards those that are not responsible for Herod's infidelity towards her, namely Mariam and her children, rather than towards Herod himself.

5.7. Women and Subjectivity in *The Tragedie of Mariam*.

Some of the women in the play, such as Alexandra and Doris, are only shown to speak up in the company of members of their own sex. They only dare voice their complaints and grudges against men outside the presence of male listeners. Alexandra only finds courage to pronounce her curse on Herod's trunk and spirit, when she presumes that Herod is dead, and when she finds herself surrounded by a female audience consisting of Mariam and Salome. As Salome rightly argues, Alexandra would not have had the courage to "have given your tongue the rein/If noble Herod still remained in life" (I, i, 119-120), or had been present to overhear her. Likewise, Doris is only outspoken in the private setting of conversation between women. As I have illustrated, Doris addresses her wrath as a forsaken wife to Mariam, rather than to Herod himself.\(^{39}\)

To some extent, this idea of contained speech also applies to Mariam. The opening scene represents Mariam uttering a soliloquy in which she expresses her contrary emotions upon

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\(^{37}\) See also Miller, 1997, 360.

\(^{38}\) As Susan Iwanisziw asserts, these words indicate that while Mariam "accepts her temporal punishment consequent upon her marital transgression, she simultaneously assumes her spiritual salvation, her place in a female and a maternal lap" (1998, 120).

\(^{39}\) Thus Naomi Miller is right when she concludes that the women's accusations are "directed most specifically not toward their husbands and male lovers, but rather toward each other" (1997, 361).
learning of Herod's death. Openly voicing her antipathy towards him, as well as her partial relief about being liberated from his tyrannous yoke, Mariam speaks her rebellious, "unwifely" thoughts to no other character, but to the air. She is supposed to utter these words while solitary. Things turn out for the worse for Mariam when she starts to open up her bosom and display her interior thoughts to Sohemus, who, as a result of their intimacy, reveals Herod's plot that Mariam should not enjoy any man after his death. Her conversations with Sohemus, which arouse the suspicion of her adultery in Herod's mind, together with her outspokenness about her grudges towards Herod ultimately lead to her death. The fact that Mariam's overstepping the boundaries of private and women-to-women conversations results in her death may create the impression that Cary supports the dominant discourses by punishing her heroine for her "unbridled speech" (III, iii, 182).

This seeming support of the idea that women ought to be silent clashes with the fact that Cary depicts Mariam as socially acceptable. In addition, Cary makes clear that the women who stick to the boundaries of private speech, and thus comply with social demands, are responsible for creating division among women. Doris unjustly directs all her accusations at Mariam rather than Herod, and Alexandra is said to rail at Mariam during her execution in order to please Herod. Therefore, Cary's portrayal of women who confine their speeches to the feminine sphere is rather negative.40 In this respect the contrast between the freedom of expression that Cary grants her female protagonist through the soliloquies on the one hand, and Mariam's woeful ending is relevant. Cary points to the conflict between a woman's desire to speak her mind, which she attempts to legitimise in the play, and the social laws which restrict female utterance. She focuses upon the restrictions on woman's voice rather than on the condemnation of woman's speech. However, while Doris's and Alexandra's expression of their ideas in conversations between women signals their inability to overcome the constraints that society places upon female utterance, at the same time their covert expression of rebellion in these female contexts remains unknown to Herod. In other words, the constriction of female utterance to privacy is shown to undermine man's control over the female sex, since women's words, thoughts and feelings are beyond their control.

In *The Tragedie of Mariam* the conventional tragic pattern, in which the outspoken woman is deprived of her former discursive potential and control, is subverted. In some respects Cary's depiction of her villainess Salome still fits in with the treatment that is reserved for wordy,

40 This negative approach towards Alexandra's effort to mode her speeches in such a way as to comply with Herod's patriarchal ideology, is accentuated by the fact that Cary gives only a brief report of Alexandra's self-preserving speeches, whereas Josephus presents Alexandra's railing speech in full. See also Travitsky, 1987, 189.
wanton women in most tragedies from the period. At the outset Salome is in command over the process of signification.\textsuperscript{41} She can impose definitions upon the people around her.\textsuperscript{42} For instance, she manages to make Herod believe the slanderous imputations that she raises against Mariam, and makes him accept her definition of Mariam as a woman whose forehead is blotted by "foul dishonours" (IV, vii, 406). Besides, she defies the significations that have been established by the androcentric society in which she lives. She challenges the gender norms that men may divorce their wives freely, while women do not have that right. Arguing that she means "not to be led by precedent/ My will shall be to me instead of Law", she assumes the right to "free" her "life" (I, vi, 419-454) from her husband. Later on in the play she loses this control over the semantic process. Herod finds out that he has been misled by "Accursèd" (V, i, 157) Salome's words. Although Salome first manages to ensnare Herod into committing his wife to death, and thus succeeds in keeping her interior impenetrable to Herod, later on her brother comes to know and see Salome as she really is: a "fond fool" who was driven by "envy" (V, i, 161-165) to see herself outmatched by Mariam. At the same time, this exposure of Salome's interior by Herod marks her loss of narrative control over the plot. Although Salome has cleverly plotted Mariam's death, she cannot execute her plan of becoming her brother's favourite as the means to obtain Herod's consent for her divorce.

While Salome's depiction conforms to the treatment reserved for discursively transgressive women in most tragedies from the period, Cary overturns this tragic pattern in relation to Mariam. In fact, one can even argue that Cary has reversed the plot that is traditionally allocated to transgressive female characters. Mariam first lacks command over her own representations, and over the plot of her life, but later on gains control over the process of signification and the medium of discourse in general. Mariam fails to control the way in which she is seen or represented by society. This is revealed by the fact that, despite her physical "whiteness", Mariam is not acknowledged and recognised as a pure, spotless soul by all people around her. Herod blindly accepts Salome's slander of Mariam for truth, assuming that whereas Mariam's eye "is pure as heaven", her mind is a site of "pitched darkness" (IV, iv, 1403-1425). The chorus raises the point that Mariam's subsequent condemnation to death is due to her failure at not just being, but also seeming a chaste, virtuous wife. However, in my view, Cary does not

\textsuperscript{41} Interestingly, in Alexandre Hardy's \textit{Marianne} it is not just Salome, but Salome and her brother Pherore who together devise the plan of sowing hostility between Herode and Mariamne. Thus, in comparison with Cary's Salome, Hardy's character exercises less narrative control over the plot. Furthermore, whereas Hardy's Salome slanders Mariam out of fear for the family and state, Cary's Salome is clearly driven by her own sexual desire and envy.
represent Mariam's unbridled speeches as the only and rightful cause of her downfall. Herod is led astray by his own attitude of role-playing, projecting his own tendency to keep up appearances on Mariam. As a result, he fails to take Mariam's white appearance for what it is, namely a representation of her virtuous soul, and is persuaded by Salome's suggestion that Mariam's heavenly beauty may conceal an evil interior: "She speaks a beauteous language, but within/Her heart is false as powder" (IV, v, 428-29). In other words, Cary represents Mariam's bleak fate as an act of misinterpretation, a tragic failure to decipher woman. This is also shown by Herod's realisation that he has been blind to the fact that "heaven" in Mariam "did link / A spirit and a person to excel" (V, i, 2122-23). Thus, Mariam's tragic fate is shown to issue not so much from women's inability to represent themselves as they are, but from men's incapacity to "read" women correctly. In this way Cary emphasises that in the world of the play, as in her own society, patriarchy's efforts to classify women is ineffective, and that "woman" as a signifier is in fact a very unstable notion. Mariam's tragic error in this respect is not so much her desire to be true to her heart in her self-expression, but her blindness to the society's innability to read beyond the binary oppositions of the wordy wanton woman and the speechless chaste female that it created. This is underlined by her expression: "And deemed my face must needs preserve my breath?" (IV, viii, 1739).

However, Mariam's initial incapacity to govern the meaning that is attributed to her transforms into control over discourse at the tragic closure. As I have explained, Herod's former dislike for Mariam's outspokenness changes into regret that he has silenced her, and the wish to remember and hear every last word that she had uttered. Thus, while Mariam first missed the possibility to utter her thoughts freely without persecution, she is assigned a speaking position at the tragic closure, albeit, ironically, when she has already been silenced through death.43 Furthermore, the alternative of a woman who is both chaste and discursively active that Mariam used as a representation of herself in contrast with the binary opposites through which society defined womanhood is accepted and established: "I hold her chaste even in my utmost soul" (V, i, 1953).

Intriguingly, while Mariam attains more control over the discursive processes towards the ending of the play, Herod gradually loses the discursive power and control, which he formerly possessed. Herod was in charge of the discursive order at first, having the power to bid women to

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42 As Shari Zimmerman has alleged, Salome can exert this control over the process of signification, since "it is Salome alone who is shown to be aware of the ways in which women may be read, hated, and dismissed" (1999, 578).
be silent, to construct their meanings according to the place that they assumed in relation to
speech, and to allocate them to position of eternal voicelessness by exercising his will. Yet, roles
have reversed at the tragic closure. For one thing, Herod is no longer in control of Mariam's
speeches and silence. Having sentenced Mariam to death, hence to infinite silence, Herod cannot
re-evoke and make Mariam's voice disappear again according to his likes and dislikes. His
comment "Is there no trick to make her breathe again?" (V, i, 1966) shows that Herod had
thought of his execution of Mariam as a game at first: a process that could reversed, and that he
was completely in power of. However, as his remark "Oh, that I could that sentence now
control" (1951) indicates, Herod has not only lost command over the "sentence" that he
pronounced over Mariam, but in particular over her discourse: he can no longer determine the
presence or absence of Mariam's speech, since her voice cannot be revived at his command. At
the same time, Herod's failure to re-evoke Mariam's speech marks his loss of narrative control
over future events. What is significant is that in Josephus's *Antiquities* and Hardy's Herod is is
capable of re-evoking Mariam. The Herod in Josephus's text is said to "inuocate her name"
(D1v), and often "commaunded his ministers to call his wife Mariamme as if she had been
alieue" (E1r). Similarly, the Herod in Hardy's tragedy argues that he will bring Mariam back to
life with his voice: "Revoquera l'esprit aux accens de ma voix" (V, 1702). By contrast, Cary
represents Herod as dispossessed of this discursive command over woman; a representation
which offers a vision of an alternative gender order.

Herod has lost control over Mariam's discourse, since she decided who was to serve as
the person to pass on her voice and messages and to create the narrative of her death. As the
Nuntio makes clear, Mariam "picked me out from all the crew" (V, i, 1937), selecting him as the
person to narrate her account. Thus, Herod is excluded from his function of discursively
controlling and creating Mariam, as becomes clear from his indignant claim: "Thou dost usurp
my right, my tongue was framed/ To be the instrument of Mariam's praise" (V, i, 1907-08).
Before dying Mariam defied patriarchal control over her signification, by suggesting that men
like Herod "can… but my life destroy/My soul is free from adversaries" (IV, viii, 1782-83). In
other words, Mariam suggests that Herod will never succeed in controlling her soul. Her
defiant statement actually shows that Mariam transcends her female body, the site which
makes her speech unacceptable in the eyes of society. No longer able to control and create the

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43 Magaret Ferguson rightly suggests that Herod, at the same time that he comes to cherish Mariam's absent
voice, transfers his tirade against women's voices to the railing Alexandra, claiming that he will punish her for
her utterances. See Ferguson, 1991b, 56.
meaning of Mariam as a signifier, Herod appears to become an empty signifier himself, who depended for his significance and identity upon Mariam. This is revealed by his craving for Mariam's speech: "Each word she said/ Shall be the food on which my heart is fed" (V, i, 1948-49).

5.8. The Tragic Closure, Transcendence and Transgression.

In contrast with the female characters that one finds in most Jacobean tragedies, Mariam reaches transcendence in death. She is allowed a last moment of assertion on the stage before she is led off to be executed. By thus pronouncing a sentence through which she can define herself as different from the world, she manages to establish her representation before the final moment of annihilation.

In a detailed study of Renaissance women on the scaffold, Frances Dolan has asserted that for women who were convicted, "the moment of death paradoxically enabled women to assert themselves through submission" (1994, 158) in a public arena: "For the female offender addressing a large audience-perhaps for the first and only time- from the scaffold, any speech, even one that affirmed the status quo and condemned herself, offered an opportunity to speak publicly that challenged powerful constraints on female self-assertion and vollubility" (1994, 158). Intriguingly, the moment of self-assertion that Mariam enjoys takes place before she is led to her place of execution, but not on the scaffold itself. In fact, a report of Mariam's last minutes comes to the audience and readers indirectly, via the account given by the Nuntio to Herod. The fact that the Nuntio renders Mariam's last words is in line with the Senecan tradition, where "lyrical and expository narration", carried out by the chorus or Nuntius, largely replaces "energetic stage action" (Shannon, 1994, 145). However, in my view, the role of the Nuntio as messenger of Mariam's last words has an additional function. It suggests that Mariam's speech is reconstructed by him, represented through his own perspective. Although this may suggest that Mariam loses discursive control, because she has to rely upon his male voice for memorialising her and forwarding her speeches, the role of the Nuntio as the instrument of Mariam's voice can also be read differently. Mariam's appointment of the Nuntio as the vessel of her voice can be seen as an act of autonomy. About to be rendered powerless and voiceless through death,

44 As Naomi Miller argues, the tragic conclusion does not only show that Herod can be "known ultimately in relation to 'his' Mariam", but also that Herod's "final words are contained" by Mariam's own "words" (1997, 366), since his final words are solely concerned with her and, ironically, dominated by her final speech. This idea of Herod's contained speech in my view evokes the image of pregnancy, Herod the speaker being the infant that Mariam the mother produces, so that Mariam is associated with the production of speech and meaning, and Herod is cast in the mother role of the dependent child, who derives meaning from his mother.
Mariam at least determines who is going to memorialise and represent her after her execution, excluding Herod from this privilege. In this respect the traditional roles of the male voice filling woman's body as the empty vessel appear to be reversed. Mariam's authority over her representation before dying constitutes a moment of dramatic control in that Mariam defines the roles that the other characters are to fulfil after her death, and thus directs the rest of the "plot" of their lives. The fact that Mariam's voice is represented indirectly also implies a sense of autonomy, in that her voice thus stays out of reach from men like Herod, and thus cannot be recaptured or controlled by him.\(^{45}\)

Besides, as Frances Dolan has remarked, "The Nuntius's description of Mariam's death presents her both physically impressive and as disembodied", and thus, "suppresses bodily death as part of the program for transforming the female protagonist into a near-saint" (172).\(^{46}\)

In addition, Mariam's disembodied voice at the end of the tragedy serves to dissociate Mariam's speech from the sexual female body, hence from any imputations of sexual dishonour. The idea is created that Mariam can transcend the social restrictions that seek to restrict and affect woman's expression. Moreover, as Kaja Silverman argues, representing a voice as disembodied attests to "an achieved invisibility, omniscience, a discursive power" (1984, 132).

Therefore, the depiction of Mariam's voice as disconnected from her body serves to underline her discursive power and control.\(^{47}\)

In other words, Mariam manages to overcome gender restrictions and stereotypes in general. Acting as the disembodied voice in the last act, Mariam becomes the ultimate inaccessible lady of the Petrarchan tradition. As we have seen, Herod uses Petrarchan discourses in relation to his wife, suggesting that he places her on a pedestal as his commandress. However, underlying his words of platonic submission are his lust for Mariam and his urge to control her. Mariam's inability to perceive this underlying meaning of his speeches signifies her initial disempowerment as far as language is concerned. Ironically, in line with Mariam's acquisition of command over discourse in the final act, Mariam becomes the ultimately inaccessible woman. Having turned into the woman who denies Herod the pleasure of representing her, and the woman who only survives as a spirit, but has no sexual body, the Petrarchan ideal of the unattainable mistress appears to have been pushed to its limits. As is

\(^{45}\) As Alison Findlay contends, "*The Tragedy of Mariam* rewrites the aesthetic relationship between femininity and death", since "Mariam is not represented on stage as a beautiful corpse, a spectacle which guarantees male ownership" (Findlay, 2000b, 509).

\(^{46}\) Elaine Aston contends that when "the spectator is not allowed to 'see' the body displayed as victim/object, but is forced into a position which requires her/him to confront the issue of male violence" (1995, 96). Thus, Mariam's death off-stage seems to have the additional function of foregrounding Herod's unjust cruelty towards her.

\(^{47}\) Besides, Mariam's disembodied voice constitutes a transcendence of the Cartesian philosophy which identified the female sex with the body and the male sex with the mind, and which thus resulted in "the assignment of men to the realm of the intellect and the relegation of women to the realm of the senses" (Ottway, 1998, 90).
revealed by the strands of Petrarchan discourse that come up in Herod's mad ravings, this Petrarchan ideal is now beyond his control as a speaker: "She was fair,/ Oh what a hand she had, it was so white,/ It did the whitness of the snow impair" (V, i, 149-151).

As we have perceived, in Jacobean tragedy the outspoken woman is silenced for good at the tragic closure, her death marking the elimination of the threat that she posed to the discursive order. Mariam's transgressive voice is also silenced by Herod's execution of her. However, the fact that she is associated with Christ suggests that, like Christ who was resurrected from death after three days, Mariam and her speech may also be resurrected and exist beyond the grave, even though Herod fails to re-echo her voice. Put differently, the impression is created that Mariam is not silenced for good.

The other female character in the play who transgresses the boundaries of silence, Salome, is not relegated to infinite speechlessness either. In spite of her being deprived of her previous command over language, meaning and the plot, she is not killed at the tragic closure, like most Jacobean villainesses. Thus, her voice is not annihilated, and her potential for achieving subjectivity remains. By contrast, Herod's voice appears to be committed to a social death, in that, grieving over Mariam's decease, he aims to seclude himself from the outside world: "I'll muffle up my face in endless night" (V, i, 247). Retreating into solitude, Herod's voice will no longer be heard in public, and will thus be annihilated from the social scene. The traditional tragic pattern, which restores the male sex to discursive power and reduces the wordy woman to silence, is reversed by Cary in her tragedy, in particular through the Christian subtext that she uses in relation to Mariam.

5.9. Cary's Play and Contemporary Tragedies.

As we have noticed, the text of The Tragedie of Mariam is characterised by a "double-voiced discourse" (Showalter b 426) concerning woman's voice. On the one hand, the tragedy contains the discourses, which associate woman's speech with sexual incontinence, that one finds in the majority of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies. On the other hand, Cary's tragedy subverts the dominant view that the outspoken woman is necessarily adulterous. In her depiction of Mariam, Cary dissociates the female voice from wantonness, by emphasising Mariam's chastity and purity of mind and body. She relates the male voice to corruption and adultery instead, and shows that Herod's suspicion of his wife is a projection of his own evil nature. In these respects, Cary differs from most Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedians. Yet, Cary's creation of alternative, legitimising discourses on woman's voice resembles Webster's
Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam*

and Shakespeare's depiction of the voiced female in their tragedies. There are many similarities between the plots of *Othello* and the plot of Cary's tragedy, since both portray an outspoken, yet virtuous woman whose sexual reputation is slandered unjustly, and who is consequently murdered by her husband. Critics have disagreed about the question whether Cary's play was influenced by Shakespeare's tragedy, or whether Shakespeare partly derived the ideas for his tragedy from Cary's drama. After all, both tragedies were probably written at about the same time. The fact is that in both tragedies the social construction of a discursively assertive woman as wanton is shown to result from power struggles in which people attempt to harm and victimise one another.

In Cary's tragedy, Herod utters his "recognition" that he had Mariam executed unjustly- a moment of "recognition" which supports the legitimisation of the heroine's speech at other stages of the plot. In this respect, Cary's tragedy is different from *The Duchess of Malfi*. Although in Webster's tragedy the idea is borne out that the men's equation of the assertive Duchess with the luxurious woman is false, this deconstruction of the dominant view on woman's speech is not expressed through a moment of "recognition" on the part of the male villains. Neither Ferdinand nor the Cardinal openly utters the awareness that their judgement on their sister was distorted. Cary's play is different from most Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies, in that the moment of "recognition" is connected with the dominant ideology of woman's voice, subverting this ideology while at the same time legitimising woman's utterance.

In spite of this difference between Cary's tragedy and Webster's play, there are also a lot of similarities between *The Tragedie of Mariam* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, as far as the representation of woman's voice is concerned. In both plays the cultural rejection of female utterance is portrayed as a figment of the vile male mind, or a projection of man's anxiety about his own identity, which results in a desire to monumentalise woman. Cary's tragedy can be regarded as more special than Webster's, however, since the former challenges the dominant gender discourses from the perspective of the woman writer.

Tragedies such as *Titus Andronicus* portray two contrasting female characters, one of whom is silent and chaste, and one of whom is assertive and sexually immoral. Cary employed this tragic convention of polarisation of characters that marked tragedies from her period, but at the same time reworked it. While she represents a chaste heroine and sexually incontinent villainess, Cary portrays the two women as equal in their breach of silence. In other words, Cary takes over the representation of two binary opposites of female sexuality.
The discourses of Christ's crucifixion that come up in *The Tragedy of Mariam* play a significant role, in that they imply a reconstruction of female tragic subjectivity. Mariam's identification with Christ entails that, like him, she turns from a powerless victim into a powerful victor. In most Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies, wordy female characters are deprived of the control over their image, the signifying process, the plot and the exchange of knowledge that they possessed earlier on in the play. This is true for Alice Arden, Tamora, Beatrice Joanna, Evadne, and Desdemona. Thus, most Elizabethan and Jacobean tragic plots move towards the elimination of woman's potential for subjectivity. Cary's plot, however, partly moves in the opposite direction. Salome's fate still corresponds to that of the conventional outspoken woman in tragedy, since she has to surrender her former discursive power in the course of the play. However, Mariam gains, rather than loses further control over the medium of language, so that the conventional plot development concerning the female subject is reversed. This reversal is elaborated upon by the fact that Herod has to undergo the fate that the villainess is usually subjected to, because he loses his former authority over the meaning of woman, and fails to direct the plot according to his desires. Man is thus rendered increasingly powerless with regard to discourse, which runs counter to the usual pattern of the tragic plot.

The tragic closure in most Elizabethan and Jacobean drama not only constitutes a restoration of a gender order marked by male control, but sometimes signals the elimination of madness and the return of reason as well. This is particularly true for *The Maid's Tragedy*. As we have seen, Amintor discards Evadne's speeches as madness, because he is puzzled by the meaning of her language, and gets frightened by the linguistic control that she exercises. The development of the plot, however, leads to a re-instatement of his control over meaning, and the reduction of Evadne to the definable object. Thus, the restoration of conventional gender relationships is paralleled by a defiance of the madness that Evadne's speeches represent, and the subsequent elimination of these mad speeches. When one compares this ending of Beaumont and Fletcher's drama with the tragic closure of *Mariam*, one perceives that quite the reverse is the case for the development of Cary's plot. Herod's loss of command over meaning is accompanied by frenzy and disorder in his mind. Herod irrationally believes that he can resurrect Mariam from the dead, and, raving in madness, finds himself unable to interpret and create meaning. His determination to "muffle" himself "up…in endless night…in some vault or den enclosed be" (V, i, 247-51) reminds one of lunatics locked up in
the ill-lit cells of a mental asylum. Since Cary's play thus ends in madness rather than the restoration of ratio and order, one could argue that Cary has rewritten the Renaissance traditions of tragic closure.

Further differences between Cary's tragedy and other tragic plays written in the same period have to do with the deaths of female characters. The outspoken, hence transgressive women in Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy usually end up dead, and are subsequently denied memorialising rites such as burial. By contrast, the women who are overtly commemorated, or for whom memorials are erected in these tragedies, are often women who have never spoken any word on the stage at all. Good examples in this respect are Gloriana and Antonio's wife in Cyril Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1607). Both women are commemorated in the play by their former lovers who re-evoke their memory. Yet the two women only enter the stage as corpses. Antonio's wife has her dead body exposed to her husband's male audience of acquaintances: "Her funeral shall be wealthy, for her name/ Merits a tomb of pearl!" (I, iv, 69-70). Gloriana only appears on the stage as a skull divested of all her former beauty, which Vindice holds up to the eyes of the theatre audience in order to justify his thirst for revenge: "Vengeance, thou Murder's quit-rent, and whereby /Thou show'st thyself tenant to Tragedy….hum, whoe'er knew/Murder unpaid? " (I, i, 39-43). In other words, the two women who are memorialised figure as the culturally venerated speechless women throughout the play, serving as the props of the male character's dramatic speeches. The fact that Mariam is memorialised by the Nuntio after her death, as well as by Herod, therefore marks an exception to the tragic conventions concerning transcendence. It is not the appropriately silent woman, but the discursively transgressive woman who is granted a place in memory.

5.10. *The Tragedie of Mariam* and the Genre of Closet Drama.

The outbursts of unbridled passion that mark the tyrant's behaviour in Renaissance closet drama, can also be found in *The Tragedie of Mariam*. Herod lacks control over his passions in his anger towards Mariam, and in his rash decision to have her convicted to death. As Rosemary Kegl appropriately suggests, in the play Herod's "passion sets an unstable cycle in motion", leading to a kingdom characterised by "instability and inconstancy" (1999, 148). The contrast between the calmness with which Mariam meets her fate, and Herod's blind fury has a significant function in Cary's legitimisation of Mariam's outspokenness. Mariam's resignation to Herod's command marks her out as a morally upright woman, while Herod's
furious frenzy emphasises the injustice of his decision, and the erratic nature of his view on Mariam's assertive speech. The boundless passion that dominates Herod's temper serves to underline Herod's error in associating Mariam's outspokenness with sexual incontinence.

Readers may wonder why, unlike many tragic heroes or heroines who die in the final act, Mariam already disappears from the stage as a living presence in Act IV. Mariam's early death in the play actually fits in with the earlier discussed Senecan conventions of closet drama, according to which the hero dies in Act IV. Mariam's early death in the play, and the effect that her death has on Herod conforms to the conventional pattern of the plot in closet drama. Again, one can argue that Cary's choice of the genre of closet drama endorses her legitimisation of Mariam's outspokenness. Her death in Act IV establishes Mariam as the paragon of political virtue and integrity, and enhances the saintly image of Mariam that is suggested by her representation as a Christ-like figure.

Partly because of the messenger who reports events and the death of the hero in Act IV, *The Tragedie of Mariam* has often been envisaged "a textbook example" (Shannon, 1994, 146) of the genre. However, a close look at the text of the tragedy reveals that Cary has rewritten some generic conventions of tragic closet drama. For one thing, Cary clearly questions the nature of closet drama itself, as a private, enclosed form of dramatic discourse. As Guttierez has suggested, Mariam's opening line "How oft have I with public voice run on" (I, i, 1) arguably addresses "a problem that has to do not only with female speech in general, but with the play's own mode of existence" (1991, 238). In fact, one could infer that Mariam's desire of a "public voice", and Cary's defence of woman's speech, question the limits of privacy of closet drama. The centrality of the issue of woman's public voice, and Cary's implicit legitimisation of this "public voice" in a genre which is confined to a constricted, private discursive setting, means that Cary oversteps the boundaries of the "closet" form of her play. The dilemma between the gender norms imposed by society and woman's desire to speak up that Cary addresses in the play, is therefore expressed by the tense relationship that exists between the enclosed nature of the genre as a dramatic act of discourse on the one hand, and Cary's questioning of the engendered boundaries of speech on the other.

Furthermore, the boundaries of the genre as a private form are challenged by Cary's choice of language. A close look at Cary's text reveals that the visual plays an important role in the play. For example, the speech that Herod utters on being informed of Mariam's death,
consists of various references to the faculty of seeing: "I never more shall see so sweet a sight...let Jewry's eye no more distinguish what is day and night...The night's pale light for angry grief would shake/ To see chaste Mariam die in age unfit...And never let mine eyes behold the night" (V, i, 152-248). Moreover, in his tribute to Mariam Herod dwells upon Mariam's exterior, as he once could behold it, speaking of her white hands, her forehead and her eyes. Herod's exclamation that he will never be able to gaze upon Mariam's beautiful body again implies a challenge to man's eroticisation of the female sex, Mariam's body being outside Herod's control. However, Herod's remarks being concerned with the absence and presence of the visual, and his re-evocation of a visual image of Mariam implies a stress on visibility as a faculty. Besides, the Nuntio's description of Mariam's execution contains a lot of visual detail: "Her look did seem to keep the world in awe...she looked the while...Yet smiled a dutiful, though scornful smile" (26-52). As Hodgson-Wright points out in the video production of a performance of Cary's play, these references to the visual often serve as stage directions. Uttering her long monologue, Salome announces Silleus's entry upon the imaginary stage by her exclamation: "Silleus said/ he would be here, and see he comes at last (II, i, 322-324).49 Although Yvonne Day Merrill argues that the play is "hardly playable", since "there is little physical action, the characters' parts are extremely long, running between four and twelve lines on the average" (1996, 193), the visual discourses draw attention to the nature of the play as a text which could be performed and visualised on the stage, rather than being just read out in a private circle. As such, the enclosed and private nature of the play is implicitly questioned from within the text.50

Most Renaissance closet dramas end with a symbolic enclosure of speech, so that the drama takes on the form of a "closet". For example, in Mary Sidney's *The Tragedie of Antonie*, we saw that Cleopatra's final speech is literally confined by the walls of the monument, the enclosed nature of which is emphasised by the images of the tomb and chest. Likewise, in Samuel Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594) the play ends with Caesar's speech within the monument where Cleopatra has just killed herself, and in the confined space of which she has uttered her dying words. In Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia* (1594) the tragic

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49 Another example of an internal stage direction is Herod's remark "And here she comes indeed" (IV, i, 87), which suggests that Mariam is entering the stage. See also the video production; Stephanie Hodgson-Wright on *The Tragedie of Mariam*. Findlay et al. 1999b, and Findlay et al., 1999 a: "Whilst the sword fight and the cup demand realisation in performance, closer investigation of the text reveals a more deeply inherent physical dimension. One of the most striking features of the characters in *The Tragedy of Mariam* is the extent to which they see and look at each other"(130).

50 Stephanie Hodgson-Wright maintains that the clear influence that Queen Anna's court masques had on the play, suggest that "it is feasible that, although no record of a performance exists, the text was written with a performance agenda" (2000, 55).
closure depicts the heroine ready to pay memorial services to her deceased father Scipio. Since she utters her last speech in front of her father's burial place, again the association between the ending of the closet drama and "enclosure" is invoked. By contrast, in Cary's tragedy Mariam's speech is shown to be unconfined, rising from the grave like the Phoenix with which she is associated. Thus, it seems that the play does not end at the "finis", since there is the suggestion of a continuation. The boundaries of the closet drama do not limit the extent of the influence of Mariam's voice. In this way, the sense of enclosure that one finds in other closet dramas from the period is absent from Cary's tragedy. At the same time, Cary's breach with the format of closet drama at this point parallels Mariam's liberation from social restrictions. Whereas earlier on Mariam was confined by the "prison" (III, i, 51) of social restrictions, she becomes free from the constraints that society imposes upon woman, being represented as a voice transcending and detached from her female body. Whereas in the play, the generic boundaries of closet drama appear to signify the social constraints of gender, Cary's partial subversion of the generic conventions represents her attempt to free herself from the straitjacket of gender norms.

Another way in which Cary has reconstructed tragic closet dramas has to do with the notion of time. In Mary Sidney's and Samuel Daniel's tragedies the span of time of one day that is constituted by the plot includes few events. Sidney's play represents Antonie's anxiety about his loss of masculine heroism and power, his suicide upon hearing of Cleopatra's supposed death, and, subsequently, Cleopatra's self-fashioned death in the monument. Daniel's play focuses upon the same tragic love, but his plot encompasses a smaller number of events: only Cleopatra's response to Antonie's death, her negotiation with Caesar, and finally, her suicide. Compared to these earlier closet dramas, Cary's play consists of a large number of developments and events within an improbably short amount of time. As Rosemary Kegl argues, "an adherence to the unities of place and time helped to define closet drama as a genre by proving one index of its distance from the formal excesses" (1999, 142) of the popular stage. Considering the incredible number of events that have been compressed within the day that the plot represents, Kegl speaks of a "crisis in genre", since in this way, the play approximates "the unsettling temporal compression that Sidney associated with the popular stage" (1999, 143). Yet, this unnatural compression of numerous events in one day fits in with Cary's reconstruction of tragic subjectivity. As I have pointed out, Cary's tragedy ends in disorder and madness, rather than a restoration of male order. In the final act Herod completely loses his notion of time, confusing day and night, what has been, and what is to come, and finding himself unable to distinguish "three days" from "three hours, three
minutes" (V, i, 79). Thus, the general disorientation of time in the play is connected to Herod's general sense of powerlessness. This lack of command, as we have noticed, has mainly to do with Mariam's subversive power over discourse. In other words, Cary's moving away from the conventions of time in closet drama accords with her general reconstruction of subjectivity at the tragic closure.

Given the fact that in closet drama dilemmas are explored from two different perspectives, it is interesting that the most "feminine" of the choices that is available to the characters is usually the option that the female characters choose or end up with. For example, in Sidney's The Tragedie of Antonie when Antonie has passed away, Cleopatra no longer wishes to "stay/From Antonie" (V, i, 113-114), and would rather follow him in death than fight for her "native land" (II, i, 354) and regal power. Thus, she distinctly prefers the "feminine" option of wifely loyalty and love to that of masculine honour and authority. In Kyd's Cornelia, the female protagonist has the choice between avenging the deaths of her husband and father, or resigning herself to her fate and leaving revenge to the heavens. In the end she opts for submission to her fate. This is indicated by her remark that she wishes the furies to "retyre… th' extreame fire" of lust for vengeance "from my hart" (157). Cary's tragedy is different from these two closet dramas, in that, at the tragic closure, the heroine ends up with the "masculine" option of control over language rather than the "feminine" alternative of rejecting discourse.

5.11. Conclusion: Elizabeth Cary and her Precursor Mary Sidney.

There are a number of similarities between Sidney's translated tragedy and Cary's tragic play. Both The Tragedie of Antonie and The Tragedie of Mariam contain contemporary discourses of sexual purity, in particular those belonging to the Petrarchan tradition, discourses of maternity and female address. These discourses serve to legitimise woman's self expression and the female dramatist's transgressive utterance. However, unlike Sidney's play, Cary's Tragedie of Mariam justifies the heroine's speech by contrasting her pure words with, on the one hand, man's wanton voices, and, on the other hand, lascivious women's discourses. While using women-to-women conversation as a strategy to feminise her female characters' utterances, Cary also vents criticism to the constraints of privacy imposed upon women's speech. She shows that these constraints may lead men to be unconscious of women's interior rebellion against them, and may result in a division among the female sex.
In both tragic texts the deconstruction of the dominant gender discourses on speech are paralleled by a reconstruction of female tragic subjectivity, in that the women protagonists attain rather than lose command over discourse, meaning and the plot at the tragic closure. Cary's play differs from Sidney's in that the heroine's discursive power even transcends the grave, the heroine's achievement of discursive control not entailing a complete erasure of subjectivity through death. Because Mariam attains subjectivity beyond death, the dominant gender discourses affecting the conventional tragic closure are more fundamentally criticised by Cary than by Sidney.

Both Sidney and Cary opted for the format of closet drama, which gave them the opportunity to engage with drama while securing the privacy of their words. However, Cary displays more insecurity about closet drama as a mask for her public voice than Sidney. Mariam's assumption "Oh what a shelter is my innocence" (III, i, 171) is undermined, since she is not protected by her sexual virtue. Possibly Mariam's statement implies that no enclosed form of protection exists for a woman who is outspoken, not even the presumably "innocent" form of closet drama. The way in which Cary has shaped closet drama is different from Sidney's use of the genre. In her process of reconstructing female tragic subjectivity, she has reversed the conventional roles of closet drama, which Sidney observed. She has the role of the dying, saint-like hero who dies in Act IV assumed by her female protagonist rather than the male character Herod, as part of her project of legitimising woman's outspokenness. In addition, Cary further challenges the enclosed nature and generic boundaries of closet drama. Finally, Cary's text includes more elements which suggest the performability of the play that Sidney's play. Thus, *The Tragedie of Mariam* marks a further re-mapping of the generic parameters of closet drama.
Part III: “Weel feaste your understandinges, Eares, & Eyes”: Women and Tragedy, 1642-1665
A Dialogue betwixt an EXCISE-MAN and DEATH.

When truee Seeds were driven, To drench themselves beneath the Western Heaven, And shade the fertile Banks of certaine spread, And silent night had laid the world to bed, Along with other Night-Birds which did seek for prey, A blast excise-man, which shored the Day, Whose rambles seem to trace his life & theory, Mere port merchent Goods which had not paid the duty, But walking all alone Death came to meet him, And in this manner she began to greet him.

Death: Stand, who comes here? What means this Knave to And scale a ladder, when honest man should sleep? (peep) Speak, what's thy name? I find quickly tell me this, Whither thou goest, and what thy business is? Excise-man. What're my bus'nis is, thou foolst-mouth'd? If I have you know, I soon to be commanded. (Stood) By any man that lives, much less by thou Who blustre out thou knowest not what, nor how, I go about my lawful buisinef: And he make you fight for bidding of none stand.

Death: Impious Care-comfe! Is thy stomack west? Pray slack your rage; and harken what comes next: I have a Writ to take you up; therefore To crack your blood I did you, friend, once more. Excise-man: A Writ to take me up? Excise me, Sir, You doe mistake, I am an Officers, To publick Service, for my private Wealth, My bus'nis is by lawe by Death, To undermine the Jews, I doe disperse Their faithfullness, therefore, hold your hand: give over.

Death: Nay, fair and soft! Tis not so quick done As you conceive it is: I am not gone A foot the sooner for your batte Chat, Nor bragging language: nor if you tell you flat To more than o'to, though fortune seeme to thwart us, Such false terms I don't intend shall part us. With this imperious arm, I make you feel My fingers dill, and with this shaft of Steele, Jc peck thy bones: As thou slew, so hated, So dealt in Days thou shald be Sorygrased.

Excise-man: Jc laugh at that; I would thou didn't but dare: To lay thy fingers on me: I'd not spare To hack thy Cackle till my Sword was broken: I'd make thee eat the words which thou hast spoken: All men should warning take by thy transgressions, How they rebell'd men of my Profession.

My Service to the Sate, is so well known, That should I but Complain, they'd quickly own My publick grievances, and give me right To cut your cases before to morrow night.

Death: Well said indeed: But boots less all: For I am well acquainted with thy Villainie, I know thy Office, and thy Trade is such, Thy Service here, and thy Crimes are much: Thy brags are many, but thy name to Swagger, And think to fright me with thy gilded Dagger: As I show thy Perfor: Place, and Threat, So now fie bring that to the Judgement Seat.

Excise-man: The Judgement Seat I must confess that word Doth cut my heart, like any sharpen'd Sword: What! Come on oath! I methinks the dreadful sound Of every word, doth make a mortal wound, Which sticks not only in my outward skin, But penetrates my very soul within, Twice leaght of all my thoughts that ever Death Would once attempt to stop Excise-man breath.

But since then I do perceive You are in earnest: then I must relieve My self another way. Come, we'll be Friends, If I have wronged thee, I make thy Amends: Let's joyne together: He past my word, this night Shall speed us Glim, before the morning light, Or, otherwise (to minimize my Errors) Stay here, Jc bring you Gold enough to morrow.

Death: To morrow Gold I will not have, And though Shalt have no Gold upon to morrow: Now My final Writ shall forth execution have thee, All earthly Treasure cannot help or save thee.

Excise-man: Then woe is me! Ah I how was I behald! I thought that Gold (which answered alms) could Have hid my friend at any time, to Bailee me; But great occasion greater, and now my trust doth fail me: Oh that my confidence were but clear within, Which now is recked with my former sin: With horror I behold my secret stealing, My Lieber, Oppression, and my graddless Dealing; My Office-ina which I had cleare forgotten, Will tear my soul, when all my bones are rotten: I must confess, it very great dish force me, Dead, or alive, both God and Man doe Curse me. Let All Excellence here be warning take. To shun this Presurse for their Conscience sake.

FINIS

Part III: "Weel feaste your understandinges, Eares, & Eyes": Women and Drama, 1642-1665.

The period from 1642 till 1665 is marked by a redefinition of theatrical settings as well as a remapping of gender roles with regard to the production of drama. The idea that the public theatre was a place where "filthie cogitations" enter the "minde; unchaste aspects the eies; wicked speech the eares" (quoted in Hazlitt, 1869, 103), "so that in the representation of whoredome, al the people… returne adulterers from plaies" (quoted in Hazlitt, 1869, 104), eventually led to the closure of public playhouses on 2 September 1642 by the Puritan government. By the "Second Measure of the Long Parliament" of October 22 1647 the Lord Mayor, Justices of Peace, and Sheriffs of the City of London and Westminster were "authorised and required to enter into all houses… where stage plays, interludes, or other common plays are or shall be acted or played… and all person and persons so offending to commit to any common jail or prison (quoted in Hazlitt, 1869, 64-65). Thus, the Puritans sought to stifle the public expression of resistance towards their regime, the theatre having become notorious for attacking the Protectorate.¹

The closure of the public theatres implied that those who wished to engage with drama despite the governmental laws, had to look for different places where they could organise dramatic performances. Since the people who wished to keep the drama alive during the Interregnum were mainly Royalists,² the dramatic productions that did take place often consisted of private household performances among the nobility.³ Obviously, such domestic theatrical productions had been common among the upper classes in previous periods, because of the presumed vulgarity of the public stage. Yet during the Protectorate the household performances gained an additional significance: because of the ban on any dramatrical productions by the Puritans, the Royalists perceived their private and secret concern with drama as a political mode of resistance. Moreover, women from the upper

¹ Wiseman reports of an "incident in 1639" when "the players at the Red Bull had been reprimanded for slurs on aldermen and attacking proctors" (1998, 4). The closure of the theatres in 1642 was preceded by a controversy over the stage. As mentioned before, Puritans objected to the public stage, thinking that public theatres teach immorality, and identifying disguise and impersonation with sodomites. This led to a struggle between the Puritan "moralised" pamphlets, used to "condemn the very existence of the populat theatre" (Lake and Questier, 2002, 425) and the theatre by the 1580's. The Puritan ideas influenced social life already in the early years of the seventeenth-century, for in May 1603 King James I prohibited "common plays and similar entertainments on Sunday" (Heinemann, 1980, 33).
² See Hobby, 1988, 102.
³ An example of such household performances was "the series of entertainments written by Mildmay Fane for private performance at Anthorpe during the 1640s" (Wiseman, 1992, 162).
classes increasingly participated in dramatic performances, since the plays were staged in exclusively private, familial settings.4

Since men and women were now equally excluded from the commercial stage, and alternative settings had to be created in which women and men equally participated, woman's engagement with theatricality became a more common phenomenon. Women prophets like Anna Trapnel and Mary Gadbury started to use official spaces such as the court room as an exhibition space where they would "structure their presence...as a theatre performance" (Findlay, 2000a, 91). For instance, Mary Gadbury dressed up in a costume before she entered the court room, thus using costume as part of her theatrical representation there.5 As Alison Findlay suggests, women's tendency to represent themselves as theatrical spectacles "looks forward to a time in which women have as much right to take the stage as men" (2000a, 89). Thus, the closure of the commercial theatres appears to have paved the way for woman's involvement with acting, eventually resulting in woman's admission to the public, commercial stage as actresses in 1660.

The closure of the public playhouses from 1642 till 1660 also led to a redefinition of the genre of closet drama. As writing plays for the public theatre was no longer possible, closet drama was the only form available to those who wished to be dramatists. As a result the eighteen years between 1642 and 1660 marked a second flowering of closet drama: "due to the government bans on public performance, some ninety closet plays were written, three times as many as in the four previous decades" (Straznicky, 1995, 357). The writers of these closet plays were without exception Royalists, as in the previous decades. Before, members of the upper classes had taken up closet drama as the means to distance themselves from the vulgarity of publicity, as represented by the public stage. However, during the Interregnum the genre was no longer just identified with an essentially private act of reading, but also with public engagement, publicity in print and the idea of a public performance.6 In the light of the ban on dramatic performances under the Protectorate, for Royalists writing closet drama

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4 See Wiseman, 1992, 162. The epilogue of Jane Cavendish's and Elizabeth Brackley's The Concealed Fancies (ca. 1645) reveal that women became involved in writing plays for private dramatic entertainment. The audience, in the form of the young women's father, William Cavendish, is directly addressed by the female characters Lucen and Tattiney (probably also performed by Jane Cavendish and her sister): "Now since your excellence hath thought it fit...To stay a three hours' comedy of sit;" (1996, epilogue).

5 According to Findlay, she put on a habit that "might shew forth her inward purity" (2000a, 92)

6 Drama had political connotations at the time, as is revealed by the fact that pamphlets attacking the Puritan regime were often structured as dramatic dialogues. For instance, A Dialogue between an Excise-man and Death (1659) "stages" a meeting between Death and a Puritan excise man, in which the latter is brought to judgement by Death (figure 7). See Wiseman, 1998, 27.
became an act of resistance against the Puritan regime.\textsuperscript{7} The private perusal of closet drama became an act of political dissent. Instead of aiming their plays for circulation within an exclusively private sphere, these Royalist playwrights deliberately sought publicity. They took their works to printing presses in order to keep drama in the public view, as an alternative for public performances. These Royalist playwrights presented their closet plays as texts which had previously been staged in front of an audience. They often included stage directions in their plays in order to "recreate the theatrical experience in print for the benefit of private readers...as a substitute for the visual component of live theater" (Straznicky, 1995, 367). For instance, William Chamberlaine refers to the private reader of his \textit{Loves Victory} (1658) as a "Spectator" (A3v), and gives stage directions in order to create the illusion that his private reader is attending a stage production of his play. Likewise, in the drama that he wrote during his years in exile on the continent, William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, suggests the public performance of his drama. In "A Prologe thatt shoulde have been spoken before an Intended Pastorall att Antwerpe" (ca. 1645, MS PwV24) allusions are made to a public that is not just listening to, but also watching the play: "Weel feaste your vnderstandinges, Eares, & Eyes" (Fol. 15b). Furthermore, "Parte of a Pastorall" (ca. 1645, MS PwV24) contains stage directions: ""her heare all loose drawes a knife" (Fol. 17a). Establishing their texts as performance texts, and thus emphasising the idea that the former public status of their works before the governmental ban on theatre performances was still available to a wide audience, these Royalist dramatists made an unmistakable political statement.

It is important to consider this redefinition of closet drama in terms of public performance when one reads women's drama from this period. In previous decades women had taken up the genre of closet drama when they wanted to engage with drama, and the genre was again readily adopted by women playwrights in the Interregnum, such as Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle and her stepdaughters Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley. In contrast with the plays by their female precursors, which were solely associated with private, domestic entertainments, these women's works were embedded within a tradition of closet drama that suggested the possibility of public performance. Because women's closet drama thus also attained connotations of performativity, when the public theatres reopened it must have been less difficult for a woman writer to make the step from closet drama to drama for the public stage. Perhaps encouraged by the introduction of actresses in 1660, which made

\textsuperscript{7} The politicisation of drama was intensified by the fact that during the Civil War theatre "became a central metaphor for vying political regimes; metaphors of tragedy and play-acting were two of the dominant ways in which contemporaries spoke of the war" (Wiseman, 1998, 5).
women's voices on the public stage a more common phenomenon, Katherine Philips was persuaded to have her closet drama converted to a stage production in 1662. She became the first English woman playwright whose work was performed in a public theatre.