Security and Instability: Mary Wroth, the Cavendish Sisters, and Early Stuart Household Plays

by

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Abstract

The early Stuart household play belongs to a tradition of amateur-produced entertainment, promoting control, security and stability. Yet, it remains distinctive in its intimacy. This project focuses on three women, Lady Mary Wroth, Lady Jane Cavendish, and Lady Elizabeth Brackley, who produced household plays to re-negotiate and perform identity as they confronted multiple insecurities. Wroth's *Love's Victory* and Cavendish and Brackley's *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" capitalize on the intimacy of household theatre; therefore, these plays become productive case studies in an analysis of this underexamined mode. Performance theory, inflected by New Historicist, Feminist, Theatrical, and Architectural theory, enables the close examination of these plays and the performances associated with them.

My analysis begins with a discussion of how intimacy differentiates the household theatrical mode from other contemporaneous forms. The 'inward' focus and intimate bonds associated with household plays facilitate limited liberty and mitigate insecurities associated with female participation in theatre. In particular, household theatre possesses a paradoxically inwardly-charged performativity that resolves itself through the intimate relationship between playwright, players, audience and space. The mutual influence of space and subjects becomes key to my analysis, as Wroth and the Cavendish sisters seek stability by re-imagining the patriarch-owned household space as their plays' settings and theatrical performance sites.

The second and third chapters of this thesis examine the ways in which Wroth and the Cavendish sisters explore and construct identity in and through their household plays. Examining the relationship between patriarchal absences and generic choice, the second

chapter argues that these female playwrights react to instabilities in their positions by deploying the pastoral mode and harnessing the intimacy of the household theatrical mode. The third chapter continues to analyze identity negotiation and performance, but in relation to play. The meaning of play for a player is intertwined with the development and assertion of a self in a social context and, for Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, play allows for reflection upon and consolidation of shifting social identities.

Broadening the study's purview, the fourth chapter examines potential continuities between Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' household plays and other female theatrical presences in the (extended) seventeenth century. Though the impetus for women to participate in drama and the form of that participation may vary, multiple insecurities pervade women's early theatrical endeavors. Women's engagement with dramatic composition and performance does not demonstrate a linear move towards increased gender subversion or towards the more 'public' theatrical spaces, and the final chapter of this thesis calls for renewed analysis of the place of women in seventeenth-century drama.

Working to better define household theatre, this project presents a 'thick description' of three plays that exemplify the mode before considering the wider implications of the stakes for an author in deploying a particular dramatic mode.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Lindsay Yakimyshyn. A portion of the analysis in chapter three has been published as “Voicing the Feminine and the (Absent) Masculinity in The Concealed Fancies.” *Women and the Gendering of Talk, Gossip and Communication Practices across Media.* Ed. Sarah Burcon and Melissa Ames. McFarland Press. 2011. 75-89.

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Prologue

I. Setting the Stage

The 'golden age' of drama in England coincides with the reign of Elizabeth I, a queen who was highly conscious of her self-presentation. Plagues and censorship hampered Elizabethan theatre, to be sure; however, during the period, theatrical entertainment gained a stable home and shifted away from transience. The significance of the establishment of theatrical sites in the late sixteenth century is not to be understated. In 1576, the first permanent London playhouse, Burbage's Theatre, was built, and about a dozen more would open by the seventeenth century. 'Public' theatre prior to these Elizabethan playhouses manifested in mobile cycle plays, processionals, pageants, and Lord Mayor's shows, which employed temporary stages and sundry structures in the streets. A stable place for theatrical play alters the creative and rhetorical potential of drama. Adaptability to different playing spaces is necessary for a dramatic work, but to write for a specific theatrical venue, whether it be the Globe, the Swan, or the Curtain, allows the author to consider staging possibilities and setting from the play's inception. Theatrical space, with all of its limitations and potentialities, informs the structure of the work that companies produce within it. The permanent theatre is a unique social space in which people expect to perform and watch performances. Elizabeth I certainly recognized the value of this sort of space, as the 'temporary' Whitehall Banqueting House, which she had erected in 1581, remained standing until James I sought to rebuild the structure in 1606 to increase its permanence and its suitability for courtly entertainments. With purpose-built space for theatrical play, courtly masques emerged with particular vigor in Jacobean and Caroline England.

Distinct from widely-accessible plays, as well as pageants and processionals, restricted-access theatricals like the court masque were aimed at coterie audiences. They were politically-charged demonstrations of wealth and power. Unstable political allegiances and Catholic intolerance festered in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, and neither James I nor his son, Charles I, could rectify the nation's financial, religious, and socio-political problems.[1] During this time, courtly masques functioned as an escape from tumult, for the royals, at least. Portrayed as gods and goddesses, cast alongside legendary figures,

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[1] Conrad Russell, among others, stresses that the social issues of the early Stuart period existed prior to James I's accession to the English throne (213).

and limned as all-important spectators, James I, Anne of Denmark, Charles I, and Henrietta Maria formed—even if only in the context of theatricals—an exemplary royal family. Heightening and distorting reality, masques shifted from aesthetic to propagandistic works. In particular, Charles I, whose rule was fraught with instabilities, actively engaged with courtly performance as a means to construct an alternate, secure self. Most Caroline masques "idealized [the marriage of Charles I and Henrietta Maria] in Neoplatonic and pastoral terms" ("Milton's *Comus*" Lewalski 296) and reinforced monarchical authority. Yet—perhaps intended as 'good counsel' rather than censure—critiques of the ruler and his policies also underpin many masques (Walker 51-2). Further, courtly entertainments inherently possess the potential to "reinforce those polarizations which were gradually working to unsettle the early Stuart state" (Martin Butler *The Stuart Court Masque* 275), especially as Charles I's predilection for 'private' shows affirmed the royal family's ever-increasing separation from the English people. Not only was he distant from his non-elite subjects, whose resentment for his taxation policies and suspicions of his religious affiliations swelled, he also dismissed his own Parliament. Still, Charles I persisted in staging shows at Whitehall. Masques at court provided distraction. This is not to suggest that Caroline masques were purely escapist; rather, they consciously reacted against political unrest.[2] They were a site of control for the royals: through sponsorship and performance, the king and his queen consort possessed authority over their theatrical identities.

Because his power over his kingdom was dissipating, Charles I employed the courtly masque to foster stability and security—though only ephemerally—as, through them and in them, he was an in-control theatrical manager, model of love, and ideal monarch. Nonetheless, these courtly theatrical performances showed their limitations. They were unable to erase the inadequacies and controversies of early Stuart rule, or prevent civil war and regicide. Yet, this dissertation is not interested in the limitations of early Stuart theatricals. Instead, this is a study of the *potential* that resides in theatrical performance, specifically in those performances that resist 'public' dissemination in a historical moment of popular 'public' theatre.

[2] In *Culture and Politics at the Court of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2010), Matthew Jenkinson raises objections to characterizations of Charles I as "oblivious to political realities" (110).

A gap in scholarship emerges from continued trivialization of early Stuart plays that are distinct from courtly masques, but likewise avoid the 'public' stage. Residing in this gap, and demanding much more attention than it has received, is the household play.[3] Aimed at a narrow audience, the household theatrical mode relies on features of earlier and contemporary texts and genres, drawing upon masques, among other forms. Yet, it remains distinctive in its intimacy. Though more restricted than the masque, the household play shares an affinity with the courtly mode because both forms were grounded in elite spaces and in an emerging tradition of ('intimate' household or 'private' courtly) amateur-produced entertainment. In addition, similar to the masque, the household drama promotes control, security, and stability.

Focusing on the potentiality of household theatre, this project attends to the plays of three young women who negotiated insecurity as the Stuarts did, by producing plays that cultivate alternate identities and explore possibilities for renewed stability. Residing at the center of this study are Lady Mary Wroth, Lady Jane Cavendish, and Lady Elizabeth Brackley, three noteworthy women who arguably composed the first original, female-penned, stage-worthy plays.[4] Paralleling the Stuart royals' construction of ideal authority through theatricals, they create intersections between the fictional role-playing of theatre and biographical realities in their plays, Wroth's *Love's Victory* (ca. 1620) and Brackley and Cavendish's *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" (ca. 1645).[5] These works are household plays, and positioning these texts as the principal objects of my study enables me to explore the generic attributes of the early Stuart household play even as I analyze three undervalued dramatic texts and their authors. This dissertation primarily considers the features of the household theatrical mode in relation to the tensions between stability/instability and security/insecurity that pervade the performances of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters. It is my aim to demonstrate that these early Stuart women wrote plays as

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[3] I am indebted to Marta Straznicky's fall 2009 graduate seminar at Queen's University for exposing me to the mode.

[4] Other women wrote plays before Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley, but their productions were translations or derivations of earlier works.

[5] There are two manuscript versions of *Love's Victory*: the Penshurst and the Huntington. *The Concealed Fancies* is part of a collection of Brackley and Cavendish's works, the manuscript of which is held at the Bodleian Library. "A Pastorall" also appears in this collection, as well as in the Beinecke manuscript of their collected writings. Brackley and Cavendish (the Cavendish sisters) wrote *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" collaboratively.

means to perform identity. Dramatic composition is, for them, an affirmative move. Through their household plays, they confront the multiple insecurities—social, political, economic, and gender-based—that pervaded the milieu. However, household theatre also filters the external instabilities of early Stuart England through intimate performances, contemplations, and constructions of the self.

II. Performing Identities, Confronting Insecurities

How do Wroth and the Cavendish sisters construct and perform identity, thereby *stabilizing or destabilizing* status, through their plays? Performance theory enables productive consideration of this question. Emanating from the central textual objects of this study—*Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall"—are the multivalent performances which the following chapters examine. My approach to these objects and the associated performances is informed by the criticism of Johan Huizinga and Judith Butler, among others. My study is also underpinned by New Historicist, Feminist, Theatrical, and Architectural theory. Though some criticism factors into my study more implicitly than overtly, what remains consistent is my indebtedness to the broad field of Performance theory, in its divergent manifestations. The field of Performance studies is so eclectic that, in implementing it as a framework, one must carefully tread the boundaries between 'brands' of performativity, as well as define the parameters of performance itself.

My conception of performance both derives and diverges from previous criticism. Performance connotes much and need not connect to theatre, as theorists like Schechner, Turner, Austin, Butler, and Goffman demonstrate. It can be a scripted and rehearsed corporeal event which is highly presentational. On the other hand, it can be a non-rehearsed, non-artistic act that involves a performer (person doing the act) and a spectator (person witnessing the performer's act). Marvin Carlson suggests that what can be considered 'performance' is boundless: "The recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as performance, or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself" (4). In contrast, Henry Bial views the body of 'performance' as changeable rather than boundless. In surveying Performance studies, he argues that "boundaries between performance and not performance are constantly being tested,

challenged, and remapped by artists and theorists alike. This dynamic and flexible characterization of our object of study is one of the hallmarks of performance studies" (60). It is also what forces each critic in the field to demarcate his or her own employment of 'performance.'

There are five 'brands' of performance with which I am primarily concerned here: gender, identity, social, play and theatrical. With the (sometimes) exception of theatrical performance, these brands often intertwine, overlap, and are connected by a predisposition for genuineness. Privileging authenticity over artifice, many performance theorists distance their work from theatre, though it remains difficult to avoid the appropriation of theatrical terms (i.e. audience, stage, and setting). Yet, does not each 'brand' of performance include some form of *mimesis*, role-playing, or artifice? Certainly, theatrical performance *demands* artifice. Rather than resist the theatrical impulse of Performance studies, therefore, I embrace it. By doing so, I am able to interpret the different facets of performance that emerge from *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall," and recognize intersections. There can be performance without theatre, but there is no theatre without performance and, in examining early Stuart women's drama, the potentiality of *theatrical performativity* certainly requires attention.

'Performativity,' which denotes the citational practice that creates and sustains identity, is most closely associated with Judith Butler. This dissertation often employs performativity and performance interchangeably, though Butler distinguishes between the terms: performance refers to the 'bounded acts' which remain connected to the reiteration of norms, but work "to conceal, if not disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformed" (234). While Butler emphasizes that performativity is "not a product of choice" (232), the "performer's 'will'" can emerge through these performance acts (234). Therefore, the social performer possesses the potential to negotiate identity in relation to embedded gender norms. I concede that "the materialization of norms … precede[s] and enable[s] the formation of a subject" (Judith Butler 15); however, this does not mean that the subject cannot recognize, navigate, and resist those norms in order to construct and reconstruct his or her social and gender identity. The sedimentation of identity, and limited agency to affect that identity, applies to theatrical performance as much as to social performance.

Diverging from Butler, I argue that self-identification emerges through the actor's, or on-stage performer's, presentation of a fictional character. For Charles I, Wroth, and the Cavendish sisters, the fictional character in theatrical play alludes to the biographical self. Especially in relation to the household play, the lines between playwright, theatrical performer, and fictional character blur. Further, the reiterative and citational practices which create and sustain identity enable theatrical performance because what on-stage performers mimic (repetitively) originates in those practices. That is, theatrical performances involve the replication of patterns which are drawn from broader social patterns. For instance, early modern English social norms dictated that women wore gowns; therefore, female characters (though played by men) wore gowns. Playwrights and performers repeat patterns so that the audience can identify what they are watching. Whether William Kempe is cast as Bottom or Gobbo, a social identity—as a theatrical performer, and one who thrives in specific roles (typecasting is not a fiction)—and anticipation of a specific performance—containing comedic rusticity and jigging—emerges. Therefore, an on-stage performer may find himself or herself fulfilling roles according to spectator expectations. On the other hand, a performer may thwart expectations. In this way, an actor in theatre may embrace or circumvent 'appropriate' or 'type' castings; similarly, a social performer may adopt or subvert normative roles, depending on his or her adherence to externally-imposed prescriptions. Again, reiteration is not without alteration, and there can be power in subverted repetition (Judith Butler 226-7). In line with this, early modern playwrights, producers, and players exploit the comedic and sometimes tragic potential of destabilizing norms by presenting cross-dressed female characters. Through *mimesis,* the on-stage performer constructs and presents his or her identity, but also attempts to show the audience to itself. Norms are reinforced and disrupted upon the stage in order to replicate and critique social practices.

The on-stage performer is always a conscious presenter, who is for the most part scripted and rehearsed, and is highly aware of the audience, even if the 'fourth wall' remains intact throughout a theatrical performance.[6] An actor recognizes and affirms his or her own status as a theatrical performer; it is an identifying feature which they accept and exploit. In contrast, an everyday social performer's self-awareness varies. Yet, the early modern period

[6] By 'fourth wall,' I refer to the theatrical term for the imaginary wall that separates the players on the proscenium (picture-frame) stage from the audience.

emphasized the world as a stage, and there was a heightened consciousness of performance of the self (see chapter three). This translates into the ways in which Wroth and the Cavendish sisters used their plays to shape their identities. Just as permanent theatrical spaces support the evolution of drama, "space was the basis for the formation of gender identities, which were constantly contested and reconstructed" (Flather 1). Recognizing the boundaries of heteronormativity, these early female playwrights enact—and sometimes deviate from—ideals which can then be adopted into the cumulative process of identity formation and negotiation.

With identity under constant (re)negotiation, Wroth's *Love's Victory* and the Cavendish sisters' *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" embody constrictions surrounding performance, in its many meanings, in early Stuart England. Inconsistencies and anxieties regarding social norms manifest in the household plays, reflecting the link between theatre and the milieu's sense of insecurity. Whether focusing on political fissures, divisions between classes, separation between court and country, or religious conflicts in the decades leading up to the Civil War, scholars recognize rifts in the early Stuart social fabric. Conrad Russell points to the "problem of multiple kingdoms, the problem of religious division, and the breakdown of a financial and political system in the face of inflation and the rising cost of war" as the "long-term causes of [early Stuart] instability" (213). Political unrest resulted in the closure of London's playhouses in 1642. As the Stuarts' reign had been marked by the proliferation of drama—in the court, in theaters, and in publication—the closure truly signaled the beginning of the end for Charles I, whose execution followed the closures by less than seven years. Still, as Dale Randall has demonstrated, shutting down the playhouses did not suppress drama; rather, it dislocated it (1-3). Surreptitious performances were held at citizens' theatres, such as the Red Bull. Moreover, entertainments had been produced at aristocratic estates in Tudor and early Stuart England, and the household space became an even more important site of dramatic production during the playhouse closures. Scholars like Marta Straznicky, Martin Butler, and Susan Westfall have identified this prominence of seventeenth-century theatricals in country houses. During playhouse closures, aristocratic estates offered a home for dramatic entertainments, which were primarily held under the guise of hospitality. Such household productions were significant because of the

opportunities and security that they afforded players and playwrights, especially women, regardless of the state of 'public' theatre.

In the face of volatility in the milieu, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters wrote plays in which insecurities and instabilities related to space, gender, identity, and socio-economic and political status appear. As I discuss in chapter one, the household spaces connected to their plays were in flux, distorting the inherent stability of a familial estate. Also, the plays demonstrate inconsistency in status, which was by no means fixed in early Stuart England. This is evinced by Charles I's fall from king to traitor. With particular relevance to this dissertation, strained finances as well as the fickleness of the court diminished Wroth's stability, and constant threats to monarchical power undermined the security of the Royalist Cavendish sisters. Further fluctuations manifest in the roles that these early female playwrights, and the characters they create, occupy. Wroth and the Cavendish sisters exemplify how identity and gender—and associated roles—are tenuous, and therefore unstable, constructions.

Women occupied a silent, subordinate position in early modern England: this was long taken as fact in scholarship, and important female writers and historical figures were long neglected or forgotten. Virginia Woolf famously lamented the peril in which early modern women—including 'Judith Shakespeare'—found themselves. The reclamation of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century female authors and performers of the past few decades suggests that women—including Wroth and the Cavendish sisters—could wield authority, whether it was in religious education, marriage negotiations or household management.[7] Further, although the supposition that women were suppressed in early modern England resounds through earlier critical analyses, the disjuncture between cultural prescriptions and women's lived reality has permeated more recent studies (Ezell 126). Nonetheless, there is also evidence that the patriarchal system did in fact suppress female voices and bodies. Women suffered brutal sexual violence, faced gross injustices, and encountered misogyny and inequality (Dolan). This is not to diminish the remarkable instances of female authority that emerged in the seventeenth century. Rather, I stress how the tenuousness of female

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[7] For instance, Sara H. Mendelson and Patricia Crawford's *Women in Early Modern England* investigates the ways in which women were able to influence and gain power in the patriarchal society as it analyzes and delineates women's economic and familial positions. See also Jacqueline Eales' *Women in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* and Amanda Flather's *Gender and Space in Early Modern England*.

agency and the anxiety surrounding gender roles affirm the milieu's sense of insecurity, which then pervades the lives and plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters. These women struggle with normative roles as wives and daughters, as they challenge cultural constrictions and underline their shifting identifications.

What Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley individually experienced can be only minimally reconstructed, and, though I ground my work in evidence, speculation is required to fill the gaps. In many ways, early modern drama continues to intrigue scholars *because* of the speculative component. Did Shakespeare in fact author his plays? What precisely ended Jonson and Jones' collaborative work? The scholar becomes an investigator whose conclusion is always—to a greater or lesser extent—historical fiction. But it is by grounding speculation in (sometimes limited) evidence and thoughtful interpretation that historical fiction transforms into productive scholarship. Contextualizing a literary object and the performances that surround it demands imagination. The importance of research-grounded imagination is particularly evident in the work of Stephen Greenblatt, and is linked to New Historicist skepticism of the objectivity of truth and historical 'facts.' Greenblatt "began with the desire to speak with the dead" (*Shakespearean Negotiations* 1), because historical contexts become as slippery and ephemeral as the performances that emerged from and shaped those contexts. While recognizing the limitations of situating texts within their contexts, I examine Wroth's, Brackley's, and Cavendish's multivalent performances as intertwined with the unstable early Stuart historical moment. This provokes questions regarding how Wroth and the Cavendish sisters perform their culturally-prescribed roles as women—sisters, wives, daughters, female playwrights—against a constrictive, sometimes hostile social and political backdrop. What is the connection between the household dramatic mode, the historical context, and the performance of the self? This study argues that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters respond to early Stuart instability by employing the household theatrical mode to construct and enact identities that are likewise unstable.

III. Reading the Female-Authored Household Play

Female authorship was relatively rare in the patriarchal society; despite this, Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley produced original texts and became some of the first Englishwomen to enter the male-dominated early Stuart dramatic landscape. That these early

female playwrights employ the household theatrical mode, then, is noteworthy. A gap of about two decades separates Wroth's *Love's Victory* and the Cavendish sisters' *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall." This is not an indication of the lack of other female contributions to the early Stuart dramatic landscape. Rather, it speaks to the scope of this project.

As I acknowledge in chapter one, the plays of Wroth and Brackley and Cavendish are not the only examples of early Stuart household drama, but I afford them the most attention for two main reasons. First, by honing in on female-authored work, I can begin to trace the significance of the household dramatic mode in relation to women's burgeoning participation in theatre. Second, the emphasis these texts place on security in multiple manifestations and the complex interweaving of biography and fiction capitalize on household theatre's intimacy, and thereby enable me to analyze that facet of the mode. Many other plays, playwrights, and on-stage performers take supporting roles in my analysis. In addition, because I am delineating a mode of dramatic authorship and performance, other modes and genres—specifically the masque, closet drama, and the pastoral—come into play. Rachel Fane occupies an important, though secondary, position in this study because—though she works within the household dramatic mode—her work does not engage with 'inwardness,' insecurity, and self-construction to the same extent that *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" do. Like Fane, Anna of Denmark, Henrietta Maria, Ben Jonson, John Milton, Alice Egerton, and Margaret (Lucas) Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, are supporting players here. Also entering my purview are Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' fathers, Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester, and William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, respectively. An examination of these men and their writing enables us to understand the role of patriarchal influence in the young women's constructions of identity. Specifically, I consider what effect patriarchal presences and absences have on Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' plays and multivalent performances. To what extent did Leicester and Newcastle enable the production and preservation of *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall"?

Maintaining primary focus on the household plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, this dissertation involves the 'thick description' of a handful of plays, rather than a glancing survey of Jacobean and Caroline drama, and 'winter fruit.' The recovery of

women's writing and other contributions to early modern theatrical performance has been the task of feminist scholars in the past few decades, and much has been recovered: female playwrights, performers, patrons, and producers of material objects. Rather than continue to recover these women—as they have certainly made their mark in recent academic work—I privilege deeper analysis of three important literary objects that have yet to receive adequate attention. Scholarship has only scratched the surface of Wroth, Brackley, and Cavendish and their dramatic products, with the plays entering critical consideration a few decades ago. After Nathan Comfort Starr dismissed *The Concealed Fancies* as trivial, Margaret Ezell bolstered the then widely unknown collection by Cavendish and Brackley in 1988. Having been similarly neglected, *Love's Victory* gained attention thanks to Margaret Anne McLaren. Still, studies of Wroth's *Love's Victory* and the Cavendish sisters' *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" remain limited in scope and breadth. Wroth's writing has been overshadowed by her uncle, her aunt, and her personal scandals. Similarly, the Cavendish sisters' stepmother, the Duchess of Newcastle—who wrote more dramatic texts than her stepdaughters and disseminated them widely—has garnered more attention than they have. Also, thanks in part to the focus of theatre historians and early modernists on 'public' theatre, closet drama, and masques—all leading up to the appearance of women on the 'public' stage in the Restoration—there are no sustained studies of household plays and their position in the dramatic landscape of seventeenth-century England. Problematically, the plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters are often undervalued, if not miscategorized. In particular, the improper classification of *Love's Victory* as a closet drama (by Margaret Hannay, Karen Raber, J.G. MacDonald, and Matthew Woodcock) disrupts consideration of its theatrical potential. There are too many indicators that Wroth's play is for the stage, and I read it as an important shift in the direction of female authorship and theatrical performance, which affirms the value of the household dramatic mode for establishing women's place in theatre.

Revealing the complex way in which plays like *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" navigate the milieu's dramatic conventions even as they turn 'inward,' I therefore work to position and analyze household drama alongside other early modern modes. At the same time, by focusing principally on Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' dramatic products, I stress the value of three literary objects and make them more

accessible to academics in multiple disciplines even as I contribute to scholarship on these women. Further, my attention to *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" enables me to define key features of the household theatrical mode. Specifically, what aspects of the mode facilitate Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' contributions to the early Stuart dramatic landscape? In what ways does it offer these early female playwrights security to navigate points of disjuncture between gender prescriptions and roles of agency? Framing the household plays in terms of multivalent performance will enable me to productively engage with early Stuart drama in a fresh way, opening up new avenues for scholarship on female theatrical presences in the milieu.

IV. Navigating Spaces and Boundaries

Because the household theatrical mode is central to my analysis of Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' plays and performances, my dissertation first attends to what I deem to be the mode's key feature, intimacy. A term that I interrogate, 'intimate' comes to describe the relationship between the playwright, player, audience, and space in the mode. I specifically consider the potential effects of audience and venue on a dramatic text and performance. Audience composition and space partly define level of dissemination, and thereby influence the security that the playwright and performer enjoy. When analyzing the plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters in terms of their intimacy, spaces (imagined, embodied, and architectural) become particularly vital. For all types of theatrical performance, space is essential. Further, like a permanent playhouse, a family household space offers inspiration and the potential for stability. I discuss how the aristocratic country house, in particular, represents status, hospitality, and family, and then consider the significance of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters assuming authority over familial estates through their plays. What are the implications of the plays' settings in the women's multifaceted performances? Where do intersections between the embodied, architectural, and imagined spaces appear in their plays, and to what effect? In the first chapter, I examine how Wroth and Brackley and Cavendish inhabit, claim, and represent space as I illuminate the negotiation of agency associated with their household plays.

Continuing to analyze navigation of authority through household plays, chapter two studies Wroth's *Love's Victory* and Brackley and Cavendish's "A Pastorall" as responses to

patriarchal absences and the related instabilities and possibilities. Biographical information permeates the various writings of Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley, and anxiety surrounding patriarchal figures pointedly emerges in their household dramas. In particular, I connect the playwrights' relationships with the patriarch to a genre which Wroth and the Cavendish sisters employ: the pastoral. Their employment of the pastoral mode—working in tandem with the household mode—is apt because of the intersection of anxiety and loss with potential and escapism. The loss of the patriarch offers potential for female authorship and agency. Considering how patriarchal absenteeism factors into the women's performance of intimate theatre and proper gender roles, this chapter underscores the tenuousness of status. Further, it interrogates the ways in which Wroth and the Cavendish sisters test the boundaries of heteronormative roles.

Chapter three extends the examination of the roles that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters perform. Specifically, I analyze how these women engage in play to define their social positions, even as they challenge the boundaries of heteronormativity. In some ways, this turns away from biographical reading, focusing on alternate, fictional characters and those characters' engagement in play. Nonetheless, familial allusions and the biographical self permeate the playing that manifests in the household dramas of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters. In fact, a key way in which they explore their own identities—and the constrictions within which they exist—is through characters that are not entirely distinct or dissociated from the biographical self. The fictional characters become 'second selves' through which Wroth and the Cavendish sisters can enact alternate possibilities on-the-page and on-the-stage. Creating and playing these roles offers the potential for freedom. However, as I discuss, rules and conventions diminish this freedom. Tension between restriction and liberty parallels the limitations associated with the female playwrights' authority. Further, this tension extends to other female presences in seventeenth-century theatre, which I discuss in the fourth chapter.

Are there continuities between the household dramas that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters produced and the works of other early female playwrights and on-stage players? For instance, how do security and instability relate to other instances of women contributing to the Stuart dramatic landscape? In the final chapter of this dissertation, I expand my purview to consider how *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" fit into the body

of female dramatic authorship and performance. Women in the seventeenth century engage in theatrical play for political authority and security, authorial prestige, and for pay. At the same time, they negotiate social vulnerabilities. As I conclude this study, I venture to make connections between the work that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters produced and other female presences of the milieu.

Aiming to better define and illuminate the significance of the household theatrical mode, this study examines how seventeenth-century women navigate the milieu's instabilities and constrictions, not only in relation to gender, but also in relation to 'public' theatre, authorship, and acting. My project speaks to several larger issues, contributing to the ongoing conversation regarding the position of women in early modern England and to scholarship on the connection between political tensions and early Stuart theatre. In many ways, early female playwrights and on-stage players capitalize on the uncertainties surrounding politics, morality, and women's 'proper' position. The household plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters exemplify the opportunity that such insecurity provides, though the lack of stability that manifests in their work ties more to the disruption of the playwrights' close circles, specifically with prolonged absences of patriarchs. While dramatic authorial possibilities emerge for Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, other noteworthy roles also arise. Through the chapters that follow, I trace the multiple positions that these three women carve out for themselves. At times they stress their embodiment of heteronormative roles; at other points, they embrace roles that are conventionally masculine. Tensions between 'proper' femininity and deviance crop up, as Wroth and the Cavendish sisters employ household theatre as a means to explore, if not articulate, female authority.

Chapter One
Intimate Theatricals and the Sidney and Cavendish Country Houses:
Bonding Host, Poet, Player, Audience, and Space

I. Finding the 'Household' in Household Theatre

In several of his dramatic works, William Shakespeare represents a household member organizing, guiding, and even editing entertainments for the aristocratic household space. One of the more well-known examples, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, revolves around household entertainment, as Theseus, Duke of Athens, commissions a performance—which Quince describes as an "interlude" (1.2.5)—to contribute to his wedding revels. Tom Pettitt argues that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "effectively *recreates* [household revels] on stage" (38). The players, who wind up staging "Pyramus and Thisbe" for the Duke and his guests, are local craftsmen. This underlines the amateur status of the household players, and also speaks to the relationship between the aristocratic host and the locals who stage an entertainment for him. Indicating the influence of the host and even the audience over the entertainment, courtly spectators interject throughout the local players' performance of "Pyramus and Thisbe," which is noteworthy in relation to an examination of theatre in the household. In fact, at the conclusion of the household entertainment, it is Theseus, rather than the players, who selects a bergamask dance in place of an epilogue (5.1.340-5). Shakespeare similarly depicts the agency of a household member in revelry in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Hamlet*. For instance, the main plot of *The Taming of the Shrew* constitutes a play-within-a-play. In the play's induction, the appearance of a troupe of players interrupts the Lord's prank on the drunkard, Sly. The Lord engages the troupe to perform, but only after he has constructed his own 'show' wherein Bartholemew dresses in drag. The troupe's play about Petruchio 'taming' Katherina becomes part of the Lord's larger 'show' and replicates the mockery and questions of gender and class that emerge from the pranking of Sly. Therefore, the Induction constructs the players' play as a joke for *and* by the household. A final key example appears in *Hamlet*, where Hamlet sets up entertainment at Elsinore for the evening. He not only specifies the play to be performed, but also instructs the actors how to perform the play, saying, "Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it to you—trippingly on the tongue" (3.2.1). In addition, he requests revisions to the players' script:

Hamlet: Dost thou hear me, old friend? Can you play the murder of Gonzago?

First Player: Ay, my lord.

Hamlet: We'll ha't to-morrow night. You could for a need study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in't, could ye not?

First Player: Ay, my lord. (2.2.514-20)

Adding to the existing script, Hamlet incorporates a scene that addresses specific family issues and, thereby, implicates Claudius. By contributing to the play, Hamlet—a household member—enacts agency, collapses the host and poet roles, and, significantly, turns *The Murder of Gonzago* 'inward' so that it better imitates *his* life.

Shakespeare's representations of household entertainments demonstrate how that form of theatre "was never under the control of a single agent: from inception to reception, it was an entirely collaborative form" in which "[h]ost, hired poet, musicians, actors, [the monarch], and the watching court" took part (Heaton 228). Indeed, the three above examples indicate the contributions of household members (Theseus, the Lord, and Hamlet). Such contributions crystallize in the final instance in a remarkable way with Hamlet's addition of lines to the troupe's play. He shifts from the courtly host to the poet and it is his supplementary lines that reinforce the link between the action within *The Murder of Gonzago* and Claudius' murder of the king—the scandal of *Hamlet's* royal family. By becoming a contributing *playwright* and infusing the entertainment with a familial 'inwardness,' Hamlet, I suggest, begins to demonstrate my conception of the household dramatic mode. His pointed revisions to *The Murder of Gonzago* gesture towards the mode. Expanding upon the agency and 'inward' focus that Hamlet conveys, Mary Wroth and Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley occupy overlapping positions in relation to their plays, exemplifying the complexities of household theatre and its inherent intimacy.

Often mentioned, but rarely defined, the term 'household theatre' has not been adequately explored by scholars. Among the scholars who employ the term and examine the mode, Suzanne Westfall, Greg Walker and Alison Findlay each lay some groundwork upon which I build. First, Westfall's critical analysis of 'non-public' theatrics attempts to pin down the household entertainment, pointing to a few characteristics of the mode, including large expense, ephemerality, connection to status and events, classical themes, and participation of household staff. Where Westfall falls short, though, is in her lack of

attention to the plays that are *composed*, and then staged, by household members. For her, the productions are top-down and not necessarily defined by the family in the way—or to the extent—that I suggest in this chapter. Like Westfall, Greg Walker does not stress familial authorship or acting in relation to household drama (which he problematically conflates with interludes and great hall plays). Productively, however, he constructs it as a bottom-up endeavor. Implicitly, the members of the household play an integral role in the theatrical mode. In a similar vein, Findlay links the people of the household to the entertainments, fruitfully analyzing the relationship between the plays and the family estates with which early women playwrights are connected in *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama*. Again, though, she does not explicitly link the genre of household theatre to authorial identity. Taking into consideration Walker's apt attention to localized contributions of the household to sundry entertainments, Findlay's spatial focus, and Westfall's initial steps towards generic definition, I contend that the household—denoting both a group of people and a space—is vitally important in the demarcation of household theatre from other forms of theatrical entertainment in early Stuart England. Certainly, in nuanced ways and to different extents, Findlay, Walker, and Westfall view household plays as ones to which the family contributes. Moreover, I argue that the involvement of a household member in composition is of integral import to household theatre.

With many manifestations of dramatic performance in, and preceding, the seventeenth century, pinpointing household theatre is no easy task, particularly as modes of performance overlap. For instance, Shakespearean plays appeared in both open-air playhouses and in court, rendering them as part of the 'public' and 'courtly' theatrical traditions simultaneously. Also, occasional entertainments, interludes, and masques often appear in the context of a household. Using authorship as a key marker of the mode, however, facilitates analysis of household theatricals as a unique theatrical phenomenon. Household theatre can be defined in two main ways: broadly, as any dramatic entertainment held in a 'private' household space (such as those in the three Shakespearean examples above); and narrowly, as dramatic entertainment that is produced in the household space *by* the household, *for* the household. In this dissertation I focus on the latter definition and primarily frame the mode as one in which the playwrights are members of the household in which the play is staged or for whom the play is written. While this framing might exclude

other entertainments that appeared in private homes, I do not diminish the significance of the household space or the household members in relation to such performances and so some of these performances will enter my consideration as I work to define the mode and examine how it offers room for women's contributions to the Stuart dramatic landscape. What I emphasize by privileging 'in-house' authorship, though, is the 'inward' focus—that is, the attention to the household and the selfhood its members—that is at work in household plays.[8]

With this generic framing in mind, playwrights that work within the household theatrical mode include Sir Philip Sidney, Rachel Fane, and William Cavendish in addition to Mary Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, as they all wrote playtexts intended for performance within the context of the country houses to which they are closely connected. What distinguishes the plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters even further from others who potentially deploy the mode are the palpable personal stakes in relation to composition and, potentially, performance. Through their plays, these female playwrights represent and embody specific familial spaces in order to (re)define them, claim them, and seek authority and security through them as theatrical sites. Written and performed for the household, by household members, and in household spaces, *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" are simultaneously 'inward' and markedly performative; that is, they have an 'inward,' familial focus, even as they project outwards to a (potential or actualized) theatrical audience. This paradoxical inwardly-charged performativity resolves itself through the intimate relationship that exists between the playwright, the players, the audience, and the space. I contend that intimacy is central to household theatre, and here I examine the intimacy implicit in the plays of Wroth and Cavendish and Brackley. *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" become case studies of intimate household theatre, and I argue that the ways in which these texts deal with 'innermost' subjects, work from and within familiar spaces, and cater to coterie audiences can be extended to establish a more precise definition of the household dramatic mode.

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[8] Though 'inward' has many connotations, I place emphasis on its indication of the interior self as being primarily connected to the household as space and the household as people. As Katharine E. Maus suggests, the tension between "'inward disposition' and 'outward appearance' seems unusually urgent and consequential for a very large number of people" in the milieu (13).

II. "We are all here, and one too much by you": Intimacy in Text and Performance

Early Stuart household theatre requires intimacy that is achieved through an emphasis on the family, a coterie audience, and a familial-based found stage. Each of these requirements is suggestive of restriction, or narrowing of subject matter, dissemination, and spatial possibilities. Indeed, intimate theatre is restrictive. Paradoxically, though, restriction and limitation afford playwrights and players—women in particular—opportunities in theatre. Therefore, the limitations should not be the focus. Rather, those who engaged in intimate household theatricals in the early modern period did so because the mode offered liberty; therefore, it is best read as a realm of theatrical experimentation and expression outside of the 'public' realm which enabled women to participate in and contribute to the dramatic landscape.

But if, as I suggest, the definition of household theatre is inextricable from 'intimacy,' an important question emerges: What did 'intimacy' denote and connote in seventeenth-century England? Further, to what extent—if any—can the term be applied to analyses of early Stuart theatre without becoming anachronistic? Here, I will demonstrate that applying this term, 'intimate,' to early Stuart household theatre is not anachronistic, but, rather, invaluably productive in foregrounding the way in which the mode ties together coterie groups and the spaces they inhabit.

Derived from the Latin for 'inmost,' intimacy denotes a state of close friendship, connection or familiarity, as well as sexual intercourse and conscientious observation ("intimacy" def. n. 1b, 1c, 2). However, the term's sexual connotation was scant in the seventeenth century, leading some scholars to conclude that "the early modern sex-gender system lacks the notion of *intimacy*—a special class of *interpersonal relationships* (whether between men, between women, or across gender) in which sexuality has a privileged home" (Gil 1). Intimacy did exist in the milieu, but it was primarily in reflections on long-term acquaintances, godly relationships, and political alliances, rather than carnal knowledge, that the term appeared. Focusing on these three connotations, then, it is evident that intimate bonds served the important function of providing security in multiple manifestations, including emotional, physical, and socio-economic. Though the early modern usage of intimate might not seem immediately relevant to theatricals, it is the sense of security associated with intimate relationships that facilitates the limited liberty of household theatre.

As 'intimacy' in the period connects to interpersonal bonds, the playwright-player-audience relationship is worth exploration; therefore, the way in which Wroth and the Cavendish sisters construct their own audiences is important. How do they set up the interaction between player and spectator? Do these early women writers imagine the 'fourth wall' convention, demarcating the players as separate from the audience? Do they invite audience participation, in the way that courtly masques draw dancers from the elite crowd? Do characters include the audience in the action through 'asides'? I suggest that Wroth's play seems to circumvent direct audience involvement. Instead, the characters implicitly position *themselves* as spectators—particularly in Act II, scene i—in ways that point the audience to acknowledge its own voyeurism. This meta-theatrical move similarly pervades the Cavendish sisters' *The Concealed Fancies*, as the cousins in Ballamo play their 'scenes' and imagine that the patriarch watches them (III.iv). Unlike *Love's Victory*, the Cavendish sisters' comedy defines its audience explicitly as one comprised of "Ladies" and "Gentlemen" through "A prologue to the stage." The patriarch ("your Lordship") also finds a space in the intended audience. Although they do not invite spectators on stage, Brackley and Cavendish give them more entry into the world of the play by drawing them in through the 'aside' device, specifically in Act II, scene I, and requesting audience response in the epilogue. In contrast, the Cavendish sisters' more masque-like text, "A Pastorall," cuts off the possibility of audience involvement by delaying revelry. Freedom calls for music and dancing, certainly; however, the shepherdesses' negative response does not support such action (75). While Wroth and the Cavendish sisters predominantly separate the audience from the plays' *action*, a heightened awareness of spectatorship establishes a close connection between the actor and the audience. There is a self-consciousness that manifests in their household theatricals and this paradox—the playwrights' simultaneous 'inward' focus and attention to the viewer—points to a distinct improbability of a wide audience. Assuming that they intended on their plays being performed for audiences, Wroth, Brackley, and Cavendish strive to maintain internality by sharing their work only with intimate audiences.

Like the playwrights' imagined audiences, the actualized (potential) audiences of *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" are of great import. Though scholars can only speculate as to audience composition, it is very unlikely that Wroth and the

Cavendish sisters anticipated anyone outside of their 'innermost' circle viewing their plays. The value of intimate relationships in fostering security in these women's theatrical writing and performance cannot be underestimated. Women writing and performing for the 'public' theatre was not a possibility in the milieu. Particularly if Wroth and the Cavendish sisters acted in their own plays, restrictions on viewership would have been important, since contemporary tracts denounced female acting. In addition to the theatrical climate, the tense political climate likely maintained intimacy in the audiences for *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall," if not *Love's Victory* as well. As I highlighted in the prologue, instability colored the Stuarts' reign in the time that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters were writing their plays. Specifically, Brackley and Cavendish would have performed their play during the Civil War, when their family estates were under Parliamentarian seizure; consequently, any audience at the besieged spaces would have been limited. Certainly later performances could have had larger audiences, but, given the lack of performance record, a more 'public' performance is unlikely. The same is true for the sisters' pastoral. Although Wroth was not affected as directly by Stuart politics, the complications surrounding her status during possible times of performance would also have demanded a coterie audience. Further, because the intimate format of their theatricals—extending to the audience—negated constrictions of 'publicly'-disseminated work, these early female playwrights could allude to familial secrets without fear of widespread scrutiny.

Affirming audiences as more intimate, Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' plays expose personal insecurities and reveal political allegiances. First, Heide Towers argues that Wroth's critique of James I in *Love's Victory* implies a coterie audience: "[the play] was almost certainly composed for a small and trusted audience at a time when James was particularly intolerant of any criticism of his policies" (442). Likewise, Margarete Rubik implicitly limits the potential audience of Brackley and Cavendish's play in her claim that it "was certainly meant to be performed at home for their father" (15). Rubik's situation of *The Concealed Fancies* within the family home, and for a restricted audience, speaks to the sisters' translation of personal wartime experiences into entertainment; however, the Royalist political faction's loss to the Parliamentarians is also significant. For whom would a heavily Royalist-leaning play be performed but trusted intimates? The plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters are, in many ways, primarily family entertainments, and Findlay

specifically claims this status for *The Concealed Fancies* in "'She gave you the civility of the house': Household performance in *The Concealed Fancies*" (260). Nonetheless, the attention to the family, though key to the household dramatic mode, does not preclude non-familial intimates from potential audiences. Restriction to intimates is all that is essential for the security of these early women playwrights' theatrical experimentations. Therefore, the twentieth-century denotation of 'intimate, adj.' as a descriptor for theatrical performance which "aims at establishing familiar and friendly relations with the audience" becomes apt in considering *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" ("intimate" def. adj. 3e.).

I propose, then, that 'intimate theatre' indicates a brand of theatrical performance that reflects upon 'inmost' personal relationships—with allies, friends, family, even God—and fosters the same type of relationships through restrictive audience composition and the diminishing of the 'fourth wall.' I suggest that, even if there is not physical integration of the spectator, an emotional and psychological barrier between on-stage player and audience breaks down in intimate theatrical performances. The close bonds between the two lay the groundwork for exploration of familial matters, from patriarchal presences and absences to scandals. For example, an entertainment that operates much in the vein of intimate theatre, Rachel Fane's pastoral masque clearly establishes the attention to family, with the jester directly addressing Fane's parents, her siblings, and even her sister-in-law's "great belly" (2).[9] Wroth and the Cavendish sisters are less explicit; yet, as I discuss in the following chapters, *Love's Victory* hints at Wroth's affair with the Earl of Pembroke and implicitly clarifies her relationship with Matthew Lister. Similarly, the Cavendish sisters' *The Concealed Fancies* points to their father's interest in procuring a new wife. Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' interest in embedding familial sexual impropriety in their plays is analogous to a masque connected to an aristocratic household: John Milton's *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle, or Comus*. In *Comus,* John Milton focuses on virtue and purity in order to purge the Egerton family of the Earl of Castlehaven's rape and sodomy indignity (Weitz Miller). Of course, in contrast to Milton, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters represent their own family and their attention to familial scandals is not necessarily purgative. The

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[9] For more on Fane's volume of work, see Marion O'Connor's "Rachel Fane's May Masque at Apethorpe, 1627." *English Literary Renaissance* 36.1 (Winter 2006): 90-113. Print.

intimate nature of the content of *Love's Victory* and *The Concealed Fanices*, in particular, begins to break down the boundary between player and audience, even if playwrights do not integrate audience participation into their plays' structure.

The interaction between performer and spectator that emerges from intimate theatrical performance in the household, with coterie audience and the erasure of the 'fourth wall,' at once diminishes and reinforces the security of both performer and spectator. Both are more vulnerable without that boundary. Martin Butler suggests that an audience's 'willing suspension of disbelief' does not occur in more intimate performance scenarios because the form eliminates the spectator-performer boundary ("Private and Occasional Drama" 132). However, because the audiences for Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' plays were most probably comprised of close family and friends, such a threat of increased vulnerability is assuaged. The only way to mitigate insecurities related to performance (especially of one's own text) is through the careful restriction of the audience, something that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters clearly recognized. The lack of performance records for Wroth's *Love's Victory* and the Cavendish sisters' *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" might suggest that the plays were never performed; however, I propose that the lack of records might instead indicate insulation of the plays. Perhaps the audiences were intimate enough that they left too few traces for scholars to discover (yet, at least).

The player-audience relationship that Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' plays convey align the texts with the popular Stuart masques, which share the potential for more intimate audiences and the breakdown of the 'fourth wall.' Masques, like household plays, are generally limited in terms of theatrical dissemination. Patrons, and artists that they commissioned, often intended for masques to be occasional; that is, most masques were staged only once as they were to be performed in conjunction with a holiday or celebration, such as a wedding. Playwrights predominantly tailored masques for the (usually royal) household and its coterie audience, rendering it akin to household theatre. This tailoring extends to the inclusion of specific characters, often mythological, to represent the Stuarts. Just like the plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, then, the Stuart court masque engages with 'inward' allusions (references focusing attention on the interiority of household members). However, any 'inwardness' becomes displaced with the necessary attention to political persona, as masques were predominantly used to celebrate and improve the political

profiles of royals. For instance, Ben Jonson wrote both *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1619) and *For the Honor of Wales* (an expansion of the first masque) to mark Charles Stuart becoming Prince of Wales. In his earlier work, Jonson honors the future king, Charles, by rendering him as Hercules, torn between virtuous political obligations and distracting pleasures. After Hercules hotly criticizes Comus and his followers, the choir encourages him to "give thy troubled spirits peace" and rely on Virtue (*The workes of Benjamin Jonson* 24). The royal family, Charles specifically, informs the play's content and performance, but—as with Milton's *Comus*—the playwright is not part of the household. Further, the audience can hardly be defined as an intimate one, especially as the Stuarts remounted the masque and it appeared in a collection of Jonson's works in 1641. The strain between the Stuarts as a private family and as public institution renders the court masques less 'inward,' and, therefore, less intimately performative.

The masque, specifically linked to political figures, *depended* on patronage and political display in a way that the household plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters did not. Returning to *Comus*, the Egerton family commissioned the Miltonic masque and, while it tacitly worked to mitigate a family scandal, it overtly celebrated the Earl of Bridgewater's new political position as Lord President of Wales. In the entertainment, the Bacchus-like reveler, Comus, entraps the chaste Lady whose patriarchal protectors have left her. Virtue and temperance, though, protect her chastity until the restoration of the patriarch's authority. Scholars often point to the Comus figure in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* as Milton's inspiration for his masque for the Egerton family. Indeed, both entertainments attend to the tension between virtue and wanton pleasure, and both plays become political displays. Moreover, if Milton alludes to the Jonsonian work, he reasserts Bridgewater's political significance by linking him with Charles Stuart. The private family is central to *Comus*, with three children literally taking centre stage; however, the political occasion, along with the playwright as a non-family member and the emphasis on reconciliation of conventional virtue and patriarchalism, projects the masque outward. It invites a wider circle—even if it remains an elite circle—to witness Bridgewater's increase in status, just as Jonson's masques invited 'public' attention to Charles. These invitations manifested through re-presentation

and publication.[10] Many masques, from those of Ben Jonson to John Milton, still attend to the family. Widely speaking, therefore, the courtly masque might be categorized, like the household play, as intimate theatre. And I raise little objection to such categorization, as the entertainments held at the Jacobean and Caroline courts also highlight a family: the royal family. However, the familial allusions that appear in the courtly masque predominantly turn outward, with weight on 'public,' political persona.

With the diminished intimacy and a distancing between the playwright and the household member or host, the Stuart masque becomes distinct from the household theatrical mode. Further contrasting the courtly masques, the household theatricals of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters privilege familial, 'inward' allusions over political concerns, though contemporaneous politics resonate as well. "A Pastorall" and *The Concealed Fancies* focus on the family, paying clear attention to Brackley and Cavendish's concerns in terms of marriage, patriarchalism, and security. This is not to suggest that the Cavendish sisters ignore English politics; indeed, it is the conflict between the Parliamentarians and Royalists that underpins both dramatic pieces. However, as I discuss more fully in chapter two, lamentations for fatherly absence and longing for reunion *sustain* the Cavendish and Brackley's attention to the war. Likewise, *Love's Victory* (which, similar to many masques, possesses songs and mythological characters, yet differs in its formal structure) alludes to wider political affairs, but mimics the love entanglements of the Sidney family, with two generations of Sidneys mapping easily onto the shepherds and shepherdesses of Wroth's play.[11] In this way, household drama maintains focus 'inward' on the household, and the people that comprise it, even if they are absent. Nonetheless, there is potential for overlap between the masque and the household play, which Rachel Fane's work and Cavendish and Brackley's "A Pastorall" best demonstrate. First, "A Pastorall" and Fane's entertainments exemplify features of both dramatic modes. Fane's dramas possess characteristics that render them masques (even the titles of her works have been assigned indicate them to be masques); yet, situated on the home stage rather than a commercial or courtly stage and

[10] In addition to Jonson's masques being published in his *Workes*, Milton's *Comus* appeared three times in print in the seventeenth century: in 1637 (three years following its initial performance), and 1645 and 1673 in Milton's *Poems*.

[11] As I outline in chapter two, Cerasano and Wynne-Davies summarize the two layers to the roman á clef of *Love's Victory* in their introduction to the play in their collection, *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*.

privileging the family over the state, Fane's pastoral masque is akin to *Love's Victory* and *The Concealed Fancies* more than to the politically-invested masques of the court. Similarly, the Cavendish sisters' "A Pastorall" clearly works within the masque mode, even opening with an antemasque. However, the play—with its ending that cuts off potential for audience revelry—also subverts the mode and maintains its focus on the family rather than wider political concerns of displays. With limited dissemination and 'inward' interest, but more artificial, masque form, these dramas from Fane and the Cavendish sisters underscore the potential for the masque to be an instance of intimate theatre. What I must stress, however, is that the level of dissemination for many Stuart masques—even if still limited—remains higher than that of Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' works.

Texts connected to courtly masques are highly journalistic patchworks that are written in the past tense and suggestive of only a recording of a performance, rather than the existence of a pre-planned script (Limon 45, 50). Furthermore, royal entertainments "tended not to be exchanged commercially [. . . and were restricted] to relatively elite social groups" (Heaton 232). Nonetheless, because of the potential of masques as political propaganda to reinforce allegiances and bolster public opinion, they were sometimes disseminated. Some pieces, including *Comus*, were both published and re-staged. This disrupts any potential for intimacy.

In contrast, closet plays might seem more restricted than household plays. The closet in an early modern household connotes security, promoting intimacy; yet, the drama linked with it frequently expands its audience beyond the household, let alone the closet.[12] Though most scholars, including Margaret Hannay, Karen Raber, J.G. Macdonald, and Matthew Woodcock, identify *Love's Victory* as a closet drama, I distance it from the genre. Certainly, affinities between the closet and the household play exist (see chapter four). However, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters work to cultivate intimacy in their audience in a way that other female playwrights in the milieu, specifically the Countess of Pembroke, Lady Falkland, and Margaret Cavendish, did not. This may seem counter-intuitive, as the closet drama is implicitly—and sometimes explicitly—relegated off of the stage and seemingly precludes tension between 'inwardness' and theatrical performativity. Indeed, though

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[12] For an analysis of the closet space, see Alan Stewart's "The Early Modern Closet Discovered." *Representations* 50 (Spring 1995): 75-100. In the article, he discusses how the closet space fostered relationships.

performative potential resides in closet drama as well, performance connected to closet plays relates primarily to coterie readings rather than theatrical production.[13] Regardless of whether they possess strong theatrical potential, closet dramas are less akin to household plays and more analogous to masques in their wider textual circulation. Pembroke's *Tragedy of Antonie* and Falkland's *Tragedy of Mariam*, for instance, were published for 'public' consumption, which *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" were not.

As much as I attend to intimacy in its theatrically-performative manifestation, the circulation of *Love's Victory* and the Cavendish sisters' collection could likewise be considered intimate. Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' plays were not published until the twentieth century and—despite the potential for manuscripts to have a substantial readership—only circulated minimally in the seventeenth century, suggesting that the playwrights sought to maintain an intimate readership for plays in the way that they intended for an intimate theatrical audience. Indeed, in the determination of the intimacy of a play, scholars ought to examine its accessibility in terms of the level and mode of dissemination, in addition to attending to the interaction between playwright, playtext, performers, audience, and performance space. 'Public' dissemination includes the theatrical performance *and* printed word, and the playwright is affected by status, literary exposure, and expectations, or lack thereof. Their product—the playtext—is similarly colored by its context and reception. Playwrights retain a degree of control over their unpublished dramatic works (thereby mitigating contemporaneous critical response) which they lose if and when 'public' circulation occurs. Publication also poses a particular threat to the female writer's social status because considering "the discourse which rendered women's words innately and irremediably sexual, their circulation, in spoken or written form, beyond the household threshold could put a woman's social and marital status at risk" (Lamb 8). This instability stemming from publication becomes evident in Wroth's defensiveness following the printing of her prose romance.

Though her *Love's Victory* remained in manuscript form for centuries, Wroth was a published author in her time. Her *First Part of The Countess of Montgomeries Urania* was printed in 1621, causing a scandal because of its roman à clef features. Lord Denny's

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[13] Marta Straznicky explores the reading culture that surrounds closet dramas, suggesting a performative element in coterie readings.

reaction to his depiction in *Urania* prevented the dissemination of her drama, which proffers (more limited) roman à clef features.[14] Yet, the lack of a published text does not prove that *Love's Victory* was not disseminated. Instead, it merely limns the accessibility of the playtext as more limited. Barbara Lewalski supposes that the play did in fact circulate (*Writing Women* 251). Nonetheless, *Love's Victory* is "clearly a more private work than *Urania*, in so far as it had manuscript circulation, as a play that may well have been performed, even if only within a family circle, it has a communal life" (Salzman 78). Just as its theatrical performance was intended for a small audience, its text was for a coterie readership rather than for public consumption. Perhaps the scandal surrounding *Urania's* publication was enough to incite Wroth to insulate *Love's Victory*—and herself—from further public scrutiny. While the potential impact of *Urania's* reception cannot be dismissed, this interpretation, of course, assumes that Wroth's composition of *Love's Victory* followed, rather than preceded, *Urania*. There is no conclusive evidence of this timeline, nor any evidence to contradict it. What might be more productive, then, is emphasis on how the mode in which Wroth writes *Love's Victory* supports more limited, or intimate, dissemination, and I argue that the 'inward' focus, with highly personal presences and opinions, in her play calls for intimacy. To more widely broadcast the play would be for Wroth to expose herself as an unchaste playwright who opposes the king. Familial and political allusions pervade *Urania* as well, but Wroth obscures them more, partly by expanding her purview beyond the household and her coterie.

Whereas Wroth publicly disseminated her writing contemporaneously to the composition of her play, the Cavendish sisters retained more control over their written words. Because their writing was rendered into presentational volumes by scribe John Rolleston, some intent to share it is apparent. However, the sisters clearly direct their collected writings, known as *Poems, Songs, a Pastorall, and a Play*, towards their father, with possibilities for limited dissemination among intimates. The Cavendishes and the Egertons, as well as close members in the community, would likely have been aware of and

[14] Allegedly unflatteringly depicted by Wroth in *Urania*, Denny exchanged heated letters with her following the text's publication; in one, he angrily accuses her of hermaphroditism. With some demanding a key for *Urania*, Wroth retracted the work.

exposed to the work of the two young women.[15] Brackley and Cavendish composed several poems, most of which address or honor relatives, friends, and the king and queen. Perhaps select verses would have appeared in letters to their father, brothers, and nephew, as well as to Alice Egerton, and Brackley's husband, John Egerton, before being compiled for a presentation volume. Interestingly, *The Concealed Fancies* is omitted from the Beinecke manuscript of the sisters' work, indicating either that they had not completed the play at the time that they initially compiled their writings or that they desired to further restrict readership of that particular piece.[16] Although I will unpack the biographical allusions of the play further in the following chapters, it is evident that *The Concealed Fancies* exposes familial affairs and critiques the patriarch in a way that the poems and pastoral do not. It is conceivable, then, that Cavendish and Brackley did not want their father to read the play, though an invitation for patriarchal approval within the drama suggests otherwise. Nonetheless, the sisters at least delay Newcastle's exposure to the play by not including it in the manuscript that was sent to him. On the other hand, because both manuscripts fell under the control of a male scribe, John Rolleston, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the Cavendish sisters possessed agency over their textual product at all. The two manuscripts convey attention and care to the presentation of Brackley and Cavendish's words. Therefore, Rolleston, if not Brackley and Cavendish themselves, likely had preservation in mind, but might have also anticipated *some* degree of dissemination beyond the home. Still, evidence is by no means substantive. The extent to which *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" circulated remains uncertain. Nonetheless, John Rolleston and the Cavendish sisters maintained control over the verses and plays by creating only two manuscript volumes. Like *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" were intimate in terms of both textual and theatrical performance, at least in authorial intent.

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[15] In "'To be your daughter in your pen': the social functions of literature in the writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish," Margaret Ezell suggests that the manuscript of their work would have likely circulated through the Cavendish and Egerton families. On how others in Brackley's circle would have been aware of the sisters' writing, see Emily Smith's "The Local Popularity of *The Concealed Fansyes*."

[16] For a discussion of the manuscript variants, see Alexandra G. Bennett's "'Now let my language speake': The Authorship, Rewriting, and Audience(s) of Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 11.2 (September, 2005): 1-13. Print.

The intimacy of Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' plays mitigates any exposure of familial secrets or critiques of English politics, as well as the subversive potential of female authority inherent to their authorship. A key part of insulating household dramas from wide dissemination and 'public' scrutiny is the architectural space that houses them. In order for Wroth and the Cavendish sisters to retain control over their plays' respective audience—and preserve the intimate bond between the play, the players and the audience—they require a suitable site for staging. Enabling intimacy, family country houses provide potential stages for enclosed theatrical performances.

III. Intimate Spaces for Intimate Theatre

In his study of courtly theatre, John Astington often refers to 'intimate performances,' but does not clearly explain his use of the term. However, his argument that "the effect of a particular theatrical occasion at court was determined as much by the special ethos of the place where it was held as by the kind of show or play performed, the skill of the actors, and the composition of the audience" (*English Court Theatre* 40) speaks to his understanding of intimate performances as being related to a linking between the players, the audience, and the playing space. Continuing to examine the intimacy of the household dramatic mode, then, the spaces that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters employ for staging—and inspiration—demand consideration. The "special ethos of the place" inflects a play's setting, but also works to construct the connection, or disconnection, between the player and the audience. As I have contended that the audiences for Wroth's *Love's Victory* and Brackley and Cavendish's *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" were intimate, the spaces that potentially functioned as the plays' venues would need to support the personal intimacy of household theatrical performance.

Studies of early modern theatre and space often intersect, either explicitly or implicitly, and the link between architectural design and drama continues to pervade modern contemplations of staging. In his consideration of theatrical space, William F. Condee argues,

> The aim of illusionistic theatre is for the audience to believe, with willing suspension of disbelief, that the performance is real, and to diminish the audience's awareness of the theatricality. But the audience-involvers want the spectator to perceive the

> performance as an artistic—even artificial—theatrical event. Theatrical performance is seen as a ritualistic interaction between two groups of people: spectators and performers. Therefore, performance and architecture should highlight and reinforce this interaction. (33)

Here, he implies that the extent to which audiences engage in a 'willing suspension of disbelief' is dependent upon the relationship between the player and the spectator, which connects to Martin Butler's conception of the diminished 'fourth wall' ("Private and Occasional Drama" 132). In addition, he, analogous to Astington, asserts a relationship between performers, performance and venue. This relationship manifests—in different ways and to varying extents—in analyses of seventeenth-century theatre. Responding to calls for a critical turn towards spatial realizations of dramatic texts, Wickham's *Early English Stages, 1300-1660* and J. Newman's "Inigo Jones and the Politics of Architecture" point to the close relationship between physical space and dramatic performance in the early modern period. In particular, Wickham, who contends that "the history of [English] drama is as much concerned with architecture as with literature" (Vol. 1 10), provides speculative reconstructions of the stages for Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* and Daniel's *Vision of Twelve Goddesses* (Vol. 2. Pt. 1 268-9), even listing the sizes of halls and other theatrical venues (Vol. 2 Pt. 2 155-156). Studying spaces in conjunction with the plays held there adds dimension to playtext analysis. Broadening the scope to consider the bodies on stage, moving through space according to memorized blocking and breathing life into blank verse, may require imagination and speculation. To disregard such, though, would be a great disservice to seventeenth-century drama, let alone the plays at the center of my study.

For *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall," prospective performance spaces demand consideration because they inform the playtexts themselves, as well as any staging of those works. The mode within which the plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters operate depends upon particular, familiar spaces that might in fact *heighten* "the audience's awareness of the theatricality" and promote the intimate bond between the amateur players and the spectators. But how, specifically, can theatrical space affect this bond?

Broadly speaking, in theatre there are four architectural stage configurations: proscenium (picture frame), arena (theatre-in-the-round), thrust, and alley stages. In

addition, found stages can act as theatrical venues. Each of these stage configurations establishes a distinct player-spectator relationship. The proscenium stage, which was popular by the end of the seventeenth century, reinforces the 'fourth wall' separation between the characters onstage and the audience, allowing a "production [to] lead an existence relatively autonomous from the space it inhabits" (Condee 46). Its antithesis, the arena stage, finds the players surrounded by the spectators in way that minimizes the boundary between the two. In this configuration, blocking can become artificial and inorganic if the audience is ignored. The thrust and alley stages also involve some envelopment of the actors by the audience, though not as complete as the arena's theatre-in-the-round. Of these four configurations, Elizabethan and early Stuart English theatre often employed the thrust stage, which invites a closer relationship between the spectator and audience than the proscenium. Yet, the height of stage and a playhouse's inclusion of a (sometimes crowded) pit area could increase or decrease the perceived spatial separation. Providing visualization, the sketch of the Swan shows a raised thrust stage with two-doored exits far upstage, and the reconstructed Globe theatre mostly replicates this. Supported by asides and addresses to the audience in prologue or epilogue material (which the Cavendish sisters, as well as Shakespeare and his contemporaries, deploy), the thrust simultaneously creates a space for diminished 'willing suspension of disbelief' and close engagement with artificiality. Moving from the proscenium to the arena, thrust, or alley stages, there is drive towards greater player-spectator interaction. The potential for interaction increases when aristocratic houses function as found stages. In using found spaces, like the household, "the specificity and concreteness of the site translates into an excess of naturalism within theatrical performance" (Jakovljevic 98), further enabling the players to foster an intimate connection to the playtext and to the spectator.

Found stages are spaces that were not designed to house theatrical productions, but are being used for that purpose. Though not all spaces are equally conducive to theatre, Gray Read asserts,

> Every room is a stage, every public space is a theater, and every façade is a backdrop. Each has places for entry and exit, scenery, props, and a design that sets up potential relationships between people. In this sense, architecture and theater are sister arts, creating worlds where people interact in studied spatial relationships. (53)

Modern players and artists use cafes, subway stations, stairwells, walkways, etc. to stage scripted and unscripted theatricals. Moreover, instances of found stages appear in early modern England. 'Public' theaters like the Red Bull were not originally built for theatre, but, rather, renovated from inn-yards to support many kinds of entertainment, including plays. Such open-air playhouse stages were relatively bare (any scenery would be ravaged by weather); therefore, the players had to give the space meaning (Yachnin 149). Ben Jonson, Inigo Jones, and their players similarly gave the Banqueting House meaning as a performance site—through additions of more elaborate masque scenery and costumes, as well as movement and speech—but the space itself was a "purpose-built performance [space]" (McManus 103). In contrast, great halls in aristocratic estates functioned as theatrical venues, but they were not built nor retrofitted specifically for plays and possessed few architectural features that would make the spaces conducive for theatricals. Instead, players, playwrights, and directors would have to conform to these household stages, using existing hallways, doorways, staircases and screens as entrances, exits, or 'hiding' places.

The features of a playhouse dictate blocking and staging; elements of country house architecture shape household theatrical productions. At the same time, by using the aristocratic household as a found space for theatricals, the players also affect the meaning of the space itself. Spaces and the subjects (and activities) they house are mutually influential. As Henri Lefebvre suggests, "*(Social) space is a (social) product*" (26). Further, Don E. Wayne argues that "form in architecture is inseparable from the specific social activity (functional or symbolic) which is its purpose" (9). Because of actors' spatial use, the household great hall—or other indoor and outdoor spaces—becomes a stage. But what are the specific effects of re-purposing space for theatre? Markus Hallensleben relies on Lefebvre to explain the relationship between space and the inhabitation of that space:

> If we take Lefebvre's concept to be valid that our bodies *are* and *have* the space they are creating, then we create and constantly re-create and form ourselves, we *do* our bodies, or in the terms of performativity studies, we choreograph our bodies, which then not only means that we control our movements in space, but also that we design and redesign our bodies in space. The human body, thus understood as a physical zone in constant flux, *is* and *has* culture (quite literally) as a tool. It creates culture by controlling itself, and it controls cultural spaces by creating and redefining itself. It *is*

> the tool itself and *has* the tools that allow it to produce and, hence, control space. Therefore body and space are not separable entities, but a unity. (16-7)

For him, the body is integral to the definition of space, and this is particularly significant in relation to theatre, as bodies repeat artificial movements through space. The ritualistic nature of theatre imprints itself on the found stage and that space becomes something else; its social purpose changes, even if temporarily. Also underlining the mutability of space, but focusing on gender, Daphne Spain indicates, "Gendered spaces themselves shape, and are shaped by, daily activities. Once in place, they become taken for granted, unexamined, and seemingly immutable" (28-9). Therefore, using a household space for alternate purposes—creating found stages out of country house spaces, for example—incites re-examination of how that space operates.

Rubik observes that "[p]rivate theatricals were not uncommon in aristocratic country houses" (9). The staging of entertainments at the aristocratic country houses of Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' families proves the functionality of those spaces for intimate theatre. For example, scholars have variously considered estates associated with Wroth—Wilton House (Pembroke), Penshurst Place (Sidney), Durance in Enfield (Wroth), Loughton Hall (Wroth), and Baynard's Castle (Pembroke)—as candidates for the venue of a *Love's Victory* production. *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" are more clearly linked to one space, Welbeck Abbey, though Nathan Comfort Starr also proposed the Egerton's Ashridge estate as a potential stage for the former play. Though not designed for theatrical production, all of these estates offered potential stages—from the great hall to the long gallery to the gardens—and many of them had played host to royal masques and occasional dramas well before Wroth and Brackley and Cavendish employed them as intimate stages.

The various possible sites for *Love's Victory* possess theatrical potentiality. One of the possible—albeit less probable—spaces for a potential performance is the Pembroke family's Wilton. This estate, the Countess of Pembroke's, became tangentially linked to courtly entertainment, with Inigo Jones and John Webb overseeing the rebuilding of the estate after extensive fire damage; further, the estate functioned as the venue for a performance of either *As You Like It* or *Twelfth Night* in 1603 (John Miller 137, 133). Another possible space for *Love's Victory*, Baynard likewise functioned as a site of hospitality as early as 1501, when Henry VII sponsored its repair (Stow). In addition, the

estate in which I contend Wroth most likely situates her play, Penshurst Place, her father's country estate, had a history of entertaining royalty.[17] Ben Jonson famously constructs this Sidney home as the site of banqueting and entertainment in "To Penshurst" and "[e]ven in Jonson's time, the Great Hall at Penshurst would have been thought an outstanding example of an ancient architectural form" (Wayne 86). The hall would have been the key site of hosting at Penshurst, but the estate extends the connection between the royal family and the Sidneys beyond the social employment of the space. Edward VI bestowed the property of Penshurst to Sir William Sidney in 1552. The presence of Tudor arms on the estate legitimates Sidneys' ownership of Penshurst (Wayne 103). Further, the architectural features created an impression of the family as practical: "The virtue of utility as opposed to ornament and uniformity (or symmetry) of appearance was consistent with an emerging Protestant (and a bourgeois) ethic" (Wayne 94). The estate, both architecturally and in terms of its social use, affirmed loyalty to the monarch. It provided the Sidney family with social and political prestige, as well as stability of location.[18] In addition, it became an Arcadia—not just for Sir Philip Sidney, but for Wroth as well—that could shift into a stage for courtiers to turn into shepherds and shepherdesses.

Like Penshurst, the Cavendish family's country estates hosted aristocratic events that increased their owner's public profile and facilitated household members' artistic productions. William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, was a clear Royalist supporter leading up to, during, and following the Civil War. This support translated into entertaining Charles I at the two family country houses: Bolsover Castle and Welbeck Abbey. Of particular note are Jonson's *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck* and *Love's Welcome to Bolsover* (staged on May 21, 1633 and July 30, 1634, respectively), which were both designed with the explicit intention of entertaining royalty.[19] The productions were expensive, but demonstrated what would be affirmed during the Civil War: William Cavendish's loyalty to

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[17] For instance, in 1519, the third Duke of Buckingham, who at that time owned the property, hosted Henry VIII there.

[18] Penshurst Place remains the property of the Sidneys' descendants; Philip Sidney, 2nd Viscount De L'Isle MBE, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Kent is the estate's current owner.

[19] Although rather young at the time of the Jonsonian entertainments, the Cavendish sisters likely witnessed the spectacles and may have employed costumes from the productions for their own household plays. I have previously published a book chapter in *Women and the Gendering of Talk, Gossip and Communication Practices across Media* (2011) where I instigate a discussion of the potential impact of Jonson's productions at the Cavendish estates on Brackley and Cavendish.

the monarch. While both *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck* and *Love's Welcome to Bolsover* clearly honor the king, Nicholas Cooper considers the Jonsonian entertainments primarily in terms of the space they occupied:

> It seems likely that the new range was not yet finished when Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria visited [Newcastle] at Welbeck in 1633 and again in 1634, but in the latter year the King and Queen came on to Bolsover to see a masque, specially written for the occasion by Ben Jonson. Successive scenes were enacted around the house, inside and out, with music and dancing, and, as a part of the masque, actors played the parts of workmen, their lines satirising Inigo Jones. (141)

The way in which the masque at Bolsover features artisans foregrounds the inextricable link between space and the theatricals' content. The space affects the play—Jones depicts the construction at Bolsover—and the play, in turn, affects the family estate by turning it into a stage. The estate of Bolsover, "built on the site of a real castle" (Cooper 130), dates back to the twelfth century, but the Cavendishes began renovating the house in 1612. The architectural and aesthetic improvements stemmed from a rivalry between Bess of Hardwick's sons, with Charles Cavendish remodeling Bolsover to outdo his brother and neighbors (Worsley 239). Charles' son, Newcastle, shared his father's interest in using the estate to bolster his own status. In particular, the visual work that he commissioned for Bolsover emphasizes Hercules, representing Newcastle's own physical strength and "fortitude of mind" (Raylor 410). An addition that Newcastle made to Welbeck and Bolsover perhaps conveyed his status and reputation most pointedly. He was known for his horsemanship and both estates boast a Riding House. Furthermore, Welbeck, even more so than Bolsover, affirmed political alliance through hosting banquets and staging masques. Aside from Jonson's *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck*, Newcastle presented his own "Masque of Ladies at Welbeck Abbey" circa 1635. Cooper affirms the function of Welbeck as a site for entertainment, suggesting that the renovated spaces are ones that "could suitably receive the highest in the realm" (141). Richard Flecknoe's country house poem on Welbeck further renders it "a royal palace, where everything/ Seems made for entertainment of a King" ("On Welbeck, The Duke of Newcastle's House" 1-2). Everything might seem made for entertaining; at the same time, the space and its function ultimately facilitate Newcastle's self-representation. There is a sense of 'public' self conveyed via the estate.

In the seventeenth century, country house poems created an inextricable link between an estate and its owner's status and virtue. However, the country house poets sometimes privilege the social function of the household space over the architectural features. Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" honors Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester by focusing on his Kent country estate. The poem opens with a consideration of the building itself:

> Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show,
> Of touch or marble; nor canst boast a row
> Of polished pillars, or a roof of gold;
> Thou hast no lantern, whereof tales are told,
> Or stair, or courts; but stand'st an ancient pile[.] (1-5)

For Jonson, the house at Penshurst is not remarkable for its architecture; therefore, he quickly shifts his gaze to the estate's grounds, claiming that Penshurst "joy'st in better marks, of soil, of air, / Of wood, of water; therein thou art fair" (7-8). Whether attending to the architectural or natural spaces, however, it is the inhabitation of those spaces that dominates Jonson's attention. In the poem, the natural environment enables hospitality and entertainment of allies, including the king and prince. Fish "run into thy net" (33) and "seasoned deer" (20), pheasants and partridges enable two forms of entertainment: hunting and banqueting. Jonson establishes the Sidney family's virtue by suggesting that the natural surroundings are well-ordered and inherently support Leicester's *usage* of the Penshurst estate. Contrasting Penshurst with ornate buildings, Jonson stresses the inhabitation of the space: "Those proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else, / May say their lords have built, but *thy lord dwells*" (101-2, emphasis added). Poets similarly extol Newcastle through country house poems, describing the estates to underline his virtue. George Aglionby, for instance, flatters Newcastle by drawing parallels between him and Bolsover Castle: "'Tis like the Master's mind, compact and high/ Uniform, fit for nobility" (47-8). Francis Andrewes, Newcastle's protégé, also describes the Cavendish estates' structures as reflections of their owner. He constructs Welbeck as a functional "brewhouse" ("Hardwick, Worksop, Welbeck, Bolsover, and Rufford" 4) and "parish" (5), and Bolsover as a stunning "fort" (6). Yet, analogous to Jonson, Andrewes attends carefully to the social employment of those spaces: "Bolser to feast, Welbecke to ride in/ [...] Bolser good sleeping" ("Hardwick..." 7, 10). Situating Newcastle within his estate, Andrewes specifically calls upon Welbeck to "entertain

[Newcastle] well at bed" ("Welcome to the Earl of Newcastle" 2). In this way, he limns Welbeck as a host itself that replicates Newcastle by demonstrating hospitality. By focusing on the meaning of the space and its social functions, country house poems construct the 'public' persona of an estate's owner.

Aristocratic houses symbolize status. Yet, the architectural spaces and the inhabitation of those spaces are equally significant in conveying status and affirming authority, as architectural form is inseparable from social activity and the subjects give the space meaning (Flather 2). Focusing on early modern spaces Cooper argues,

> Many members of the upper classes lived well beyond their incomes, and such behaviour provoked competition all the way down the social scale. Whether in their clothes, in their entertainments or in the decoration of their houses, rich men paraded their wealth. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, great houses were dense with extravagant ornament, both outside and (even more so) inside. (9)

Ornament, whether on the body or in architectural space, was a performance to affirm social position. As exemplified by Newcastle's employment of Herculean symbols in Bolsover, "the forms and ornament of Jacobean houses are full of meanings. Heraldic decoration proclaimed the owner's ancestry, his allegiances to king, friends and family; classical ornament showed off his education and culture; symbols and emblems expressed his values" (Cooper 107). With these symbols in place, the reception of guests into the household was an opportunity for aristocrats to convey their 'public' selves. Do they align themselves with the monarchy? Do their tastes reflect modest Protestantism or the ornament associated with prelacy? Do they maintain a well-ordered home and, by extension, family and community? The architecture and decoration of spaces might answer these questions. For instance, as mentioned above, the Sidneys' Penshurst reflected the family's connection to the Tudors and their Protestant values (Wayne 103, 94). The presence of family portraits in the household also constructed the normative family, though Leicester's authority as patriarch was sometimes more implicit (see discussion of Barbara Gamage portrait and Leicester's absences in next chapter). Nonetheless, the household could only convey these messages about its inhabitants through its wider social usage. Just as masques require wider dissemination in order to exhibit political power, crests and symbols in a household space

require visitors from outside that space in order for them to fulfill the purpose of constructing a 'public' identity.

With this in mind, specific household spaces served as sites of hospitality. [20] The hall, in particular, functioned as a found stage for performances, thereby becoming the "public face of the household" (Friedman 44). "'Private' domestic spaces had 'public' functions," Amanda Flather contends (177), challenging the application of the 'public'/'private' dichotomy to early modern spaces. Helen Hills similarly argues that "the 'domestic' was neither exclusively private nor familial, but was necessarily the sphere of work and business and was the locus of political patronage" (7). The employment of the aristocratic country house in the form of theatrical entertainments, banquets, and hunting expeditions diminishes the boundary between the 'public' and the 'private,' as hosting worked to define and secure a ('private') family's ('public') social and political position. Specifically, the employment of a family's 'private' estate as a stage for the entertainment of a 'public,' even a restricted 'public,' demonstrates the precariousness of defining space—and theatre—as 'public' or 'private.' Furthermore, when the household hosts and performs for an exclusive group of intimates, it supports the production of intimate theatre. The estates under consideration in relation to the plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters—Penshurst Place, Bolsover Castle, and Welbeck Abbey—are not what modern scholars might consider intimate spaces, as they boast large state rooms, long galleries, and great halls, span acres of land, and serve to construct the owner's 'public' persona. Despite the grand scale and 'public' function of these architectural spaces, they housed families, or, more precisely, households (early modern household members included the immediate family, as well as servants). The country houses were both 'public' entertainment hubs and 'private' family dwellings. Therefore, entertainments held in the aristocratic country house—particularly household plays, but also royal entertainments and interludes—also hover between the 'public' and 'private' realms in a way that problematizes the binary.

Analyses of early modern theatre position 'public' and 'private' theatre in opposition in a way that limits the reading of the milieu's theatrical performances and its spaces, one of which is the aristocratic country house. Early modern 'public' theatre connotes male-

[20] See Felicity Heal's monograph, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), which examines the significance of early modern English hospitality in relation to diverse social groups.

authored, -approved, and -performed, commercial productions. Women's participation in the 'public' commercial realm or the 'publicly' open theatrical realm was limited, if not prohibited, resulting in the conflation of the terms 'public' and 'commercial,' despite their inherent distinctions. The exclusion of women from commerce certainly maps nicely onto their exclusion from theatre.[21] In spite of the traditional association of 'public' spaces with spheres of masculine influence, and 'private' spaces with the feminine, the overlapping of the 'public'/'private' and the masculine/feminine complicates the clear implementation of such dichotomies. Even though "the relationship between private and public is now fundamental" (Lefebvre 159), the binary is not necessarily useful. In employing 'intimate' to interrogate early Stuart modes of performance, the utility of the 'public'-'private' binary comes under scrutiny.

Set up in opposition with 'public' and 'commercial', the terms 'private' and 'non-commercial' are too often collapsed in examinations of early modern drama. However, the extent to which 'private' plays—including court masques, interludes, and potentially even household plays, to some—juxtapose commercial 'public' theatre becomes less clear due to the spatial overlapping of 'public' and 'private' and due to the restrictions attached to attending *both* 'private' and 'public' plays. A nuanced definition of 'public' indicates that that sphere is "Open or available to all members of a community, or all who are legally or properly qualified (as by payment)" ("public" def. adj. 1a). It is worthwhile to underscore that even 'public' plays are restricted to the *paying* public. Following this logic, then, an event can be dubbed 'public' even if qualifications—including status and political affiliations—limit access. Therefore, although court masques and household entertainments are certainly not 'public' in that they are not widely accessible, with their audiences being restricted and attendance regulated, entertainments which have traditionally been depicted as 'private' are not necessarily so. Tom Bishop complicates the 'private' character of the masque in his suggestion that ritual is performed publicly via the masque (96). In a similar vein, Peter Holbrook characterizes *The Masque of Queens* as a "public entertainment" (79). Attending to masques, plays, and sundry entertainments, Martin Butler suggests that such 'private' dramas "had a high public profile" ("Private and Occasional Drama" 131). This 'publicness' may signify the commercial component of 'private' theatre, which had financial

[21] Of course, there are notable exceptions to these exclusions, as I highlight throughout this dissertation.

concerns despite aristocratic patronage (Love 95-97). Further, though directed towards a narrow, coterie audience, 'private' plays involve a sort of transaction: those staging the show purchase status and authority through their sometimes blatant displays of wealth.

A consideration of seventeenth-century 'non-public' drama illuminates the strong affinity between masques and household plays, as both engage with a form of theatrical performance that is potentially 'intimate' because it is distinct from 'public' theatre. Defining masques as 'public' or 'private'—or even intimate—becomes problematic, then, because it possesses contradictory features. Its performances are limited, but 'public.' It has an 'inward' focus on the family, but that family is comprised of 'public' figures and political display takes precedence. The boundary between 'public' and 'private' theatre is complicated and permeable, therefore, and often indistinct. The question arises: can we define and differentiate 'private' and 'public' theatre and how does intimate theatre relate to this problematic binary? Clear distinction is difficult to determine, especially with the permeability of the binary extending to theatrical spaces. Still, by limiting 'public' accessibility in different ways and to different extents, those spaces help differentiate forms of theatrical performance.

Dubbed 'private' and 'public' playhouses respectively, both covered and open-air playhouses were open to the paying public. However, the capacity of 'public,' open-air playhouses was three times greater than that of 'private,' covered playhouses. The pit area of open-air playhouses gave 'groundlings' an inexpensive way to watch plays, whereas the limited seating in the covered playhouses increased ticket price. Courtly stages were, of course, more exclusive than the playhouses. With its current capacity at 380 (*Weddings and civil union at Banqueting House*), the Banqueting House would accommodate about one fourth the audience of the Globe—a 'public,' open-air theatre—or about half of the audience of Blackfriars playhouse—a 'private,' enclosed theatre.[22] Yet, the Banqueting House functioned as a site for entertaining courtiers and foreign ambassadors, in addition to the royal family's circle, and therefore opens up beyond the 'intimate.' The Stuarts employed St. James palace, on the other hand, for intimate entertainment. That is, Prince Henry and later Henrietta Maria used the royal estate, which lacked Whitehall's designated theatrical space,

[22] Francis Beaumont suggested that the capacity of Blackfriars was 1000, but, as Andrew Gurr indicates, this is probably an exaggeration ("London's Blackfriars" 213).

as a stage to perform for small cohorts of friends and family instead of as a stage upon which to demonstrate political prowess to a less restricted crowd (Astington *English Court Theatre* 123). The country houses associated with Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, as well as their plays, are even more restrictive than Whitehall and St. James, partly through their geographical location; for instance, Penshurst Place is located south of London in Kent and Welbeck Abbey is located north of London in Nottinghamshire. These estates hosted guests beyond the household, but their distance from the city and the court could easily facilitate intimate theatre. The architectural sites for household theatre become significant, then—as the name of the mode might suggest—as they support its intimacy in terms of limiting dissemination and focusing on the family. Situating *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" in Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' household spaces takes on multiple meanings, all of which point back to the 'inwardness' of these dramatic works.

IV. Claiming and Retreating to Real and Imagined Spaces

Maintaining the 'inward' focus of household theatre, these early female playwrights translate their childhood homes—and, for the Cavendish sisters, their contemporaneous living space—into the plays' stages and settings. While I will return to the importance of the country house as a found stage, the household spaces, first and foremost, function as inspiration for the settings of Wroth's *Love's Victory* and Cavendish and Brackley's "A Pastorall" and *The Concealed Fancies*. Henri Lefebvre's analysis of the relationship between theatrical space and the representation of space ("scenic space") is productive in considering the multifaceted usage of the household space; the "scenic space," Lefebvre proposes, "correspond[s] to a particular *conception* of space" and is "mediated yet directly experienced" (188). Though he links the "*conception* of space" to specific theatrical traditions, the idea that a play's scene depicts an experienced space—even if it distorts that space—is significant as I contend that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters negotiate their respective familial country houses through representing and even manipulating those spaces in their plays. Only partly supporting Lefebvre's assertion that the represented space "infuses the work and the moment, [and] is established as such through the dramatic action itself" (188), Wroth and the Cavendish sisters signal the settings for their plays through characters' actions, dialogue, traits, and spatial affiliations.

There are four distinct settings for *Love's Victory*: The Temple of Love (or Venus' temple), the clouds, a meadow, and a wood. The spaces that the characters and stage directions define can all fit within these categories. Wroth establishes the Temple of Love as an important site, especially as she opens and closes her play in that space.[23] In Act I, scene i, Venus and Cupid occupy the Temple of Love as they prepare to 'play' with the bucolic characters. The next time that the setting is clearly used is in Act V, scene iv: an opening stage direction indicates the Temple of Love to be the setting, and the reference to "Love's altar" (96) affirms the space. Permeability between the temple and the pastoral spaces manifests in the discovery of Musella and Philisses strewn upon the altar in the following scene. Act V, scene v sees the bucolic characters "*ready to fetch the bride*" (stage direction) in an unspecified place, when Rustic finds the seemingly dead bodies. Rustic's ability to see the limp bodies of Musella and Philisses suggests that staging must allow for the two represented spaces to be separate, but connected. More importantly, they must be simultaneously depicted on the stage. Therefore, the altar connected to the Temple of Love must be small enough to accommodate the second imaginary spot that Rustic and other shepherds and shepherdesses occupy. The unspecified space in which Rustic stands when he discovers Musella and Philisses could be the meadow or woods, or perhaps an alternate pastoral setting. Regardless, Act V, scene v establishes the stage as an intermediary space between the supernatural world of Venus and the natural world of the bucolic figures. The landscape at Penshurst, or even Wilton for that matter, would have both inspired and supported the connection between the supernatural, or religious, and the natural that Wroth creates here. Expansive gardens and a family chapel would both be found at the Sidney estate.

Although Penshurst included a religious space, the rolling green landscape predominates. Assuming that Wroth employs this estate—her uncle's Arcadia—as inspiration for her play's settings, it is noteworthy that the country house poems on the estate similarly privilege its natural spaces over its neo-Gothic architecture. As mentioned above, Jonson's "To Penshurst" stresses the value of the estate's landscapes and natural offerings, though he also moves to the house's interior as he indicates that those offerings facilitate hospitality. Wayne points out how Jonson's descriptions of Penshurst move from north to

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[23] The opening with Venus and Cupid only appears in the Penshurst manuscript.

south, from untamed lands to tamed interior (85). Further, Edmund Waller strongly focuses on the outdoor spaces in his two poems on Penshurst. Jonson's and Waller's poems associate the estate with the family's literary heritage, often pointing to the muses that populate Penshurst's woods. Appropriately, then, the action of Wroth's play displays a pull back to green spaces, where the shepherds and shepherdesses primarily reside despite their foray into Venus' temple. Act I, scene ii (which is the opening scene in Wroth's Huntington manuscript) describes a "pleasant flowery mead" that boasts "Meadows, paths, grass, flowers,/ Walks, birds, brook" (17-8). In the same scene, Silvesta also indicates that "pleasant valleys," "meadows" and "gliding streams" make up her surroundings (74, 76). Meadows are not treed areas, and a move seems to occur at the beginning of Act I, scene iii: "Dalina: The sun grows hot, 'twere best we did retire/ Lissius: There's a good shade" (1-2). Here, a logical (but absent) stage direction would see the cast cross into a treed space that offers "good shade." The first scene of the second act requires a similar space, as there must be some barrier (and large trees or bushes would be most suitable) between Silvesta and Forester and the rest of the bucolic characters, since the pair "*[does] not see the others*" (stage direction). "Silent woods" and "blessed woods" also provide the setting for Act III, scene i and Act IV, scene i. In the latter scene, a hiding spot is required, as it was in Act II, scene i. Therefore, though Philisses mentions "these valleys and these meads" (IV.i.37), the scene must be set in a treed area. He even gestures towards this: "You blessed woods into whose secret guard/ I venture" (IV.i.5-6). Any visual differentiation between the meadow and the wood might be negligible, especially for an intimate household performance in a found theatrical space. Nonetheless, Wroth clearly imagines two different settings and these settings might replicate the boundary between tamed and untamed spaces at Penshurst.

Whereas Wroth demarcates the settings for the scenes in *Love's Victory* primarily through stage directions and dialogue, leaving the reader or director to interpret the spaces, the Cavendish sisters set up the spaces in the character list, dividing the characters into households. Overlapping of household-as-people and household-as-space occurs, as the Calsindow household, Lady Tranquility's household, and Ballamo contain and define the characters. The Cavendish sisters infrequently specify the setting of each scene, but because they attach characters to respective households, the reader (or prospective director) can usually assume that those characters appear in their household spaces (either in anterooms,

chambers, hallways, etc.). For instance, the reader only knows that Act III, scene iv takes place in Ballamo because the three cousins to whom the estate is attached (Sh., Is., and Cicilley) occupy the scene and they refer to residing in a besieged space. Sh.'s bedchamber is later mentioned, but as a space into which Sh. and Lady Tranquility exit (IV.iii stage direction) rather than a scene's setting. The settings, then, are malleable, as long as they remain in the proper household space. However, Brackley and Cavendish sometimes drop hints to narrow down the space in which a scene occurs. With Lady Tranquility frequently referring to her bed and to dressing in Act I, scene ii, for instance, her bedchamber seems the most apt site for this particular scene. Situating characters within their household spaces becomes troubled, however, through Luceny and Tattiney's move to the convent space. The convent acts as place for mourning and charity. Specifically, Luceny refers to "my sacred church, where I will weep" (IV.i.49). At the same time, it is a zone which both confines and frees: it defers marriage. The Calsindow sisters delineate their new space; Luceny takes stock of chambers, a nun's gallery, and the gardens (V.ii) and Tattiney outlines her "seeled chamber and dark parlour room" (V.ii.22). Their construction of a convent space appears to signal a departure from the Calsindow estate. Yet, if anything, it reaffirms Welbeck Abbey as the source of inspiration for *The Concealed Fancies'* Calsindow estate.

Prior to the Suppression of the Monasteries from 1536-1541, Welbeck Abbey was a religious house. Lisa Hopkins conjectures that "Tattiney's references to her 'dark parlor room' and Luceny's to walking in the 'nun's gallery' look like specific allusions to features of the abbey" (32). Interestingly, Brackley and Cavendish's stepmother, Margaret Cavendish, also deploys the convent as a sanctuary for Lady Happy in *The Convent of Pleasure*. The Cavendish family made significant renovations and additions to Welbeck; nonetheless, the country house possessed a concrete religious heritage that translates into the religious space that Brackley and Cavendish imagine as a retreat for Luceny and Tattiney. Lisa Hopkins primarily connects Welbeck, especially its remarkable painted ceilings, with *The Concealed Fancies* (32). Indeed, the combination of the religious past and the aesthetic renovations render the estate as appealing to young women exploring playwriting. However, Bolsover provides an equally important site of inspiration for the play. Ballamo Castle correlates with Bolsover Castle. In line with Andrewes' description of Bolsover as a "fort" ("Hardwick…" 6), the play sets up Ballamo as a "very strong place" (II.i.76). Still, as I

discuss below, a performance at Bolsover would have been highly improbable. Yet, in terms of the Cavendish sisters representing experienced spaces, Bolsover's Heaven Room there would provide the perfect backdrop for Courtley and Presumption "*coming down out of the sky*" (V.ii stage direction). In particular, the Heaven Room features a remarkable frieze on the ceiling—depicting Christ, surrounded by cherubs playing musical instruments, ascending into heaven—that suits the male protagonists' descent. Moreover, Bolsover is "a house designed for sensual indulgence" (Raylor 435), rendering it appropriate for the Cavendish sisters to situate the three cousins who indulge in cordials and invade the patriarch's privacy there, at its fictional counterpart, Ballamo. Overall, *The Concealed Fancies* deals with houses' particularities and architecture (Hopkins 25) and implicitly acknowledges the two primary settings as ones that replicate the Welbeck (the former convent) and Bolsover (the little castle). This coincides with what Hopkins identifies as a Cavendish drama motif: "a sharp awareness of both the literal and the symbolic meanings of place, manifested particularly in an acute sense of the potential fruitfulness of the interpenetration between the actual and the represented space of the stage" (39).

The Concealed Fancies splits its scenes between Welbeck/Calsindow household and Bolsover/Ballamo, as well as other settings. In contrast, Brackley and Cavendish's "A Pastorall" remains connected to one space. As I explore further in the next chapter, the setting of this dramatic piece is a green space, and Welbeck appears to be the space in which the Cavendish sisters imagine the action of their play. First, in "On Welbeck," Richard Flecknoe describes Welbeck's parkland as an Arcadia, rendering it as an ideal place in which the Cavendish sisters might situate shepherds and shepherdesses. Second, the characters' movements and speech indicate specific elements of this space, including an altar, which points back to the religious elements of Welbeck Abbey. Along with Findlay, I suspect that this demarcation of an altar implies Welbeck as the source of inspiration for the setting of "A Pastorall" ("'Upon the World's Stage'" 78). The newly-built Riding House at Welbeck was "of so vast extent,/ it does some mighty temple represent" (Flecknoe "On Welbeck" 21-2), and Brackley and Cavendish might also capitalize on this 'temple-like' addition to their family estate. The attention to Welbeck in "A Pastorall" is perhaps less explicit than the attention to Welbeck and Bolsover in *The Concealed Fancies*. Nonetheless, both of the

Cavendish sisters' dramas demonstrate an 'inwardness' by setting them in spaces that reflect the country house.

Wroth and the Cavendish sisters draw upon their experienced spaces—their homes—to create the imagined spaces of their plays. The 'inwardness' that manifests through the household plays' settings lends itself to the theatrical intimacy of the country house as found stage. With this in mind, I will return to the other key role of the household, as a potential theatrical site. The Sidney and Cavendish estates are all potential venue candidates, with some candidates being clear front-runners. There is minute critical discrepancy regarding the composition date of *Love's Victory*, which troubles locating any potential performance in a specific space. Most critics situate it circa 1620 (Naomi Miller, Swift), thus allowing for an extended writing process or implying a lack of evidence for precise dating. Mirroring this, Paul Salzman extends *Love's Victory* spatially over several sites. Avoiding linking the play to any particular site, he considers it "as a complex negotiation of spaces, including the court and its margins, Penshurst, Loughton (her own house), and Baynard's Castle (Pembroke's London House)" (80). Others have attempted to refine the time frame and, thereby, the likely theatrical site. For instance, Findlay and Wynne-Davies both predominantly attach *Love's Victory* to Penshurst as they attempt to hone in on composition dates.[24] Findlay suggests, "It is possible that Wroth envisaged or perhaps realized a private production of *Love's Victory* in the Penshurst surroundings" (Findlay "Dramatizing Home and Memory" 143-44). Lewalski suggests *Love's Victory* was written for private performance at Penshurst or Durance (*Writing Women* 297). I also suggest that an amphitheater, carved into the landscape behind another family estate, Wroth's aunt's Wilton House, might have existed specifically for the sort of intimate performance that the female playwright would imagine for *Love's Victory*. Most compelling, however, is Hannay's argument that the play was composed for Wroth's sister Barbara's wedding, which would have been held in the spring of 1619 at either Penshurst or Baynard's Castle. The divergent venues that critics proffer for a staging of the play again speak to the significance of location in theatrical presentation. That Penshurst appears in most arguments is significant and speaks to the potentiality of the estate as a found stage.

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[24] Findlay places *Love's Victory* in 1615-1618 ("Dramatizing Home and Memory" 142), and Wynne-Davies narrows the date to 1614-1616 ("As I, for one, who thus my habits change" 96-7).

Although the intended theatrical site for *Love's Victory* is difficult to pin down because the play is not precisely dated, Penshurst Place is the most likely site of composition, as well as the most likely site for (intended or actualized) performance. First, as Findlay observes, the Great Hall or the garden next to the house would have supported a performance nicely thanks to the surrounding pastoral landscape (Findlay "Dramatizing Home and Memory" 143-44). Second, as an important childhood home for Wroth, Penshurst is more closely tied to Wroth's Sidneian roots than to her adult, marital identity. This inspires the tension between maidenhood and wifehood in *Love's Victory*: in order to enter into one identity (good wife), the protagonist, Musella, must reject the other one (good daughter). The interest in shifting female identities, which I elaborate on in the next chapter, suggests that Wroth might have composed the play during a time of instability in identity. Wroth was married at a young age (seventeen), and could have written the play around the time of her marriage in 1604. However, taking other scholars' arguments regarding the dating of *Love's Victory* into consideration, I push the composition into the late-1610s. I suspect that the death of her husband (1614) and son (1616) enabled Wroth to both write and share writing more freely, even as the deaths resulted in instability and newly shifting identities for her. If Wroth composed *Love's Victory* after 1616, then, the play's strong ties to Sidneian pastoral space suggests that she attempted to attain protection through her family's roots, in terms of literary interest and found theatrical spaces. Penshurst offers her security not only as a 'home', but also as an intimate venue in which she could write and stage a play that explores 'inward' matters.

Analogous to Penshurst, Bolsover and Welbeck represented stability for the Cavendish sisters in an unstable personal and political moment. The impetus behind *The Concealed Fancies* is inextricable from the family estates, and the war that surrounded them. Prisoners in their own home, Brackley and Cavendish turned to writing for pleasure, expression of contempt, and the forging of identity in the absence of their male relatives. Welbeck, where it seems Jane, Elizabeth, and their youngest sister, Frances lived during the war, was captured by Parliamentarians in 1644, taken back by Royalists in 1645, and seized by Parliamentarians again in 1645.[25] The sisters most likely resided in Welbeck during the composition of *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall," and the estate is the probable site

[25] Bolsover was also taken by Parliamentarian troops in 1644.

for any theatrical presentation of the dramas. All scholars who write on the plays, except for Nathan Comfort Starr of course, also arrive at this conclusion. In particular, Hopkins situates *The Concealed Fancies* in Welbeck Abbey, citing the play's suitability for small, intimate venues in addition to some appealing aesthetic features of the estate (32). Findlay likewise suggests that Brackley and Cavendish's "A Pastorall" was likely meant to be staged at Welbeck (Findlay "'Upon the World's Stage'" 78). The Cavendishes' Bolsover Castle is an unlikely candidate for any performance. Nonetheless, it pervades the sisters' comedy, becoming Ballamo. Perhaps the sisters imagined bridging the play between the two households in theatrical performance as well as in the play's settings. In *The Concealed Fancies*, Brackley and Cavendish represent multiple features and spaces of the two family estates. In conceiving a potential production that incorporated their household spaces, then, they might have looked to entertainments that had been staged there previously. For Jonson's masque "Love's Welcome to Bolsover," held at Bolsover, "[s]uccessive scenes were enacted around the house, inside and out, with music and dancing" (Cooper 141). Inspired by "Love's Welcome to Bolsover," the Cavendish sisters might have conceived of their comedy as moving throughout household spaces, from the antechamber to the bedchamber, and even from the Riding House at Welbeck to the Heaven Room at Bolsover. However, this would be very ambitious for an intimate production. More significantly, Parliamentarians limited the sisters' access to their own homes and, therefore, many spaces they imagined in composition were likely not usable in staging. The sisters endured captivity and, as their household play exemplifies, asserted authorial power over and searched for security through the patriarch-owned domestic space.

The physical household is a source of stability and security. It conveys 'public' identity, but also insulates the 'private' family. In employing the household space as settings and as found theatrical sites, do Wroth and the Cavendish sisters imply that the experienced spaces they represent offer physical security and stability in identity? Paradoxically, the Stuart estates that are most closely connected to Wroth and the Cavendish sisters—Penshurst for Wroth and Bolsover and Welbeck for the Cavendishes—were in a constant state of flux, as owners made structural and aesthetic modifications. More significant were the destructive effects of the Civil War on the Cavendish estates. The instability of the material space—in its structural changes as well as issues of ownership—affects the security of the subjects that

occupy and employ that space. Therefore, if Wroth and the Cavendish sisters use the household space in their plays, the instability of that space should extend into those plays. And it does. As I discuss in the following chapters, insecurity pervades the green spaces of Wroth's *Love's Victory* and the Cavendish sisters' "A Pastorall" and the war-stricken estates represented in *The Concealed Fancies*. I suggest that it is in reaction to multivalent insecurity that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters retreat 'inward'—into a family-centric space—in their plays. They appropriate the country house spaces for inspiration, composition, and performance. As they do, they re-frame the spaces, which have a public dimension, as ones that primarily protect and proffer retreat: 'private' bedchambers, convents, and religious temples. Thereby, despite physical instability of the country houses, those spaces offer an abstract security of place. Most importantly, the Sidney and Cavendish estates enable early female playwrights to engage in a paradoxical 'inwardly performative' form of theatre.

Scholars, especially Alison Findlay, often assert the importance of the family spaces to the household plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, but what I stress in relation to these spaces is the reflection 'inward' that they enable and how that supports the theatrical products of three early modern women. A home, more than an open-air or closed playhouse or even a courtly entertainment space, fosters theatrical intimacy because the play's audience would be limited by spatial and well as relational restrictions. Therefore, the family estates in which Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley displayed their playwriting skills and (very probably) tested their theatrical performance skills offer security in that intimacy.

V. Conclusion: Insulating Agency

Spatially and figuratively, the household dramatic mode facilitates the production of female-authored play. Yet, authored and presumably performed in patriarch-owned spaces, household theatre is potentially as constrictive as the closet drama. Further, though Wroth and the Cavendish sisters claim their experienced spaces by employing them as imagined settings and real theatrical sites, none of these women owned the architectural houses that offered intimate theatrical venues. Therefore, even as the household spaces facilitated their productions, it became essential for the female playwrights to re-imagine those spaces in order to privilege a specific social function: intimate theatrical performance. Intimacy in

terms of settings and venue, content, and dissemination fosters authorial security, even though authorship was a masculine pursuit in the milieu.

In organizing a household performance of *The Murder of Gonzago*, Hamlet begins to take on an authorial position. But what happens to an entertainment when its poet, or author, also occupies the roles of host and actor? Does the overlapping of these roles diminish the collaborative element, and what are the effects of this? I contend that the household theatrical mode offers an example of this sort of overlapping and, for Mary Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, the positions gained as poet, host, and actor has two main effects. First, these roles offer agency to these early modern women, disrupting normative femininity. Second, these roles enable Wroth and the Cavendish sisters to elect their *mode* of performance; they shield themselves—their potentially deviant experiments with authorship and theatrical performance—and their work from 'public' scrutiny.

By staging a play, these female playwrights and performers deviate from norms. However, by staging a *household* play, female playwrights and performers maintain greater adherence to the normative prescriptions of silence, obedience, and chastity. The intimacy of the mode permitted Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley to enter the 'masculine' realm of dramatic writing and production without compromising (though also not ostentatiously displaying or gaining) status. Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, as their plays exemplify, demonstrate authorial agency even as they searched for security in the household. The more 'public' architectural, theatrical, and rhetorical spaces are traditionally male spaces, and the more 'private' ones are traditionally female spaces. To move out of the closet spaces, associated with closet drama, to stage a play in the more 'public' spaces of the country house—the great hall, for example—represents an exploration of gendered spatial politics. At the same time, by keeping their plays within domestic, familial spaces, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters mitigate deviance. The plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters were insulated entertainments. Central to intimate theatrical performances is restriction. Paradoxically, restriction incites greater freedom; it offers female playwrights opportunities to explore a male-dominated field, question norms, and define themselves without exposing themselves to censure in the way that their publicly-disseminated counterparts did. As such, the playwrights and performers could negotiate gender prescriptions, primarily those connected to authorship and theatre. Overall, these female playwrights managed the

reception of their drama and worked to foster 'inwardness.' As this dissertation asserts, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters *sought*, if not *attained*, security through the intimacy that is central to household theatre.

Chapter Two

"My sheppardes habits": The Pastoral and The Patriarch

Selfe-lost in wandring, banished that place we doe come from,
What meane is there, alas, we can hope our losse to recouer?
What place is there left, we may hope our woes to recomfort?
(The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia, The First Booke 42.17-19)

Identities are not fixed and must be reiterated in order to be sustained. Like a text, identities are embedded within, informed by, and emerge from a particular context. External and regulatory power—manifested in political structures, social hierarchies, and gender roles—have "formative or constitutive effects" (Judith Butler 34), and the self is established in relation to those forces. The dominance of the patriarchy, a "political system based on the dominion of a husband and father over his household" (Mendelson and Crawford 6), in early modern England inflected self-fashioning in that milieu. Defined primarily in relation to patriarchal figures, women and their words were "filtered through the barrier of men's expectations" (Mendelson and Crawford 11). Normative femininity was defined by male authorities and 'proper' female roles were limited to maid, wife, and widow. These delineate the woman's status as she relates to the patriarch: she is subservient to the father, then husband, then to the absent husband. To embody alternate roles, disconnected from fathers and husbands, was to challenge normativity and re-negotiate identity. Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, for example, were daughters and then wives; yet, government posts, death, civil war, and exile destabilized the positions of these young women. While Wroth's normative identity was challenged by her distance from and disobedience of the patriarchs in her life, the Cavendish sisters adopted conventionally masculine authority reluctantly. In this chapter, I examine Wroth's, Cavendish's, and Brackley's connection to patriarchs, and how the disruption of these connections incited the women to write pastoral dramas.

Interlinked with Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' performances and constructions of identity are the generic choices that they made. They assert their authorial voices, and do so in specific ways. The three female writers write in multiple modes, including comedic drama, verse, and prose romance. However, all three turned to the pastoral dramatic mode

and, in that mode, dwell on gaps and redirections in identity. As Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley are among the earliest English female dramatists, their employment of the pastoral mode is striking, and raises some questions. To what extent do their pastorals accord with other, male-authored examples of the mode? What does the pastoral dramatic mode offer these women that other modes do not? Most importantly, what is at stake in casting themselves in a pastoral world? This chapter explores these questions by considering early modern manifestations of the pastoral and the ways in which the female-authored plays *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall" reflect modal conventions before turning to the patriarch's effect on generic selection. I argue that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters write in the pastoral dramatic mode because it enables them to explore anxieties regarding their unstable identifications under a patriarchal system, refiguring their roles through play.

I. *Pastor, pastoris*: Defining the Pastoral Landscape

But "what is pastoral?", as Paul Alpers queries in his important study of the constitution of the mode. Traceable back to Theocritus' Greek bucolic poetry (ca. 300 BCE), the tradition of attending to the loves and games of sheep-herders was sustained by Virgil and Ovid. The latter writers provide, directly and indirectly, source material for medieval and early modern pastoralists, who in turn complicate the defining features of the pastoral mode. In her succinct study, *English Pastoral Drama,* Jeannette Marks rightly suggests that the variety evident in Renaissance pastoral literature renders a precise definition of the mode impossible (28).

Sir Philip Sidney's sixteenth-century contemplation of poetic genre influenced generations of literary criticism, and continues to pervade analyses. Comedy, tragedy, and "mungrell Tragy-comedie" (K2) dominate the courtier-poet's *An apologie for poetrie*, and he briefly mentions pastoral. His minimal treatment of pastoral may imply that the literary mode lacked popularity in Elizabethan England. However, pastoral poetry and drama markedly emerged from the 1570s to 1590s, continued to be popular through the early seventeenth century, and were employed by Sidney himself in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* and *The Lady of May*. Because of the focus of this dissertation on household drama, this chapter primarily considers dramatic manifestations of the pastoral; nonetheless, non-dramatic or quasi-dramatic pieces, including Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*, Sidney's

Arcadia, and Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love," helped to shape the pastoral landscape, and, therefore, their importance cannot be discounted. The symbiotic and intertextual relationship between the different genres that support the pastoral mode is evinced in the transplantation of tropes, themes, and character-types from pastoral prose and poetry into plays and vice versa. Nowhere is this better evinced than by Wroth's use of characters and plot schemes from her prose romance in her play. In addition, Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* clearly influenced the dramas of early Stuart playwrights Samuel Daniel, John Day, and James Shirley.[26] Dramatic, prose, and poetic pastorals emerged in varied forms, sometimes incorporating Petrarchan, comedic, tragic, tragicomic, or masque elements. Yet, it was particularly with the import and then translation of Giovanni Battista Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (printed in English in 1590) and Torquato Tasso's *Aminta* (printed in English as *The Countess of Pembroke's Yvychurch* in 1591) that the pastoral dramatic mode gained popularity in England.

A 'golden age' for drama, 1587-1642 saw pastorals emerge in different forms. Aristotle deems plot, theme, characterization, diction, melody, and spectacle as the components of drama (*Poetics* Book VI); following Aristotle, Philip Sidney desires unity of time and place in a play (K). Yet, dramatic pieces attend to Aristotle's elements or Sidney's unities to divergent extents. Character development, plot structure, inclusion of music, etc. vary widely in early modern dramatic texts, including pastoral works. While some playwrights structure their works into acts and scenes, others make little attempt to organize, or even fully script, their dramas. The masque exemplifies this. Attending primarily to pastoral drama, Lisa Sampson delineates structural differences: 'regular' pastorals are "scripted plays that adopt the five-act form and neo-classical unities typically used for erudite comedy and tragedy" (3) and 'irregular' pastorals are more fragmentary, and include "eclogues, semi-dramatic dialogues, interludes (intermedi or intermezzi), and hybrid dramas (drammi mescidati) mixing mythological pastoral, tragic and comic scenes" (7). According to Sampson's conception of 'regular' and 'irregular' pastoral plays, for instance, Samuel Daniel's *Queen's Arcadia* belongs to the former, and Sidney's *Lady of May* to the latter category. Early pastoral dramatists Tasso and Guarini divide their plays into five acts, and

[26] Day's dramatization of Sidney's *Arcadia*, *The Isle of Gulls* (1606), was interpreted as a slight against the Stuarts. In *The Arcadia* (1640), Shirley overtly drew from and referenced his Sidneian source text.

the early Stuart period saw plays-proper which work with the pastoral mode. In addition to Daniel's *Queen's Arcadia*, Day's *The Isle of Gulls*, Shirley's *The Arcadia*, and William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *The Winter's Tale* contain pastoral elements. As pastoral drama became established in England, the mode's conventional elements materialized as fragments in larger works. Even works which share key features deviate in the ways in which and extents to which those features appear. The pastoral mode was diluted and, consequently, difficult to define. Nonetheless, certain characteristics tend to recur in early pastorals, including the appearance of sheep-herders and mythological characters, an Arcadian or green space (often in decline), contests, miraculous escapes from death, female vulnerability, and loss or separation that leads to nostalgia. Rather than reiterate the work of early scholars like Alpers and Walter W. Greg by offering a full account of the pastoral here, I will point to some important examples of Elizabethan and Stuart pastorals as I consider these features in anticipation of shifting focus to *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall" and shifting self-identifications.

Given its Latin etymology (*pastor, pastoris* translates as shepherd), one may assume that a pastoral is a work which boasts a cast of characters comprised entirely of shepherds, and their female counterparts, and which dwells on their lives. Such an assumption would be partially accurate. Marks understands "pastoral literature [as] all literature in which shepherds play an important part" (28). While most scholars would concede that a conventional pastoral tends to focus on the lives of shepherds and shepherdesses, the mode also predominantly includes mythological or supernatural figures, as well as characters that have been displaced, usually from the city or court. Although bucolic characters always appear, 'courtly outsiders' sometimes play more of a central role than those shepherds and shepherdesses. Walter Montagu's *The Shepherd's Paradise*, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge*, and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, for example, demonstrate this tendency. Also populating the pastoral world are stock characters, including the villainous satyr, fickle woman, naive ingénue, etc., who might facilitate the retreat of courtiers, the games of supernatural beings, and the love entanglements of shepherds and shepherdesses. Despite the composition of a pastoral drama's cast, the emphasis is on the simplicity of the sheep-herders' rural lifestyle. Alpers, who does not pay due attention to pastoral drama—even dumping his consideration of *As You Like It* into a chapter on poetry—provides a

practicable denotation of the pastoral similar to that of Marks. Trying to narrow the mode, he argues that "the central fiction of pastoral . . . is not the Golden Age or idyllic landscapes, but herdsmen and their lives. . . . [P]astoral does not include all poems about nature or landscape, nor does it include all poetry, drama, and fiction about rural life" (x). Alpers prioritizes the bucolic characters over the settings in which they reside; the green landscapes and nature are secondary. However, as those landscapes offer a life distinct from urban constrictions and often function as retreats and playgrounds for courtiers and supernatural beings, they are, I contend, as necessary to the pastoral mode as the sheep-herders.

Contrasting Alpers' perspective, Ken Hiltner recently contended that pastoral poetry—and, again, the focus is the poetry rather than drama—is nature writing. Hiltner's position is simultaneously intriguing and problematic, as it is difficult to apply to pastoral *drama*. On the one hand, playwrights' use of pathetic fallacy, wherein the shepherds and shepherdesses read the natural environment as sympathetic to their plights, or personification affirms the significance of nature in the mode. For instance, *Love Crowns the End* casts nature as an intrusive spy, "prying into [Alexis'] errors." On the other hand, Hiltner's denotation of pastoral indicates that landscapes require a poet to respond to nature; a cast of characters that inhabit the landscapes is inessential. However, especially in pastoral *drama*, the green space is necessarily occupied by bucolic, mythological, stock, and displaced characters. Those figures give the space its meaning and vice versa. The bucolic space provides the setting for the characters and their actions. In particular, 'courtly outsiders' imprint the urban world upon the green spaces and are simultaneously affected by those green spaces. For instance, Fidamira and Belesa's retreat to the Shepherd's Paradise incites a full-fledged courtly invasion and Fidamira's choice to remain in the bucolic world as queen— affirming hierarchical structure—permanently alters that world though the physical landscape may not change. At the same time, the green space offers Fidamira a life separate from the urban court, wherein she gains power and remains chaste. The mutually influential relationship of space and inhabitants is also evident in *Queen's Arcadia*, where the shepherds find

> Our Countrey, faire Arcadia, so much changd
> From what it was; that was, thou knowst, of late,
> The gentle region of plaine honestie,

The modest seat of undisguiséd trueth,

Inhabited with simple innocence:

And now, I know not how, as if it were

Unhallowed, and divested of that grace[.] (1.1.2-8)

Arcadia has lost its grace, and this loss permeates the lives of its inhabitants. The altered setting provokes deception, disguises, and discord. More than anything, though, Melibaeus emphasizes how the "distemperature" (12) correlates with the tainted reputations of nymphs (16-22). Therefore, the pastoral mode marries a green world with recognizable characters, and the setting and its inhabitants affect each other.

Although green space is a key feature of pastoral literature, that bucolic landscape is not consistently protective or escapist. In fact, the setting provides a stage for female defencelessness. Divine rape dominates an early pastoral model: in the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Apollo (unsuccessfully) attempts to rape Daphne, and Jupiter rapes Io, Callisto, and Europa. Continuing to underline women's vulnerability, in Tasso's *Aminta*, nature—specifically the tree and its roots—is forged in a way that enables the satyr to challenge the chastity of Silvia and Aminta's heroism is established by his rescue of her. Satyrs also abduct Thomas Goffe's and John Tatham's shepherdesses. Sheep-herders also threaten each other in the green world, with loss of chastity and death looming over shepherdesses in particular. Guarini's play features patriarchs who—tricked by Corsica—insist upon the execution of Amarillis for unfaithfulness. Thanks to a male hero and *deus ex machine*, the female protagonist escapes death. In Joseph Rutter's *Shepherd's Holiday*, Daphnis poisons Nerina, who seems to die. Moreover, Goffe's shepherdesses, Arismena and Castarina, interrupt a duel by threatening to kill each other and the two shepherdesses appear to be dead before the play concludes happily. Female characters are vulnerable to jealousy, deceit, lust, and patriarchal power in the pastoral world; yet, they escape death, and often enter a heteronormative union before the play concludes. The helpless situations in which they often find themselves allow shepherds to demonstrate their masculine power.

Easing the dark mood of pastorals, the figures that occupy the green world often engage in tournaments and games, offering male characters further opportunities to display prowess to 'win' a beautiful nymph. Competition between Therion and Espilus for the Lady of May's hand forms the basis for Sidney's pastoral drama. Similarly, in *Love Crowns the*

End, Lysander, Francisco, and other "bonny *boyes* / Play [their] parts" to prove their worth. Francisco, already linked to Gloriana, boasts to her, "None e're can conquer me, but you alone." In Guarini's influential *Il Pastor Fido*, Mirtillo exploits the game of tag and the kissing contest of the maids of Megara—winning the latter competition—to get closer to Amarillis. These games and contests remove agency from the shepherdesses, rendering them as prizes or victims, and, again, placing them in powerless positions. Certainly, powerful women also appear in pastorals, often in form of a guide who "transcends... earthly love" and "restore[s] the human soul" (Yang 34, 35). However, central to the pastoral dramatic mode is the trope of the threatened nymph. She ultimately escapes rape, danger, and death. The separations and losses inherently connected to the threats upon her, though, play into the pastoral mode's emphasis on loss.

Pastoral plots are often driven by loss or separation, with family and/or potential heteronormative couples (temporarily) divided. Father and daughter are separated in *The Winter's Tale*, with Perdita relegated to the bucolic landscape. Even in John Milton's pastorally-inflected text, *Comus (A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle)*, the title character captures Lady, separating her from her brothers. Like Milton's pastoral, Goffe's and Tatham's texts separate shepherds and shepherdesses via abduction. Yet separation can be productive. In Tasso's pastoral, Silvia flees Aminta after he rescues her from the lustful satyr. Pursuing his love, Aminta encounters a bloody veil and presumes Silvia to have been killed by wolves. His consequent devastation and suicide attempt incite the pity of Silvia, who is in fact alive. The pair is successfully united because of the misunderstanding that arises from their separation; they each fear the loss of the other. Whereas Silvia distances herself from Aminta, Guarini's female protagonist is separated from the male protagonist by predestined marriage arrangements. In *Il Pastor Fido*, the heteronormative bond between Amarillis and Mirtillo is deferred and separation through death is a palpable threat until the conclusion. Fortuitously, Mirtillo sheds his name (and identity), replacing it with his rightful name. Adopting the name and role of Silvio, he becomes the man to whom Amarillis is in fact betrothed. Loss of self, for Mirtillo/Silvio, facilitates a happy ending. While separation is a necessary device for plot complication and progression, loss is also thematically central to pastoral drama. Renato Poggioli contends,

> The psychological root of the pastoral is a double longing after innocence and happiness, to be recovered not through conversion or regeneration but merely through a retreat . . . The pastoral longing is but the wishful dream of a happiness to be gained without effort, of an erotic bliss made absolute by its own irresponsibility. (Poggioli 1, 14)

The sense of longing that Poggioli identifies is linked with the concept of escapism: pastoral characters navigate the green landscapes in search of contentment, instigated by loss or separation. If they seek "innocence and happiness", it is only because it has been lost. Shepherds lament the lost Arcadia. Nymphs fear the loss of chastity and life. Love, power, and family are vulnerable to supernatural forces and lustful satyrs. Happy, reconciliatory endings appear at the conclusion of most pastoral dramas, redeeming compromised virtue, and rejoining brother and sister, lover and beloved, and parent and child; however, whether the innocence of the Arcadian world can be restored is not always clear. Having opened *The Queen's Arcadia* by describing the pollution of the bucolic landscape, Daniel concludes the play by exiling corruption and those who corrupt: Melibaeus calls "us to recollect our selves / [...] And be againe Arcadians as we were" (5.4.253, 255). But is such purgation possible? Can what was lost be regained? Conversely, to what extent can loss be productive, even prompting reconfigurations? The female pastoralists who emerge in Stuart England suggest the utility of the loss trope in response to real-life instabilities.

II. Shepherdesses on the Early Stuart Stage

The prologue to this dissertation underscored the political, religious, and socio-economic tensions that defined the first half of the seventeenth century in England. Catholic recusants were being executed under James I; a mercantile middle class was burgeoning even while the court and many aristocrats were under heavy financial pressures; neighbours were battling each other, defending or opposing Charles I; also darkening the reigns of James and Charles were three plagues. Sampson recognizes the potential for reductive criticism of the pastoral when its nostalgic and escapist elements are foregrounded (4); however, the way in which pastoralists can consolidate personal and political tensions by turning a lens onto rural life appealed to Stuart courtly writers, performers, and audiences. Further, the idea of courtiers retreating to a green space to restore state order is all the more charged during Charles I's Personal Rule (1629-1640) and the resulting war. Plays enabled Charles I to

communicate his authority in a positive way and "[p]astoralism, romance devices, and platonic love were the political and social norms in Charles's court" (Raber 198). They distracted from political unrest. Many of the plays staged in the Caroline court represented Charles I and his wife as examples of good rulers and idyllic love, but the instability of England in the milieu is indisputable. Therefore, the gain in popularity, particularly among the aristocracy, of the nostalgic mode at the time is fitting.

Dramatic pastorals were often aimed towards the queen consorts and aristocratic circles and staged in courtly spaces, including Somerset House (Daniel's *Hymen's Triumph* and Montagu's *The Shepherd's Paradise*). Although James I's wife, Anna of Denmark, enjoyed pastoral productions (Curran 136), the popularity of this mode of drama surged in the court of the 1630s. The prominence of pastorals on the Caroline courtly stage is indicative of Henrietta Maria's ties to and involvement in French pastorals, as well as her strategic use of the pastoral masque to reassert her heritage (Britland 31-32). Pastorals provided the queen consort (and her husband, Charles I) with propagandistic material, but, more pertinent to this study, also with opportunities to perform. Of the dramas in which Henrietta Maria was involved, *The Shepherds' Paradise* is the most well-known. "[P]astoral was the dominant mode of the plays and masques written for Stuart women to perform" (Tomlinson 154), and it was Henrietta Maria and her ladies' performance of Montagu's pastoral in 1633 that ushered into England a different form of theatrical performance, one in which female parts were acted by amateur actresses (Gough 205). Women had been afforded speaking roles in France and Italy, and Henrietta Maria and her sisters had acted in the French court in their youth (Gough 194-198). Yet, courtly female theatrical performances that ventured beyond pantomime were only emerging in England under Charles I. Of course, while Henrietta Maria and her ladies took to the Caroline courtly stage, other women acted in the intimate venue of the aristocratic house, also in the pastoral mode. A young Rachel Fane, among other children, played in a fragmentary household pastoral, and in 1634 Alice Egerton found herself adopting a speaking role in Milton's *Comus*, another aristocratic drama with pastoral overtones; however, these performances, like the potential theatrical performances of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, do not make the same political statement as that of Henrietta Maria and her ladies. As discussed earlier, the household provides an intimate and secure stage, which contrasts with that of the court. Analogous to the pregnant Anna of

Denmark's showing in *The Masque of Blackness* at the beginning of the Stuart reign, Henrietta Maria pushed the boundaries of the English courtly stage. Deploying the pastoral dramatic mode, she *acted* rather than *danced* and did so at a time when the authority of the monarchy was under threat and her position was unstable.

Paradoxically, then, elite women turned to a mode which embraces female vulnerability for acting opportunities. Why? First, the simplicity of country life may appeal to both male and female courtiers faced with political instability. Second, the pastoral could have been the mode of choice because of its incorporation of female characters (Sampson 1). Many pastoral plays balance attention paid to the female and male characters, especially in comparison with non-pastoral early modern dramatic works. Following and even exploiting this trend, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters allow women to dominate their respective pastoral dramas. Wroth creates seven male and eight female characters (not counting the Priests), and renders women as the primary agents of action. The cast of Cavendish and Brackley's "A Pastorall" includes four shepherds, four shepherdesses, two country wives, two goodmen, and five witches. Finally, the vulnerability of the pastoral nymphs echoes the vulnerable position held by female actors as they began to take the English stage. Aristocratic female actors exposed themselves, but, by enacting the female parts rather than seeing them played by young men, the women refigure the powerless positions in which nymphs often find themselves. Wroth anticipates the female-performer's attraction to the pastoral dramatic mode in England with *Love's Victory*, as she figures the green world as one in which homosocial bonds take priority and female characters are afforded agency. Likewise, in "A Pastorall," the shepherdesses—who struggle between powerlessness and authority—prioritize fatherly and sisterly bonds over potential heterosexual bonds. Their appropriation of the pastoral might indicate that these female writers wanted to assert female power through a mode that highlights female vulnerability. Yet, female vulnerability is not entirely shut down in *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall." I contend that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters create alternate pastoral worlds through which they negotiate personal loss and re-frame identity.

The anxieties, losses, and escapism that pastorals conveyed, the opportunities that they offered would-be female actors, and the mode's popularity in early Stuart England rendered the pastoral dramatic mode appealing to Wroth and the Cavendish sisters.

Moreover, these female writers were almost certainly exposed to various classical and contemporary pastoral works, which would influence their own authorial choices.

Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, finished by his sister, Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke, inspired a wealth of pastoral texts. Further, the Countess—a model of female authorship—composed a pastoral dialogue. Though his literary efforts were overshadowed by those of his deceased brother Philip, Robert Sidney, the Earl of Leicester also produced verse, much of which is generically pastoral. Aside from literary endeavors, a portrait hanging in Penshurst portrays Barbara Gamage Sidney, Wroth's mother, as a shepherdess and Ben Jonson depicts Wroth herself "drest in shepheards tyre" ("CV. To Mary. Lady Wroth" 9). Jonson also connects the Sidney family to the green spaces of Penshurst Place in his country house poem, "To Penshurst," as discussed in the previous chapter. The pastoral mode is closely linked with "the Sidneys of Penshurst and the Herberts of Wilton" (Lewalski *Women Writing* 306), and Wroth aligns herself with this Sidneian heritage by writing *Love's Victory*. That Leicester, his two siblings, and his daughter wrote pastorals may seem unremarkable, since many prominent writers of the milieu at least experimented with the mode. Yet, that at least four Sidneys elected to employ the pastoral mode validates Lewalski's claim.

Critical arguments are divergent, but all indicate Wroth's exposure to English and Continental literature. Margaret Anne McLaren considers *Love's Victory* as a "conventional Renaissance pastoral" which is "genre bound and owes important debts to both earlier and contemporary models" (278). Though Wroth creates an original plot, it unquestionably owes some debts to Virgil's *Eclogues* (Lewalski "Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*"), Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (MacDonald), Petrarch's *Triumph of Love* (Woodcock), and other English pastorals (Wynne-Davies "As I, for one"). She likely read John Fletcher's *The Faithfull Shepherdess*, a tragicomic pastoral that was published circa 1609 with a commendatory poem by Wroth's acquaintance Ben Jonson. Considering that Fraunce's *Ivychurch*—which uses *Aminta* as its primary source—was dedicated to her aunt, the Countess of Pembroke, Wroth in all likelihood read or heard that text at a young age. The Countess' patronage of Daniel suggests that his pastorals would have also been accessible for Wroth. Moreover, Wroth's position at the court of James I and Anna of Denmark probably would have enabled her to see the production of Daniel's *Il Pastor Fido* adaptation. Fletcher's, Fraunce's, and Daniel's

plays resonate in *Love's Victory* in divergent manners, from the escapes from death in *Ivychurch* to the chaste female agent in *The Faithfull Shepherdess* to the complex love entanglements that appear in all of these texts. Broadening her awareness of the pastoral mode, Wroth may have even acted in Jonson's lost drama, *The May Lord*, circa 1611 before composing and staging her own play (Wynne-Davies "As I for one…" 93). By writing *Love's Victory*, Wroth responds to and engages with the pastoral tradition and, in doing so, embraces the literary circle and familial legacy that partly define her identity.

The Cavendish family, in contrast to the Sidneys, is better known for drama—the comedies of William Cavendish, the Duke of Newcastle, and his second wife in particular—than pastorals. While Newcastle ventured into the pastoral mode, the surviving texts suggest that he only did so after his exile. Therefore, the exposure that the Cavendish sisters had to the pastoral was less directly from their family. Like Wroth, though, their knowledge of the mode stemmed from their familial status. The Cavendish sisters were linked to the Stuart court, even acting as ladies-in-waiting to Henrietta Maria (Rubik 15). In addition, their father tutored Charles II, patronized courtly writers, and entertained the king. Though specific connections between "A Pastorall" and other works are somewhat tenuous, pastoral elements in the Jonsonian entertainments Newcastle commissioned for the king may have inspired Brackley and Cavendish's "A Pastorall". Further, separation is induced by magic in their pastoral drama, which resonates with Milton's *Comus*; the sisters were likely exposed to Milton's pastoral masque, as Brackley married one of its actors.

Therefore, it is very probable that the Cavendish sisters and Wroth had been spectators, as well as readers, of pastoral drama. To what extent, though, do Wroth, Brackley, and Cavendish deploy conventional pastoral elements in their dramas, and to what end? Presaging the performances of Henrietta Maria's court and writing her own pastoral dramas, Wroth "engages with and defuses the sexual and emotional danger that the pastoral mode could pose for women" (Macdonald 449). Josephine Roberts, Barbara Lewalski, Heide Towers, and Julie D. Campbell also argue that Wroth appropriates and subverts the pastoral model specifically to underscore female agency. Rather than focus solely on her play's feminist politics, which have been nicely covered by these scholars, I examine her adherence to pastoral conventions. Likewise, the ensuing analysis of the Cavendish sisters' "A Pastorall" attends to the playwrights' inclusion of key pastoral features. A succinct

analysis of pastoral conventions in *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall" will begin to illuminate the utility of that specific mode for some of the earliest female dramatists.

III. "As I, for one, who thus my habits change": Female-Penned Arcadias

Apt for the pastoral mode, the casts of *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall" are predominantly comprised of shepherds and shepherdesses, with stock and supernatural characters also appearing. From the inexperienced shepherdess Musella to the fickle Dalina to the mischievous Arcas, *Love's Victory* contains predictable pastoral characters. Mythological figures Venus and Cupid also appear in the Arcadian setting of the play, manipulating Wroth's potential lovers in order to underline their own power. In "A Pastorall", sheep-herders dominate the main action, though witches perform the opening antemasque, providing the supernatural element. Paralleling the inclusion of stock characters, characters' names—Hag, Chastity, Careless, Freedom, and Innocent—reveal the characters' identity and function. Populated by recognizable bucolic and supernatural characters, *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall" avoid representing 'courtly outsiders'. Instead, both female-authored dramas introduce characters who are 'bucolic outsiders,' figures who belong in the pastoral realm but are disruptive and/or unwelcome. In *Love's Victory*, the 'bucolic outsiders' are Arcas and Rustic; in "A Pastorall," they are the goodmen and goodwomen. None of these characters is 'courtly' or supernatural, and their functions diverge in the two dramas. Whereas Arcas and Rustic become tools that Venus and Cupid deploy as they manipulate potential lovers, Goodman Rye, Goodman Hay, Gossop Pratt and Naunt Henn serve to establish the rusticity of the setting for "A Pastorall" and point to the danger that exists there because of the witches' conjuring.

Love's Victory and "A Pastorall" explicate the role of supernatural presence and interference. Pastoralists will often invoke Cupid and Venus, but Wroth elucidates the motivation that spurs their meddling and includes scenes of the pair throughout the play. As Venus and Cupid plot against the humans, Cupid boasts,

> Friends shall mistrust their friends, lovers mistake,
> And all shall for their folly woes partake;
> Some shall love much, yet shall no love enjoy,
> Others obtain, when lost is all their joy. (I.i.27-30)

Venus wants to ensure that the sheep-herders respect her authority, and insists that Cupid interfere in their love-lives until they do. Cupid enacts his mother's devious plan. What motivates the witches' troublemaking in "A Pastorall" is less overt. They are—much like Cupid—the "Actors" of another's "designes" (46). Just as Venus and Cupid intend to separate friends and lovers, the witches claim to "[Bell:] make Brother hate brother/ Hag: Sister hate Sister/ Bell: Wife hate husband, and all other kindred, hath their divisions of hatred" (46). Whether they are given motivation, the mythological characters in *Love's Victory* and supernatural witches in "A Pastorall" create and expose the vulnerabilities of the sheep-herders.

Female vulnerability pervades both *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall". In *Love's Victory,* it is attached to unrequited love and daughterly (dis)obedience. Though both male and female characters are vulnerable, *female* helplessness more prominently manifests, as Musella is subject to the will of her deceased father in addition to the whims of the mythological figures. Her resistance to paternal will results in her attempted suicide, as well as the near-deaths of Philisses and Silvesta. Like many of Wroth's pastoral dramatic models, *Love's Victory* proffers miraculous escapes from death that highlight the helplessness of the sheep-herders. Yet, the shepherd does not play the rescuing hero here. Also establishing the vulnerability of the bucolic characters are their struggles with uncertainty and inconstancy, which recall the themes of falsity and fickleness of Wroth's prose romance and sonnet sequence. Wroth develops four main unrequited loves: Climeana for Lissius, Forester for Silvesta, Silvesta for Philisses, and Rustic for Musella. In addition, some of Wroth's lovers incorrectly assume that their feelings are unreciprocated. The two couples of mutual affection, Philisses and Musella, and Lissius and Simeana, suspect inconstancy thanks to Venus and Cupid. Though Philisses and Musella love each other enough to commit joint suicide when the latter character is hopelessly engaged to Rustic, each initially doubts the other's attachment. Musella awkwardly instigates confessions of love in the first scene of Act IV, and once both she and Philisses realize that their feelings are reciprocated, they become devoted lovers. In contrast, the bond that Lissius and Simeana share continues to be challenged after Venus complains that the bucolic characters require further testing and instructs Cupid to continue to further complicate their love lives. Becoming a tool of the mythological agents, Arcas convinces Simeana that her beloved Lissius "give[s]/ [His] love

in equal sort to all" (IV.i.185-6). Simeana believes Arcas' mischievous lie, placing more trust in a 'bucolic outsider' than in her beloved. Musella mediates and negotiates the rift between Lissius and Simeana, and successfully reunites the distrustful lovers. Nonetheless, the confusion that burdens the sheep-herders indicates their susceptibility to deceit and betrayal.

Balancing potential vulnerabilities, female agency appears in *Love's Victory* in multiple ways. First, inverting Aminta's pursuit of Silvia in Tasso's pastoral, Climeana pursues her male love interest. Lissius chastises Climeana's subversion of gender norms:

> ...Is this for a maid
> To follow and to haunt me thus? You blame
> Me for disdain, but see not your own shame!
> Fie, I do blush for you! A woman woo?
> The most unfittest, shameful'st thing to do! (3.2.184-88)

Climeana agrees with his blunt assessment and exits, although she hints at suicide before departing the stage. Climeana's agency is threatening, because she subverts the passive, subordinate role of women. Second, Musella also disrupts her normative role by disrupting patriarchal authority. Refusing to be subject to the lingering power of her dead father, she exercises control over her body and her fate by electing suicide. Musella's mother—under the impression that her daughter's chastity is under threat—upholds her dead husband's contract, which binds Musella to Rustic:

> Musella: …she with tears/
> Did vow and grieve she could not mend my state
> Agreed on my by my father's will, which bears
> Sway in her breast and duty in me. (V.i.11-14)

She is resigned to obey the will of her parents, but defies them through her proposal that she and Philisses unite in death (V.i.85-88). Martyrdom, for Musella, is the alternate to fulfilling her father's contract. Although, in sacrificing herself alongside Philisses at the Temple of Love, Musella replaces one patriarch's authority with another—shifting from father to husband-in-death—her resistance to patriarchalism resounds. She negates her promise to Philisses, and intends to die first (V.iv.45-56). In *Love's Victory*, Musella attempts to occupy a heteronormative role even as she attempts to detach herself from patriarchal authority.

Even as she gains freedom from her contract with Rustic, the Priests quickly transfer her to Philisses (V.vii.63). Paradoxically, then, the marriage contract and the near-death episode reinforce female vulnerability at the same time that they underscore the potential for female agency.

The final instance of female agency likewise deploys the 'vulnerable nymph' trope as it threatens male authority. In the play, Venus asserts her power and Silvesta works in collusion with the goddess to devise and enact a plan to protect her friends. "A Pastorall" casts Venus and Silvesta as female guide figures. Sharon Rose Yang emphasizes the significant role that Venus, the divine female guide, plays in the drama, and in the literary landscape:

> With the divine pastoral guide, Wroth gives her audience a woman who seems to wield power capriciously only to those who are too egotistical, insecure, selfish, or short-sighted to recognize the wisdom and justice shaping her thoughts and behavior. Lady Mary Wroth's work restores the female pastoral guide to assert the potential of woman's power in reason, love, strength, and courage when unconstrained by prejudice and fear. (135)

Another female guide, Silvesta, though not divine, also wields authority as she helps other bucolic characters navigate heterosexual love. She parallels Tatham's Claudia, the wise shepherdess who heals Florida and cures Cloe, providing security for the vulnerable shepherdesses. In particular, she facilitates Musella's daughterly disobedience even as she enables a heteronormative union. Silvesta is doubly threatening to patriarchalism, as her smart heroism displaces the conventional male hero and her elected celibacy disrupts the heteronormative imperative of reproduction. She compares heterosexual love to slavery and boasts of her new-found freedom: "I have won Chastity in place of Love./ Now Love's as far from me as never known;/ Then basely tied, now freely am mine own" (I.ii.118-20). According to Silvesta, loss of liberty is central to love; therefore, rejection of love is essential to the recuperation of freedom. Forester saves Silvesta from execution, but, unlike *Aminta's* Silvia, she will not be converted to love (V.vii.40-48). Yet, unrequited love provoked her new-found devotion to Diana, pointing to the intersection of female agency and vulnerability. The instances of agency in *Love's Victory* stem from anxieties: Musella's anxiety over obeying her father's will, Climeana's over unrequited love, Venus' over neglect, and

Silvesta's over rejection. Only Silvesta reacts to her anxiety by figuring herself as an 'outsider'; in this bucolic world, where love reigns victorious, she adopts and manufactures and affirms an identity separate from a patriarchal figure.

Cavendish and Brackley render vulnerability differently: their shepherdesses are victims of the social disorder that strips them of the patriarch rather than of arranged marriages or unrequited love. Love does, however, torture the shepherds. Of course, similar to *Love's Victory*, it is the supernatural conjuring that indirectly causes the shepherds to be "bearyed in loves cruell grave" (72). Thanks to such conjuring, the three shepherdesses in "A Pastorall" are sad and unreceptive to male attention. The shepherds (Freedom, in particular) and the stage directions refer to their sad affectation, and the shepherdesses define themselves as "sad" and "mallencholly" (57). The sad shepherdesses are stuck in winter, and Innocence and Vertue indicate the cause: "Inn: Our Summer is, if that could bee / Ver: Father, Brothers for to see" (71). Even when the shepherd Freedom attempts to pull the sad shepherdesses out of their grief, inviting them to dance, "absent friends" prevent this (75). Patriarchal absence interrupts game-play and heterosexual love, and it affects the shepherdesses' identities. First, Innocent struggles between hopeful and suicidal contemplations. The shepherd Pers., who loves her, observes Innocent's loneliness: "Your Fathers absence makes you alwayes owne/ Your selfe though handsom still to bee alone" (58). Conceding, Innocent limns herself as a lamb prepared for sacrifice, which parallels Philisses' suggestion that he and Musella "to our loves a sacrifice to give" in *Love's Victory* (V.i.108). Unlike Musella, however, Innocent loses her sense of self because she strives to maintain a paternal bond. At the Temple's table, she sings,

> His absence makes a Chaos sure of mee
> And when each one doth lookeing looke to see
> They spakeing say, That I'm not I
> Alas doe not name mee for I desire to dye[.] (69)

Appropriate for the pastoral mode, death is averted as Innocent, in her unstable state, is guided by Chastity, "her Sister in Greifs pay" (68). In contrast to Silvesta—who facilitates the union of Philisses and Musella—Chastity, the priestess in "A Pastorall", protects against female vulnerability by facilitating retreat and affirming the separation of potential lovers. Yet, her 'priestly' role is part of her own re-figuration in the face of social unrest. She

"owne[s] [her] selfe to bee a wife/ And yet [she] practice[s] not that life" (65); there is conflict between her normative role and her enactment of identity.[27] Rather than a wife, Chastity defines herself as the lovers' priest, a position she will occupy until "good newes [her] habits chang'd to bee" (66). Though Per. affirms her alternate position, referring to her as "your Hollynes" and asking her to get Innocent to love him (68), she refuses his request. In fact, she opposes disruptive male presence entirely, casting it out of "loves Church" (68). Both Wroth's Silvesta and the Cavendish sisters' Chastity reject heteronormativity, with Silvesta explicitly linking her celibacy to unrequited love. Chastity, on the contrary, merely defers heteronormative union. Carelessness observes that "fetch[ing] [their] freinds now out of France" would restore the sad shepherdesses' happiness and, thereby, enable marriages (75). This recognition underlines the shepherdesses' desire to sustain their connection to patriarchal authority, though they prefer to suspend subservience and delay the adoption of marital roles. Whereas Wroth's shepherdesses attempt to distance themselves from patriarchalism, those that the Cavendish sisters render accept their daughterly and sisterly roles, only resisting wifehood.

Deliberately or not, the shepherdesses that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters create lose their sense of self, reinforcing the pastoral's thematic emphasis on loss. In "A Pastorall", the shepherdesses lose freedom and their identities as daughters are disrupted. Wroth's Musella rejects her subservient role of daughter and wife, only to accept another wifely position, while Silvesta loses her stake in heterosexual love to gain freedom and agency. Of course, loss and separation are essential to the pastorals of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters as plot devices. In *Love's Victory*, the father's death, the divided loves, and the attempted suicides reflect the pastoral mode's attention to separation. Separation plays an even more central role in "A Pastorall", as the lack of father and brothers is what incites the shepherdesses' lamentations as re-figurations of identity. The sense of loss in these dramas extends to the settings, which, adhering to modal conventions, are green spaces. Again, though green space is a key feature of pastoral literature, that space is not uniformly safe. As the pastorals of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters demonstrate, the bucolic world exposes vulnerabilities and loss, as danger emanates from nature itself or from the beings

[27] Likewise, the co-author Brackley did not immediately fulfill her wifely duties, as I discuss below.

who occupy it. Yet, the green space also hosts the shepherdesses' negotiations of their connection to the patriarch.

There is discomfort in the setting of Wroth's play. It is hot: the shepherds and shepherdesses play games to avoid "the sun's fury" (I.iii.22) and the flocks "burn" (I.iii.108). Fire is a Petrarchan emblem of passion, which Wroth employs in establishing the setting of *Love's Victory*. Philisses, Simeana, and Lissius describe love as a fire (I.iii.3, III.ii.116, III.ii.230). Because the play is set in springtime (I.ii.81), the heat is more indicative of the characters' passionate love rather than Arcadia's usual climate. Nonetheless, the heat about which the shepherds and shepherdesses complain in *Love's Victory* contributes to their lethargy and confusion, and endangers their flocks. Rather than protective, then, the green space is potentially harmful and disruptive. The female protagonist, Musella, seems out of place in Arcadia, as she confusedly states, "For, oft'nest when I'm here,/ I am as if I were another where" (I.iii.9-10). Philisses shares Musella's feeling of separation from the natural environment. He opens the play's second scene with a half-hearted rejection of his environment:

> You pleasant flowery mead
> Which I did once well love,
> Your paths no more I'll tread,
> Your pleasures no more prove,
> Your beauty more admire,
> Your colours more adore,
> Nor grass with daintiest store
> Of sweets to breed desire. (1-8)

Tension between the sheep-herders and the spaces they inhabit reflects the complications imposed upon the characters by external forces. The setting supports Venus' and the lingering patriarchal interferences, as they further disturb the passion evoked by the green worlds' unbearable heat. Yet, even as Lissius describes his hostile surroundings for the audience, he suggests a prior connection to the mead that he now scorns. Later, he entrusts "blessed woods" with his secrets, indicating the consoling potential of space (IV.i.5). Of course, the woods cannot keep his secrets; Musella uses the cover of trees to hear his

lamentations. Therefore, the bucolic space offers the potential for security even as it disturbs its inhabitants.

While the setting supports the plot and attention to passion in *Love's Victory*, it also supports the transitory states of Musella and Silvesta with the collision of natural and architectural elements. The urban invades the rural, pointing back to the country estates, Penshurst Place and Wilton House, which served as inspirational sites for Wroth's pastoral literature. Both estates are appropriate theatrical venues for *Love's Victory* because they offer bucolic backdrops. The grotto at Wilton, in particular, would have nicely supported a production. Penshurst and Wilton boasted well-planned gardens, wherein nature was tamed. The world of *Love's Victory* replicates this intersection of nature and architecture, with the pastoral characters communing in treed areas and also venturing to the Temple of Love. The competing settings reflect the meeting of natural and supernatural characters; the temple acts as an intermediary space where Venus and Cupid interact with humans. The tamed nature that surrounded Penshurst and Wilton was similarly a space of transition between the structured house and the land beyond the estates' boundaries. Lauded by Ben Jonson and often cited as the site where Philip Sidney wrote *Arcadia*, Penshurst housed Wroth in her childhood. The setting she creates is an affected, even threatening "Arcadia" (III.ii.88). Though Wroth ventured beyond Penshurst's boundaries and frequented many estates before composing *Love's Victory*, the sense of 'in-betweenness' that she establishes in the play suggests an attempt to retain something that has been lost—an idyllic Arcadian world—and supports Musella's and Silvesta's shifting relationship to patriarchalism.

Country life is conciliatory ("A Pastorall" 65). As opposed to the threatening hot environment of *Love's Victory*, the green world of "A Pastorall" offers the bucolic characters sanctuary from disorder. The Cavendishes do not render nature as distant. Rather, green space, as well as architectural features, supports and protects the sad shepherdesses. The second antemasque begins to establish the pastoral setting of the play. Goodman Hay indicates the presence of satyrs and Gossop Pratt demonstrates concern for her sheep (53). Further, the song of Goodman Rye, Goodman Hay, Gossop Pratt and Naunt Henn delineates their losses—a cow, a sow, corn, sheep, eggs, and pigs—thereby limning a rural environment for the drama (56). The prologue that follows the antemasques fleshes out the setting, as Chastity describes a "fyne coule shady walke / Soe fit to answeare Lovers in their talke" and

a “Groto” that functions as a haven for the shepherdesses (57). Chastity’s prologue points to the overriding melancholic tone of the drama, as well as to the important role that space plays in coping with sadness in the drama. More in line with Shakespeare’s use of the pastoral, the Cavendishes stress the green space as a site of retreat. Solace is found in nature walks, in tending sheep, and in female camaraderie. Further, religious spaces provide comfort and facilitate Chastity’s reconfiguration of identity into a priestess. She invites the sheep-herders to pay duty to God, seemingly in a temple. The next stage direction indicates that a table is employed in the ensuing scene (69). Analogous to *Love’s Victory*, the temple appears amidst the greenery.

For the Cavendish sisters, the real-life pastoral backdrop for their pastoral drama is perhaps less overt than that of *Love’s Victory*—Bolsover Castle and Welbeck Abbey were not famously rendered as Arcadias. Nonetheless, the Cavendish sisters lived in these two remarkable country estates in their youth, both of which boasted wild landscapes that facilitated their father’s hunting and horsemanship. As I discuss below, these estates were seized by Parliamentarian forces during the Civil War. The sisters would have been residing at the besieged Welbeck Abbey while they composed “A Pastorall”, and through their drama they return to pre-war spaces. Already confined by the Parliamentarian forces, imagining a pastoral world, uncomplicated and unmarked by political conflict would have been practicable for the young women. Even the bucolic world in which they situate “A Pastorall”, however, is not immune to early Stuart England’s tumult, represented by the witches’ conjuring. The witches—like the Civil War—are a divisive force. Still, Chastity employs space to assuage female vulnerability. In fact, the invasion of architecture in “A Pastorall” provides security for the shepherdesses, as the female priest bars “Ill nature” from the temple (68). Analogous to *Love’s Victory*, the intersection of natural and architectural elements reinforces the liminal state of the shepherdesses.

The losses which drive the plots of *Love’s Victory* and “A Pastorall” also instigate the losses of identity. While, conventionally, green space represents the possibility of escape from courtly life, Musella, Silvesta, and the sad shepherdesses retreat towards architectural spaces: the Temple of Love and Chastity’s make-shift temple. These female characters consider their connections to the patriarch as they adopt new positions. Both household pastorals feature worlds where political or personal perils are disruptive and incite nostalgia.

More fully examining Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' experiences of patriarchal authority illuminates the significance of their employment of the pastoral dramatic mode. If Wroth and the Cavendish sisters deploy the pastoral mode to escape, what are they escaping? To frame this differently, what is the longing that prompts the composition of their dramas? Their female characters exercise authority, re-figure themselves, and express anxiety through negotiation of heterosexual and patriarchal bonds. I contend that, for the playwrights, their plays are not about escaping patriarchalism, but about confronting its effect on identity, and that Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley were attracted to the pastoral mode because—aside from simple rural life, female roles, and potential to refigure female vulnerability—it offers a platform to explore alternate selves that emerge in the absence of the father.

IV. Instability and "Chaos" in Patriarchal Absence

Fatherly presence was scarce for both Wroth and the Cavendish sisters at various points in their young lives. Thanks to his governing role, Wroth's father was out of England for much of her childhood. The Cavendish sisters' father was forced into exile after supporting the Royalist cause. The instability experienced by Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, which culminated with their abandonment by one (or more) patriarchal figure(s), permeates the lamentations and resolutions of their shepherds and shepherdesses. How, though, does this instability influence the women's negotiation of identity and authorial choices? Several theories suggest that a female child's self-perception and personality were adversely impacted by the absence of the father. In particular, James M. Herzog, employing a psychoanalytic lens, illustrates the father's role in moderating the child's behavior and considers "father hunger" as "an affective state of longing" experienced by the child when a father is felt to be absent (51). In the remainder of this chapter, I trace how the absent patriarchs—Leicester and Newcastle—influence *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall" through their absences and lingering presences.

At the head of the Sidney and Cavendish families were fathers, Leicester and Newcastle, respectively. Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester, and his wife, Barbara Gamage, had four sons and seven daughters, the eldest being Mary (Sidney) Wroth. William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, produced two sons and three daughters with his first wife, Elizabeth Bassett, before she passed away. Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth (Cavendish)

Brackley were their two oldest daughters. The number of children—eleven total for the Sidneys—is not remarkable for the milieu. Neither is the fact that Leicester and Newcastle outlived many of their children. What is remarkable, however, is that both patriarchs raised daughters who became dramatic writers. That Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley turned to the *pastoral dramatic mode*, specifically, has much to do with parental influence. Leicester and Newcastle affected their daughters as literary models, but also through their prolonged absences. The writing that Leicester and Newcastle produced comes into literary purview, as do their personal and political struggles, because—read alongside the lives and works of their daughters—they enable us to comprehend why these women chose the subjects, tropes, modes, and genres they did, and, perhaps, why the plays that they wrote were preserved, if only to remain in manuscript until the twentieth century. I will trace evidence of Leicester's and Newcastle's impact on the pastoral plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, respectively, in order to interrogate how patriarchal absenteeism factors into the women's creation and embodiment of pastoral roles as much as 'proper' gender roles.

'Father' and 'daughter' are roles that have been analyzed by performance theorists, psychoanalysts, and feminists, to name a few. Theories of how the father precisely affects the daughter differ in these critical sects, but the very breadth of literature on the father-daughter relationship across the disciplines speaks to the significance of the relationship, across time and space. In the early modern period, daughters were expected to behave according to codes that defined proper femininity. Silence, chastity, and obedience were the primary feminine tenets; a woman's adherence to or deviance from these tenets reflected upon her household and its patriarch. Of the three tenets, obedience related most to the woman's position as daughter *and*, later, wife. A daughter's obedience was doubly necessary, as children were to respect and obey their parents and women were to respect patriarchal authority, including that of their fathers (Amussen 40). Good order within the family translated into wider socio-political order; therefore, a daughter's deviance had implications beyond the immediate household. Similarly, with a young woman's obedience ideally transferring from father to husband, a good wife reflected positively on her husband and spoke to the successful maintenance of patriarchal order in the milieu. Of course, there were certainly divergences between early modern tenets and lived experiences (Eales 15). A close examination of Wroth, Brackley, and Cavendish reveals their deviance from gender

prescriptions. Wroth compromised her chastity and, thereby, her own, her family's, and her husband's reputation. Even if it was imposed upon them, the Cavendish sisters accepted agency during the war. None of these women were silent. Therefore, to limn all early modern daughters and wives as passive and silently obedient discounts the possibility of strong-willed, even defiant women, as well as the very real possibility of mutually-influential relationships between men and women, and fathers and daughters. It is this sort of reciprocal bond that the Cavendish sisters embraced and that Wroth both imagined and abandoned as all three women faced separation from their fathers. Separation, loss, and instability are as central to the playwrights' lives as they are to the pastoral mode.

V. Mary's Shifting Patriarch: Leicester, Wroth, Pembroke

Mary Wroth's father, Leicester, composed poetry and eclogues, as well as a volume of letters during his absences from England. The letters are a vital source of information for Wroth scholars, and Margaret Hannay draws from the correspondence between Leicester and his wife, Barbara Gamage, to construct the early life of their eldest daughter, "Little Mall" or Mary. In 1588, with "Little Mall" only an infant, Leicester was appointed the governor of Flushing. Consequently, over the next fifteen years, he was forced to spend much of his time in the southwestern Netherlands and correspond, rather than reside, with his family. Though they visited Flushing, Barbara and her children primarily remained in England. This was partly due to Barbara's frequent pregnancies; in spite of the long distance marriage between the Leicester couple, they had produced six children by 1596, when the younger Marcus Gheeraerts painted the Sidneys *sans père*. The letters that Robert wrote to Barbara demonstrate a duality of concern: personal and political. And, of course, the personal becomes political and vice versa. Many of the extant letters relay his often frustrated attempts to gain Elizabeth I's favor, and the status, stability, and financial security that might accompany that favor (Hannay 41-3). As governor, he petitioned for resources for Flushing and entreated the English court to provide him with greater personal compensation and dispensation to return to England. Even while he sometimes expressed dissatisfaction in his position and the strain that it placed on his family, Leicester had confirmed his loyalty and sense of duty to the queen—which he had also showed in acting as an English diplomat in 1588 and 1593—by accepting the Flushing appointment. It was not until 1618, under the

rule of James I, that he gained the Leicester title, and his letters certainly convey desire for greater political prestige during Elizabeth I's reign. However, it is ultimately his concern for his family which precipitates his *oeuvre* of letters.

Separated from his family for long stretches of time, Leicester queried about and advised on the management of the estates, Barbara's and the children's health, and the children's education in his letters. A particular affection for Mary appears in his letters, as he inquires specifically about her and affectionately instructs his wife to "make much of little Mall" (HMC, De L'Isle, II, 100). Leicester may have loved "Little Mall" dearly, but she felt abandoned and was devastated when her father suggested that she remain in England rather than join him in 1597 (HMC, De L'Isle, II, 261). Perhaps as a compensatory measure, Leicester sent "Little Mall" books to study (HMC, De L'Isle, II, 32). Yet, because her progress and level of accomplishment reflected his own status, it is difficult to discern whether his instructions for her education and gifts of books were motivated by fatherly devotion or political self-interest.

Marriage arrangements, which would enter the Leicesters' consideration by the end of the sixteenth century, and a daughter's marriageability—linked to her upbringing—influenced the security of the family. Children's marriages were important to the household because they could facilitate political allegiances, financial stability, or social status. Again, the personal is political, and Leicester and his wife would have had to arrange a match for their eldest daughter that would bolster or solidify their status in some manner. Nonetheless, though marital unions had external concerns and affected the couple's family, claims that seventeenth-century marriage was a "virtual prison" and women were merely "pawns in the marriage game" (Liddy 76, 72) discount the agency that women exercised. Women often contributed to marriage arrangements (Ezell *Patriarch's Wife* 18-20), and Jennifer Eales suggests that there is evidence of love in marriage and that forced marriage was not widely accepted nor performed in the early seventeenth century (64-66). In addition to wealth and status, the compatibility of potential spouses was taken into consideration in early modern marriage negotiations (Ezell *Patriarch's Wife* 28). Robert Wroth—to whom "Little Mall" was betrothed—was not the only candidate that the Leicesters considered (Hannay 90), but what he lacked in 'fashion' he made up in property and family prominence, and the match was made. Despite his separation from his daughter, Leicester brokered the marriage of the

teenaged Mary to Robert, who was eleven years her senior, and facilitated a £200 wedding present from his Flushing captains (HMC, De L'Isle, III, 140). Leicester demonstrates a continued interest in his eldest daughter's affairs following the union between Mary and Robert in 1604, indicating the potential effects of a child's behavior on the parent.

Because marriages could affect a family's position, "[p]arents were frequently close observers of their children's marriages and pursued a variety of courses of action to demonstrate their disapproval if marital behaviour did not meet their expectations" (Foyster 323). Elizabeth Foyster argues that parental influence extended into their children's adulthood and that parent and child often maintained a close relationship, regardless of the distances that marriage may create; these relationships were sustained, in part, through correspondence (315-6). In her article, she particularly underscores the potential misbehaviour of one's son- or daughter-in-law (319). Yet, a parent's own child could also deviate from the tenets of marriage, as was Leicester's experience. In one of the better known letters to his wife, he conveys dismay following an awkward encounter with his son-in-law, Robert Wroth:

> Heer I found my son Wroth, come up as hee tels me to despatch some business, and wil be againe at Penshurst on Fryday. I finde by him that there was some what that doth discontent him: but the particulars I could not get out of him, onely that hee protests that hee cannot take any exceptions to his wife, nor her cariage towards him. It were very soon for any unkindness to begin; and therefore whatsoever the matters bee, I pray you let all things be carried in the best maner til we all doe meet. For mine enemies would be very glad for such an occasion to make themselves merry at mee. (HMC, De L'Isle, III, 140)

Though scholars, including Hannay and Gary Waller, have speculated that infidelity is what troubled Robert Wroth, the precise nature of his "discontent" is never definitively elucidated. Ben Jonson, who honored both Mary and Robert Wroth in his poetry, implies disjuncture between the couple. Mary was, according to Jonson, "unworthily married on a jealous husband" ("Ben Jonson's Conversations" 1:142). Further, as Gary Waller suggests, Jonson's poem on Robert acknowledges "exactly the characteristics [Mary] scorns" (116). Earlier scholarship on Wroth tends to emphasize biographical allusions in her work in order to limn their relationship as strained, at best (Ferguson "Sidney, Cary, Wroth", Wynne-Davies "As I,

for one"). Wroth's 'obsession' with arranged marriages in her work, it has often been argued, points to her own marriage to Robert Wroth. But was the union between Mary and Robert Wroth in fact an unhappy one? The veracity of rumors and suspicions of marital discord have been discounted by Hannay, who argues that there is no substantive evidence that Wroth's marriage was a regrettable one, stressing that reading "a complete correspondence between fact and fiction" is problematic (101). Despite indications of marital discord, no records suggest that Wroth blatantly disobeyed her husband. In fact, Robert Wroth renders her as a dutiful wife in his will: "And I harelie desire my sayed deere and loving wife that she will accept hereof as a testimony of my entire love and affection towards her, albeyet her sincere love, loyaltie, virtuous conversation, and behavioure towards me, have deserved a farre better recompense..." (reprinted in W.C. Waller 23-25). Further, she had attempted to fulfill her wifely duty by giving her husband an heir (*Letters of John Chamberlain* 512.). However she demonstrated her faithfulness to her husband, though, she undermined her husband's authority and connections by retaining the Sidney family coat of arms and privileging her Sidneian roots over her (disrupted) position as Wroth's wife on the title page of *Urania*. Moreover, she may have in fact been unfaithful to her husband, having an affair with a Sidneian cousin, Pembroke.

For years, Wroth's fiction, including *Love's Victory*, has been interpreted as thinly-veiled autobiography that reveals her disdain for the 'rustic' Robert Wroth and love for her charming but fickle cousin, Pembroke. Yet, there is no evidence that Mary Wroth cheated on her husband, and many questions about the relationship between the cousins remain. Had "Little Mall" fallen in love with her cousin Pembroke prior to her engagement to Wroth? Did she and Pembroke have a *de praesenti* marriage that, at least in her mind, superseded that engagement? Hannay suspects so (107-8). However, determining whether an understanding between Wroth and her cousin existed, let alone predated her marriage, is premature given the fragmented supporting evidence and the speculative nature of Hannay's admittedly persuasive argument. I am skeptical of the existence of a *de praesenti* marriage between Wroth and Pembroke because there is scant evidence to suggest that their love was reciprocal until the 1620s. Further, Pembroke's wife, Mary Talbot, outlived him, and they remained married for the rest of his life despite his clear infidelity. While Wroth and Pembroke conceived twins together—both children would be the only offspring of either partner that

would survive past infancy—they did so well after her husband and legitimate child had died.

Regardless of whether or not an affair between Mary Wroth and Pembroke provoked Robert Wroth's displeasure, Leicester demonstrates his concern that his daughter's potential wifely misbehaviour will trouble his own status, rendering him vulnerable to his "enemies." Mary doubly disrespects patriarchal authority if she does not 'properly' enact her role as wife. Upon marriage, a woman's obedience transferred from father to husband: "Ideally, a woman was to her husband what she had been to her father or master, except that she possessed even fewer adult rights than she had before her marriage" (Mendelson and Crawford 124-5). Whether this occurred in Wroth's case, or whether such obedience to the patriarch was observed in the first place, is difficult to ascertain. As noted above, female obedience to the patriarch—which was prescribed in the milieu—would certainly not have been uniform, and, given Wroth's predilection for independent thought and creativity, it is not unthinkable that she would have disobeyed her predominantly-absent father and reputedly ill-matched husband. Nonetheless, despite compromising her father's patriarchal authority by inadequately fulfilling her wifely role, Wroth remained Leicester's "most obedient Daughter till death" (MS Crawford #177). Even in adulthood, she relied on him for guidance.

Like Leicester, Wroth's extant writing includes a handful of letters in addition to her fiction. The most recently uncovered of her letters, known as the Crawford letter, reveals the trust that Wroth placed in her father.[28] Written March 19, 1613, this letter predates her conception of a legitimate male heir by only a few months. The Crawford letter was written in anticipation of financial instability, as, in it, she seeks jointure in order to secure her interest in her husband's property. Having not attained jointure at marriage, and having not yet produced a male heir on whose behalf she could potentially manage the estates, Wroth was vulnerable. This letter recognizes that vulnerability, but also indicates Wroth's assertiveness and foresight. In February of 1614, she gave birth to her husband's son, James. After trying to conceive for years, this should have been a relief to the Wroths. However, Robert Wroth passed away only a month after James was born, and left his wife

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[28] Margaret J. Arnold makes the letter accessible, publishing a holograph of the letter, as well as a transcription, in "An Unpublished Letter of Mary Wroth" (*English Literary Renaissance* 35.3 (2005):454-458).

and son in a difficult financial position. Widowed, Mary Wroth had a "£1,200 joynter, and a younge sonne not a moneth old: and his estate charged with £23,000 debt" (McClure 519). She never remarried, and the debt and the wardship of her young son caused some stress, which she conveyed to her father. Wroth's brother-in-law had financial motivations which clearly skewed his judgment—and incited her distrust of him—when it came to the well-being of the young James. Although her father had been absent for much of her own childhood, Wroth beseeched Leicester to act as her son's surrogate father following her husband's death, saying, "for itt is now your part to bee his father being left booth ways in blood" (*Poems of Wroth* 234). James, Wroth hoped, would grow "to deserve [Leicester's] love to him" (Ibid). Although no evidence indicates that Leicester in fact adopted a fatherly role in his grandson's life, Wroth's elicitation of his advice on both finances and childrearing demonstrates an attempt to maintain a father-daughter bond. On the other hand, perhaps Wroth was merely seeking financial support from a persistently distant father. He did not help assuage her debts, even after she lost her son. James died on July 5, 1616, at the age of two. Like Leicester, Wroth, and Pembroke, he too left Mary. Without husband or son for security in the family estate, Wroth was left to protect herself from debt collectors, and her in-laws: "Lady Wroth's sonne and Heir dyed on Satterday last, by which meanes there is an uncle come to a great estate" (HMC, 7th Report, 529b.). Leicester's eldest daughter managed her widowhood and inherited debt as best she could, but it was clearly a struggle, since she sought several warrants for protection against debtors from 1623-1628. Leicester, Pembroke, and other family associations may have aided her from time to time, but they had other political and financial concerns. Leicester's position at court became unstable with the demise of Queen Anna—he had been appointed her consort at the Stuart accession—in 1619. Again, despite fathering Wroth's children, Pembroke upheld his union with Mary Talbot, even appointing her executor of his estate. Therefore, neither man could comfortably offer Wroth security in her widowhood.

For a woman with such great capacity for writing, and who suffered loss and abandonment from childhood to adulthood, it is perhaps surprising that Mary Wroth did not produce faithful meditations or a mother's legacy. One could speculate that her religious fortitude was not what her aunt's was, and, therefore, she turned to mythological and romantic figures for guidance. Yet, it is possible that she did write pensive, religious

reflections that centered on childbirth, the deaths of her husband and child, or her struggles with a fickle lover. Perhaps such writings were lost, destroyed, or forgotten, now awaiting an eager researcher in the archives or in a dusty closet. More likely, though, Wroth channelled her frustrations, fears, and sadness into fiction rather than a non-fictional medium because it enabled her to distance herself from those emotions even while expounding them. Specifically, the pastoral dramatic mode enabled Wroth to redefine herself—newly widowed—even as it served her sentimentalism for the absent patriarch and for the never-realized happy ending.

Using a setting and characters that nod to her models, Wroth redirects the masculine-driven pastoral tropes: loss, vulnerability, and competition are mediated by female agency. Abandoned at various times by father, husband, and cousin-lover, Wroth appropriated the pastoral mode to negotiate a position not inflected by the patriarch. Treading carefully, I do not intend to read *Love's Victory* as a simple allegory. Neither do I discount the tensions between her reality and her fiction. What I consider, rather, is why—beyond literary modeling and dramatic vogue—Wroth elected to set her only extant play in a bucolic world, populated with shepherds and shepherdesses. As I commented above, Wroth's father was in Flushing, separate from her, for much of her childhood. Through her pastoral play, she renders a mother-daughter relationship that is burdened by the absent patriarch. Still, patriarchal absences—though potentially disruptive—facilitate Musella and Philisses' union. Musella's father is dead at the outset of the play and the mother's misguided adherence to her dead husband's will creates a rift between mother and daughter, leading Musella to indirectly defy patriarchal authority through suicide. Analogously, Wroth maintained a distant relationship with her father, and, though she fulfilled the contract with Robert Wroth, she implicitly affronted her father by not acquiescing to her husband's will. The father's absence enables disobedience. For both Musella and Wroth, however, potential consequences for subversive behavior linger. The presence of the husband-patriarch, in particular, illuminates female misbehaviour. Perhaps echoing Wroth's own desires, Musella describes her betrothed, Rustic, as "This welcome man, whose absence were more sweet" (IV.i.124). Conversely, she calls for Philisses' presence: "And hither soon return / That sun to me, whose absence make me / burn" (II.i.249-51). The absence of the 'sun,' Philisses, and the presence of Rustic hamper the fulfillment of Musella's desire and the female agency that

emerges suggests distrust of patriarchal authority. While she challenges that authority, Musella is content to adopt the sort of conventional, wifely role that Wroth also embodied for a decade.

Refracted into the female protagonist, Musella, and the chaste shepherdess, Silvesta, Wroth works to understand potential responses to patriarchal authority and the loss of the patriarch. As noted above, these two female characters gain agency, enacting agency over their fate and their bodies. Musella enters into a normative heterosexual relationship with Philisses. Distancing herself from parental authority, though, Musella refigures her position; she shifts from daughter to wife. Silvesta rejects heteronormative love and her change in position—from lovelorn maid to empowered follower of Diana—is more marked and is reflected in "her new attire" (II.i.4). These shepherdesses' attempts to reframe their positions in the bucolic world speak to Wroth's own forced renegotiation of identity. In the years leading up to the composition of *Love's Victory*, Wroth lost her husband and son, thereby also losing her identifications of wife and mother, as well as her financial stability. Transitioning from wifehood and motherhood to widowhood, she considers the roles that women occupy under patriarchalism and how alternate identities—distanced from male figures—might operate. The pastoral offers her the rhetorical space to examine her losses, her longing, and potential figurations of the self.

VI. The "meatamorphis[is]" of Newcastle's Daughters

Like Wroth, the Cavendish sisters were born into privilege, only to be fraught with socio-economic instability. They too turned to the pastoral dramatic mode to re-negotiate their identity in the face of personal turbulence. First and foremost, Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley were their father's daughters at the time that they composed "A Pastorall". Though no full account of the Cavendish sisters' exists, evidence suggests that they settled into married life only after attempting to protect the Newcastle family status and estates, which the Civil War placed in jeopardy. Insecurity permeated their early adulthood, but the exceptional way in which the two sisters respond to war, writing a pastoral drama among other pieces, indicates the significance of literature and theatre in their upbringing.

Brackley and Cavendish were the eldest daughters of Newcastle and his first wife, Elizabeth Bassett. Like her daughters, Bassett was not consistently secure in social, political

and financial status. The early death of her father, William Bassett of Bloor, complicated her position. However, as the sole heiress of the estate, her financial status enabled advantageous matches; she was married to Henry Howard, the son of the Earl of Suffolk, before wedding Newcastle—whose prestigious title had not yet been assigned—in October 1618. The marriage arrangements reassured her of social security, as she fulfilled the normative wifely role. Further, Newcastle's growing prestige, bolstered by his inheritance of the Cavendish estates of Bolsover and Welbeck, viscount title, and literary products, affirmed the status of both husband and wife. In parallel to the Leicesters, Newcastle continued to advance his career while his wife bore children, five of whom survived past infancy (Jane, Charles, Elizabeth, Henry, and Frances). All of the children were educated and Newcastle's influence on his daughters, in particular, resounds in the collection of writing that Cavendish and Brackley produced.

Although "patriarchalism includes as part of its mechanism a devaluation of women's abilities and achievements in deference to those of their fathers or husbands" (Ezell 4), Newcastle "[had] been a great lover and admirer of the female sex" (Margaret Cavendish 206) and had promoted his daughters' education. Parents would determine level of education and 'learned ladies', such as the Cavendish sisters, would usually receive private education (Ezell 12). Newcastle promoted his daughters' education, boasting that his daughter Jane "hath the pen of a most ready writer" and advising that Elizabeth "must write too" (qtd. in Turberville. *History of Welbeck Abbey and its Owners* I:45-46). *Poems, A Pastorall, and a Play* demonstrate the capable authorial voices that Newcastle's two eldest daughters developed. Perhaps more remarkable is their creation of two original dramatic pieces. Dale B.J. Randall deems the Cavendish family worthy of a chapter in *Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642-1660* because of the "phenomenon" of "no fewer than three women dramatists in the family," which is linked to Newcastle's patronage of dramatists and his own engagement with dramatic modes (313). He secured prominent social status for his family through his predilection for literature and theatre, as well as his horsemanship, but insecurity in that status stemmed from his political loyalties.

Whether trying to gain the governorship of Hull or defending Tadcaster and Pomfret, he worked his familial and political allegiances to support Charles I and the Royalist cause. Therefore, in the late 1630s and early 1640s, Newcastle was regularly absent from the family

estates. His wife died in 1643 and, though Newcastle demonstrated some hesitancy to fight around this time, even Bassett's death did not halt his military career (Perry 30-2). He was in battle only two months after becoming a widower. In July 1644, Newcastle led Royalist troops to an embarrassing defeat at Marston Moor and he was subsequently exiled. Charles and Henry followed their father to the Continent, leaving Jane, Elizabeth, and Frances without parents or brothers on whom they could rely at a peak of political instability. The two eldest daughters reacted by writing and compiling *Poems, A Pastorall, and a Play*, and while not all of the poems attend to war-time experiences, the attention that the sisters pay to absences incited by disorder (in "A Pastorall") or war (in *The Concealed Fancies*) suggests that they compiled their writing around 1644-5, with *The Concealed Fancies* being a late addition. The mode-appropriate emphasis on separation evident in "A Pastorall" is indicative of the sense of loss inherent in war. Cavendish and Brackley lost their brothers, though the siblings were reunited and corresponded into adulthood. Further, they lost their father. Though the young women would not have known it at the time they wrote their dramas, the relationship to the patriarch would not be restored, even when he came back to England at the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy. Newcastle's new wife, Margaret Lucas, allegedly strained father-child bonds during his long exile. In addition, Cavendish's and Brackley's connection to the patriarch—that they so obviously try to maintain—had transferred from father to husband by the time that Newcastle finally returned: "The household, as well as William's own children, felt threatened by his second marriage" (Worsley 236). When composing "A Pastorall", though, the sisters exist in a liminal state, not unlike their sad shepherdesses, and they fear the implications of the absent patriarch. Overall, the young women—not surprisingly—lost security and stability during the war. However, at the same time, war offered the Cavendish sisters an opportunity to refigure themselves.

The Civil War created possibilities for female authority. Most pertinently, scholars emphasize how "wives' work in estate management was intensified" (Mendelson and Crawford 310). With the exile of their husbands, many Royalist women performed the traditionally-patriarchal tasks of "running large estates single-handedly and conducting business affairs" and petitioning the government (Ezell 143). Since her mother was deceased, Cavendish accepted the managerial role over the family estates. Lord Fairfax, a

Parliamentarian, provided Newcastle's daughters with some modicum of protection (Findlay "Sisterly" 195). Nonetheless, it was Cavendish who defended her father's property, hiding the family plate at Welbeck before she and sister Frances fled to Bolsover in July 1645 and "securing some of the tapestries and Van Dycks after the despoiling of Welbeck and Bolsover" (Humphreys). Furthermore, she successfully facilitated the return of her brothers to England, though her petitions for the pardon of her father proved futile (Humphreys). Cavendish, then, shifted from her 'daughterly' role of subservience and deference to the patriarch to enact the part of the patriarch and of the wartime wife, as she worked to maintain the family property. However, this shift did not disrupt her obedience and loyalty to Newcastle, and she—much like the shepherdesses of "A Pastorall"—strived to maintain her bond with the absent patriarch.

Extant writing limns the bond between the Newcastle and his two eldest daughters as affectionate and motivational, even during his war-time absence. Bookending their pastoral drama, the Cavendish sisters address their father, expressing their desire to please him. Both of the introductory verses—they write separately here as they do in the body of "A Pastorall"—laud Newcastle's literary discrimination, and invite his judgement of their work. Likewise, the verses that follow the pastoral indicate both the sisters' hope that their dramatic text delighted their father; however, the effects of his absence permeate the concluding verses as they had "A Pastorall" itself. Cavendish's initials indicate that she composed the verse that immediately follows the drama. She laments, "My lord it is your absence makes each soe/ For want of you what I'm reduc'd to bee/ Captive of Sheppardesses life" (Beinecke 76), linking herself to the pastoral characters that she and her sister depict. Newcastle's exile "reduc[es]" Cavendish, and, indeed, his political and personal losses affect the financial and social status of his daughter. Despite the insecurity to which she points in her short poem, Cavendish indicates that she channels her "strife" into authorship: "Gives every leave to make not strife/ Soe what becomes me better then/ But to bee your daughter in your Penn" (Beinecke 76). In his absence, Newcastle clearly inspires and influences his daughter and her literary endeavors; she works to continue his legacy as a writer and seeks validation from him. In the final lines of this particular poem, Cavendish indicates that she is able to accept the lowering and instability of her position if her father is "now pleased" by the pastoral drama that she composed with her sister (Beinecke 76). Echoing her elder sister, Brackley

reconfigures her situation into an opportunity to compose verse and drama. Further, she establishes a connection between her father's compositions and her own writing:

My lord your absence makes I cannot owne
My selfe to thinke I am alone
Yet sheppardesses can see to read
And soe upon your stock of wit I feede
Soe begs your blessing to like this
Then am I crown'd with hight of blis. (Beinecke 76)

Like Cavendish, Brackley begins by acknowledging Newcastle's "absence" and hints at a loss of self. There is distrust of her surroundings, and this distrust stems from the lack of the patriarch. She also refers to the "sheppardesses" of "A Pastorall" before underlining her own writing capabilities, which she draws from her father. She concludes the poem with an elicitation for her father's approval of her work.

At the time that the two Cavendish sisters composed "A Pastorall", Brackley was already married. This partly forms the foundation for Nathan Comfort Starr's contention that the "Lord" to whom *The Concealed Fancies* is dedicated was not Newcastle, but, rather, Lord Brackley. Most scholars who have subsequently attended to the play have discounted this, rightly acknowledging Newcastle as the dedicatee of *The Concealed Fancies*, and the collection of which it is a part. As indicated above, "A Pastorall" and the poems that bookend it dwell on the fatherly figure and his absence, and the play that is added to the Bodleian manuscript analogously tends to the absent patriarch. The "Lord" to whom the sisters address their text is the one who has been newly exiled, their father. In the collection of writings, In *Poems, A Pastorall, and a Play*, Brackley primarily maintains focus on Newcastle; her duty and obedience would transfer to her husband when she moved to his Ashridge seat in 1645 and began fulfilling her normative wifely position.

It was three years before Newcastle's exile, on July 22, 1641 at St. James's in Clerkenwell, that his daughter Elizabeth married John Egerton, Lord Brackley. According to Margaret (Lucas) Cavendish—who wed Newcastle in 1645—the fifteen-year-old Elizabeth remained with the Cavendish family because "she was too young to be bedded" (124). Margaret's implication that Elizabeth and John Egerton's union was not immediately consummated seems to be substantiated by the fact that their first child was born in

November 1646. Elizabeth and John, Lady and Lord Brackley, had ten children from 1646-1663. She certainly fulfilled her wifely role, providing her husband with a male heir and fostering a reputation of chastity and piety. She became well-respected in her community. In her "Loose Papers", which "open a highly unusual window on the thinking of a seventeenth-century woman" (Travitsky "Egerton"), Brackley adopts a tone that markedly diverges from her earlier work. Maturity and a somber mood permeate her papers. Some of the meditations reflect upon the illnesses and deaths of her children. It was in the delivery of her final child, continuing to perform wifehood and motherhood, that she died. Having written poems and plays with her sister in her youth, Brackley turns to religious and domestic subjects in adulthood. In the Cavendish sisters' collection, naiveté colors the depictions of captivity and Royalist losses. The idealism and nostalgia of the young women's collected works fracture in Brackley's later work. Perhaps she lost hope that the Royalists would persevere or that her father's status and wealth would be restored. If Newcastle's exile affected Elizabeth Brackley's security in 1644, so did John Brackley's brief imprisonment in 1651. The Restoration saw both Elizabeth Brackley's father and husband regain prominent positions, though Newcastle's finances were not fully restored and his reputation floundered thanks to the eccentricities of his second wife. However, Brackley scarcely had the opportunity to enjoy the return of the patriarch, as her bond with her father was strained and she died three years after the Restoration.

A patriarchal validation of the sisters' collection concludes the Beinecke manuscript. Presumably written by Newcastle himself, "Upon the right honourable the Lady Jane Cavendish her booke of verses" praises his eldest daughter, but ignores Brackley. Implicitly, Brackley's writing also receives commendation. However, that Newcastle addresses Cavendish reinforces the suspicion that she compiled the pieces, and then sent them to her father in his exile. Further, he may focus on Cavendish primarily because she, his eldest daughter, occupied the war-time wife's role by managing his estates. Unlike Brackley, her filial bond had not been disrupted by marriage by the time that she composed the poems and dramas contained in the collection. Rubik argues that Cavendish and Brackley stopped writing dramas after marriage because they were deprived of encouragement (15). While I do not discount this, I contend that their later generic choices connect more with their new identities, as wives and mothers rather than daughters.

As with Wroth, the pastoral mode provided a forum for the Cavendish sisters to explore the insecurity of their status. Coping with loss and separation, they limn the father-daughter bond as pivotal in their pastoral drama and the verses that bookend it. Like their shepherdesses, they hesitate to enter heterosexual relationships because they work to sustain the paternal bond. The Cavendish sisters were captives of Parliamentarian forces at Welbeck and "Captive of Shepherdesses life" (76), which, in "A Pastorall," is defined by melancholy and longing for the absent patriarch. They cast themselves as lonely shepherdesses whose identities are under construction. Alison Findlay conjectures that the pastoral's shepherdesses "reorient themselves as pastoral nuns rather than lovers, and a powerful celebration of primary sororal bonds can be felt through the scenes" ("Sisterly" 198), thereby emphasizing the characters' occupation of sisterly roles. More strong, however, is their assertion of their daughterly positions. Rather than reject patriarchal authority and embrace the agency that the social disorder affords them, they accept deferred heteronormative roles. Brackley and Cavendish also turn to gender-appropriate roles in their father's prolonged exile, with Cavendish adopting 'wifely' authority and Brackley transitioning into her subservient wifely role.

VII. Conclusion: Productive Losses

If women were expected to be obedient to the patriarch, then the patriarch was expected to be a guide and source of security for their dependents. Obedience exchanged for protection (Amussen 3). Leicester and Newcastle each sought to maintain, and even improve, their families' social, economic, and political standing. Both patriarchs experienced success in these departments, but it was by no means linear nor secure for either of them. Instability defined Leicester's and Newcastle's careers, and this instability permeated their daughter's personal lives and literary productions. Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley turn to pastoral drama for multiple reasons, but it is the mode's attention to female vulnerability and loss that most palpably reflect the lack of security that they experienced. Patriarchal absence permeates both *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall". Cavendish and Brackley employ the pastoral mode to sustain their ties with their exiled father. They refigured their daughterly obedience by, for Cavendish in particular, accepting agency over the family estates. In their fiction and their lives, heterosexual unions are diverted in favor of

the father-daughter bond and in composing "A Pastorall" the Cavendish sisters affirm that they are "daughters in [Newcastle's] Penn" (Beinecke 76). Wroth's use of the pastoral less clearly conveys longing for the sustenance or restoration of patriarchal authority. Instead, for her, the pastoral feature of loss facilitates the contemplation of potential responses to patriarchal power and its sudden absence. Rather than work to sustain her heteronormative roles of wife, mother, and widow, she obfuscates those roles by cultivating an authorial position.

The loss of security that Wroth faced with the deaths of husband and son and absences of Leicester and that the Cavendish sisters faced with the exile of Newcastle provokes and facilitates the production of *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall". If Wroth looks to regain something distanced or lost—father, husband, lover, or son—she replaces it with the potential for female authorship. By penning a pastoral, she also re-appropriates her Sidneian heritage in place of her widowhood. Cavendish and Brackley likewise use patriarchal absence as an opportunity to demonstrate their authorial potential and thereby establish the Cavendish family's dramatic legacy. Therefore, for these female pastoralists, loss is productive. *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall" reflect the adaptability of the playwrights, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, respectively. These female playwrights deploy the pastoral mode in order to negotiate their connection with the patriarch and, in doing so, refigure their own identities. Transitioning between roles—daughter, wife, widow, agent—these women turned to the pastoral mode because its key features enable reflection on loss and vulnerabilities. In accordance with the mode, longing colors *Love's Victory* and "A Pastorall"; however, the longing is for stability and authority in identity more than for a past 'golden age'. The insecurity encountered by Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley is not particularly unique. Financial, social, and political circumstances—including government appointments, marriage, and civil war—separated families. Therefore, the pastoral mode was apt for the early Stuart milieu, which trailed the age of Astrea and awaited stability, and for the female playwrights who emerged in that time.

Chapter Three

Play for Play's Sake?: Constructing and Securing the Self through Play

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players.

They have their exits and their entrances,

And one man in his time plays many parts[.] (As You Like It, 2.7.138-141)

Mary Wroth, Jane Cavendish, and Elizabeth Brackley occupied and negotiated multiple roles, from dutiful daughter to estate manager to playwright. While they react to losses by deploying the pastoral mode, they also harness the intimacy of the household dramatic mode to engage with ideas of instability in selfhood. The intimate, patriarch-owned spaces to which I connect *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" offer Wroth and the Cavendish sisters physical, psychological, and rhetorical room to explore and then consolidate their shifting identities. Scholars challenge the extent to which the early modern subject is self-reflexive, often suggesting that the subject responds to external, constitutive forces. This aligns with Stephen Greenblatt's conception of self-fashioning, where one shapes his or her identity in the social context. As Ina Schabert puts it, "The self could only be conceived as an embedded self" (36). On the other hand, Ute Berns sees the early modern subject as fashioning itself by "rehearsing or generating performances that tend to become self-sustaining, complex and self-reflexive" (14). I view early modern self-construction as a non-ending process in which the subject responds to his or her environment, constantly re-negotiating, re-asserting, and performing an identity. While I have already suggested that Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' positions responded to the absent patriarch and unstable socio-political circumstances, it is worth reiterating that their 'embedded selves' were in flux at the time that they composed their household dramas. Potentially self-reflexive, these female playwrights' identities emerge through the playing in which they engage. That is, they consider, negotiate, and affirm their social positions by writing and probably staging theatricals that feature various forms of play.

Wroth's *Love's Victory* and the Cavendish sisters' *The Concealed Fancies* foreground play as means through which characters (re)construct their identities and (re)position

themselves within the community. The shepherds and shepherdesses of Wroth's pastoral highlight their skills and expose weaknesses through organized game-play. In the Cavendish sisters' comedy, theatrical artifice facilitates the protagonists' negotiation of conventional spousal roles. Beyond the internal play of *Love's Victory* and *The Concealed Fancies*, the playwrights partake in play by implanting alternate selves into the household plays and, furthermore, (likely) acting in these fictive roles. Rather than play for the sake of play, then, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters limn gaming and playacting as a tool for constructing identity and examining its relationship to the milieu's heteronormative roles. This chapter considers how Wroth and the Cavendish sisters (re)frame their social identities through play, as I attend to the playing evident within and the implicit playacting that surrounds their household plays.

The link between identity formation and play emerges in the work of psychoanalysts, including Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget. Piaget's focus on the importance of play in education and cognitive development, in particular, resonates in current scholarship in the field. Yet Dutch historian Johan Huizinga reacts against the psychoanalytic emphasis on the biological, developmental purpose of play, instead attending to play itself. For him, play has "a *significant* function—that is to say, there is some sense to it. In play there is something 'at play' which transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action" (1). He deals with "the question of what play is *in itself* and what it means for the player" (2). Though Huizinga situates himself in opposition to psychoanalysis, I question whether the two are entirely incongruent. As "play is not only an individual activity, but also a cultural one" (Cohen 31), play functions—and might be interrogated—as cultural performance. For instance, what role does play have in self-representation and construction? With identity formation entrenched in culture, playing enables the enactment of a 'self' that simultaneously imitates and influences the player's identity. Play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith stresses that play and identity are mutually influential: he casts play as the social context in which identity takes shape (220) and positions the self—with its "multiple meanings"—"at the center of play experience, through which play is to be defined" (200). Taking this into consideration, social identity is integral to play in itself. Drawing a link between Sutton-Smith, Huizinga and psychoanalytic theory, I contend that play's meaning for the player might in fact lie in its influence on identity formation. Further, I

suggest that, for Wroth and the Cavendish sisters play functions as an attempt to secure and stabilize identity.

But how can a sense of security be attained through playing? "The purpose of most [play in the form of] conflicts, contests, and expressions of power is to prove the superiority of one's own identity, community, and traditions" (Sutton-Smith 91) and, in this way, play promotes bonds within social groupings (Huizinga 13). Moreover, Sutton-Smith suggests that "The rhetorics of identity focus on the use of play forms as forms of bonding" (91). Again, this points to play as social and as means to securing social identity. If play facilitates bonding, then the intimate bonds that I discussed in the first chapter have an opportunity to further develop through playing household theatricals. Supporting identity construction for both playwrights and their characters are the bonds, the communities, and the coteries that emerge through play, both within *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" and through any potential acts of collaboration or camaraderie in the composition or performance of these plays. Using Huizinga's work as a touchstone, and also taking more recent play theory into account, I examine how play as cultural performance intersects with play as identity construction in and through Wroth's *Love's Victory* and Cavendish and Brackley's *The Concealed Fancies*. For Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, the meaning of play is indeed intertwined with the development and assertion of a 'self' within a social context.

I. Defining Play

Love's Victory and *The Concealed Fancies* place emphasis on self-presentation and play. But what did it mean to 'play' in the seventeenth century? How did children and adults play? When considering play in relation to early modern writers and texts—as with my use of 'intimate'—careful attention must be paid to how the term is being deployed, so as to avoid anachronism. However, to explore the denotation and connotations of 'play' in seventeenth-century England is no easy task given the relative lack of attention to the subject before eighteenth-century philosopher Rousseau (Cohen 19). At the same time, it is clear that play was central to the early modern culture, in which theatre, a distinctive form of performance play, proliferated. Shakespeare famously renders the world as a stage in *The Merchant of Venice* and *As You Like It*, thereby limning the milieu as one defined by

theatrical play and players. Extending the Shakespearean metaphor, Huizinga—who has published on Medieval and Renaissance thought in addition to producing a seminal analysis of play and its place in human culture, *Homo ludens*, in 1938—asserts, "the whole mental attitude of the Renaissance was one of play" (180). Yet, was theatrical performance synonymous with play in the early modern milieu, or did the play element manifest in ways entirely distinct from theatre? David Cohen, who sketches a history of play, "doubt[s] if it is possible to fashion a perfect definition of play precisely because it is such a wide behavior. There are many ways of playing play" (6). Affirming the broad scope of play, Sutton-Smith attempts to navigate ambiguities by outlining nine categories of play. For him, playacting and playgoing falls under the performance play category, but the range of playing extends from the more 'private' mind or subjunctive play (i.e. imagination) to the more 'public' risky or deep play (i.e. skydiving) (8-9). Therefore, various modes of play exist alongside playacting. With particular regard to the seventeenth century, theatrical playing often seems to be the dominant form of play; yet, literary texts and tracts from the milieu direct the reader to other manifestations.

Non-theatrical forms of play served pedagogical and social purposes in early modern England. Texts that were marketed for moral edification, education, or pleasure set age and gender boundaries around play; while rhetoric predominantly linked "Judgement" and logic with adult males, "Pleasantness" and play became associated with children (Edel Lamb 69, 75). However, child-play was predominantly connected to the acquisition and display of knowledge. John Brinsley's *Ludus Literarius* (1612), for instance, explicitly interweaves play and education. Because entertainment—pleasure, play, pictures—was pedagogically valuable, at least for children, humanist treatises on education "advocated a ludic culture of learning" (Edel Lamb 72). Turning to adulthood, elite circles participated in various forms of play outside of theatre, including tilting, tournaments, card games, and conversational games. Referring to Sutton-Smith's play categories, these types of play predominantly reflect contests (games and sports), as well as informal social play (8-9). Similar to children developing and demonstrating cognitive skill, these forms of adult play often allowed the elite to refine and exhibit their abilities. Gary Waller argues that "Humanist educational ideals and practices alike stressed the need for the aspiring courtier to present himself self-consciously as an actor on the great stage of the world" (222). On a similar note, Huizinga

observes that “The nobleman demonstrates his ‘virtue’ by feats of strength, skill, courage, wit, wisdom, wealth or liberality” (65). Play also facilitated female access to rhetorical spaces (Larson 166), as elite women could display skill and wit just as Wroth’s shepherdesses demonstrate their capabilities in singing and riddling. In this way, the player constructed or affirmed his or her ‘public’ identity. With “all the men and women [as] . . . players,” there was heightened awareness of the self and its presentation in the early modern period.

Because it appears in multiple forms, play is by no means synonymous with playacting. Yet, theatrical performance is an important form of play. While Sutton-Smith positions it as performance play (8-9), theatrical playing also engages with other elements of play as the “many ways of playing” are encapsulated in the imaginary worlds created by playwrights, directors, set designers, actors, etc. The intersections between theatrical performance and play often appear in relation to the distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary. To begin with, Huizinga identifies separation between (the broad conception of) play and “ordinary” life (19). This distance, Peter Stromberg stresses, extends to theatrical play: “Entertainment is playful activity undertaken for its own sake, in the pursuit of pleasure that diverts the player from the day-to-day” (1). Henri Lefebvre echoes the suggestion that play in a dramatic context offers escape from “everyday concerns” even as it represents or parodies “ordinary” life (222). But what is the significance of the separation that occurs in play, especially in play*acting*? As Huizinga’s theory highlights, it ties into the meaning of play for the player. Specifically, the distance between everyday and the diverting ‘interlude’ of play facilitates freedom (Huizinga 7-9). Because Huizinga does not isolate *theatrical* play as a form connected to freedom, but discusses play more broadly, an important question arises: Does playacting offer freedom? If so, to whom and how? Both the actors and the audience engage in performance play, so does the playing of a play possess the same meaning for both groups?

The spectator, or the off-stage player, experiences freedom from ordinary life by ‘playgoing.’ Pastorals reflect escapism from courtly life; in a similar vein, theatre draws the spectator into an alternate world, informed by geopolitical reality and colored by imagination. Freedom in play for the off-stage player might also connect to catharsis, the purgation of emotion through tragedy. Any escape from day-to-day life requires the

audience's 'suspension of disbelief,' which suggests a deferred concern for logic and, thereby, a deferral of the reasoning self. That is, along with his or her disbelief, the spectator's self is suspended when engaging in performance play. The relationship between the off-stage player and the on-stage player, to be successful, demands this. In addition, the off-stage player enables the successful theatrical playing of the on-stage player by assuming an active role "in the process of combining actors and characters into blended actors/characters" (Stromberg 44). While the spectator enjoys freedom in this blending, imagination, and self-suspension, he or she is also responsible for adhering to theatrical conventions. Most modern theatre requires audience members to quietly observe the on-stage performers; however, conventions shift depending on the milieu and the theatrical mode. As discussed in chapter one, for instance, the household dramatic mode does not call for audience participation in the same way that the Stuart courtly masque does. Assuming the spectator follows the boundaries that the mode and the actors (should) establish, his or her freedom in performance play becomes limited.

Theatrical conventions likewise diminish the on-stage player's freedom. Yet, I contend that the actor's method affects his or her engagement with the role and, therefore, the meaning of his or her playing. For instance, "living" a role is central to Stanislavski's approach to acting—now often conflated with Method acting—whereas older techniques predominantly emphasize external skills. Nonetheless, the actor's approach and the strictures surrounding a performance, from directorial demands to commercial pressure, influence the freedom with which he or she plays. Despite potential constrictions, the actor experiences some freedom by dissociating from the self and embodying a character in a play. With scripted lines, actions, and features, dramatic roles offer actors escape, not only from day-to-day life, but potentially from their own identities. For example, an actor (male or female) playing *King Lear's* Cordelia takes on her gender and her social status, as well as her roles as daughter, sister, and wife. In this way, playacting is certainly an 'interlude' in daily life *and* identity. However, to this must be added a caveat: "[a]cting is not a full-blown metamorphosis of one person into another . . . the role donned is discontinuous with the actor's biographical self; yet the biography-role dissociation is incomplete and more interesting to both experience (as actor) and perceive than a complete rupture" (Zamir 228). Rather than break with the biographical self, as Tzachi Zamir puts it, actors "*amplify* their

own lives by imaginatively embodying alien existential possibilities" (230). The actor must find aspects of his or her own 'self' in order to enact an alternate, fictional 'self.' In relation to this, part of the task of this chapter is looking for the continuities between the dramatic role and the actor/playwright in relation to *Love's Victory* and *The Concealed Fancies.* Below, I examine how Wroth and the Cavendish sisters embed fictional selves in their plays. Assuming they took on roles in these plays, they also embody these fictional characters through playacting. In addition, with playwrights and players of a household dramatic production representing household members (including themselves) and close friends, the intimacy of this dramatic mode paradoxically facilitates greater liberty and greater limitations.

Many types of play free players from the ordinary or the everyday; however, those players are bound to rules. There is a 'right,' or at least more successful, way to play. Deviation from the rules or underperforming undoes the potential for productive bonds and, as Wroth demonstrates with Rustic in *Love's Victory*, leads to potential exclusion from the social group. In this way, games are at once restrictive and freeing (Larson 188). Likewise, in their conventions, theatrical play and playscripts have boundaries. In theatrical playing, the scripting, blocking, and rehearsal that anticipate play limit the on-stage player's freedom. Playacting becomes a particular, conscious act and its purposes—whether biological, developmental, cultural, or social—collapse as the actors are bound by the structure of the dramatic text and performance conventions, which effectively delineate the rules of theatrical play. Yet, if the player's liberty is limited, it can be renegotiated into authorial power, particularly in the case of household drama where the players and the playwrights are one and the same. For instance, as the writers and (potentially) actors of their own plays, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters possess agency to script and revise their playtexts, thereby constantly redefining the parameters of playing. In addition, the intimate venue of the household plays allows these female playwrights to experiment and play outside of the confines of commercial or professional theatre. Therefore, the potentially limiting rules of play are subject to negotiation in the context of the household dramatic mode.

If there is any separation between play and ordinary life, it is affected by venue. In terms of theatrical play, this separation is heightened in commercial and courtly settings and diminished in the household setting. Attending to *Love's Victory* and Shakespeare's *Love's*

Labour Lost, Katherine Larson points to the "authorizing potential of ludic spaces" and underscores the permeability of those spaces (166, 168). Like Huizinga and Lefebvre, she notes the placement of conversational games "out in physical isolation from everyday society" (166). Yet, games, sports, riddles, and dramatic performances can certainly be held in the same architectural spaces that house ordinary life. In his investigation of play, Russell Meares provides a fruitful definition of playing spaces: "Play takes place in a space that is created by the atmosphere of another. The play space [is] part real, part illusory" (6). A play and playacting imitate life; therefore spatial connectivity between play and ordinary life should not be precluded. Does allowing for connection between play and ordinary life undermine a focus on play itself and its meaning for the player? On the contrary, I contend that the ordinary spaces and life of the player affect play and its purpose. Setting their plays in re-imagined household spaces (see chapter one), Wroth and the Cavendish sisters play in order to reflect upon and establish their social identities.

Playacting and the performance of the self are intertwined. Meares suggests that the "self depends upon the concept of innerness" (7). However, as indicated above, the early modern self is entrenched in the social context and, as Meares acknowledges, selfhood "grows in the public domain" (7). While the 'public'/'private' binary is troubling, the point that external forces and settings that exist in the 'public' domain affect self-identification is an important one. To return to my earlier argument, early Stuart household plays are intimate. Nonetheless, theatrical play itself is an outward act that at once exhibits and constitutes identity. For example, by taking the open-air stage, actors establish that they are actors and, as such, occupy a specific socio-economic position. Elite performers similarly portray themselves, including their allegiances, their skills, and their heritage by adopting roles in court masques or household plays. For Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, *Love's Victory* and *The Concealed Fancies*, respectively, facilitate self-presentation. The playing evinced in and through the Cavendish sisters' and Wroth's plays serve two purposes. First, theatrical play enables them to enter a predominantly male rhetorical space to demonstrate their wit, aligning them with a tradition of elite gaming and performance. Second, and more importantly for this chapter, play's simultaneous reflection of and disconnectedness from ordinary life facilitates the (re)imagining of social identity. Play enables these early female

playwrights to explore and push the boundaries of the roles that they occupy in the patriarchal society.

II. "Pleasure's sport to win": Playing in *Love's Victory*

Reflecting the early modern metaphor of the world as a stage, *Love's Victory* foregrounds play that enables the performance and construction of the self. In her household drama, Wroth creates a coterie, comprised of shepherds and shepherdesses who play. The type of play in which they engage is primarily competitive; as I acknowledged in the preceding chapter, contests, games, and competitions are often present in the pastoral mode. However, the playing that appears in *Love's Victory* carries more than generic significance. In each of the first four acts, the bucolic characters propose and enact "sports," which become the means through which they reveal themselves, their loves, their motivations, and their status. Reflecting Sutton-Smith's suggestion that competitive play serves to assert superiority and create bonds through "common contestive identity" (75, 91), Wroth's characters work to establish identities in the context of social groups. By tracing the forms of play that Wroth devises for her characters, I will illuminate the purpose of playing within *Love's Victory* and then, by extension, in authorial constructions of selfhood.

In the first act of *Love's Victory*, Dalina instigates the pastoral, playful activity: a singing game. Musella and Philisses act as judges for the contest and listen to Rustic, who comically praises the former's beauty:

> Thy cheeks are red
> Like ochre spread
> On a fatted sheep's back;
> Thy paps are found
> Like apples round… (I.iii.67-71)

After he frames Musella's beauty in terms of "fatted sheep," she unsurprisingly discourages his poetic endeavors. Rustic's blundering description of his betrothed stands in stark contrast to the evocative songs of Climeana and Lacon, who also participate in the game. Climeana alludes to the connection between wandering eyes and the heart and Lacon describes being struck by Cupid's arrow; Rustic, in contrast, constructs simple similes that employ pastoral animals and food. Though the judges do not declare a victor in the competition, Rustic is the

clear loser. Whereas Climeana's and Lacon's songs are met with interest, Musella interrupts his song. Therefore, the shepherds' singing game demonstrates Rustic's lack of refinement and poetic skill. In addition to revealing his incapacity for poetry, the game also shows Musella's distaste for him, as she laments being the subject of his song. Even as it establishes the strained relationship between Musella and Rustic, the first act's "sport" also positions the fickle nymph, Dalina, in a subordinate but important role. On one hand, she initiates play in the scene; on the other hand, heat defers her participation and desires (I.iii.96-102) and she remains secondary to the constant Musella.

Prevented from joining in the singing game, Dalina is the impetus for play again in the second act. As the act opens, she says, "Methinks we now too silent are. Let's play/ At something while we yet have pleasing day" (II.i.1-2). Yet, Dalina's play is deferred again. Rather than move directly into a structured game, Lissius remarks that a "sport enough" presents itself in the appearance of Silvesta—newly devoted to Diana—and "her slave," Forester (II.i.3, 4). Turning into a spectator of the scene between Silvesta and Forester, Lissius anticipates the "play's" action. He suggests, "She, I'm sure, will fly,/ And he poor fool will follow still, and cry" (II.i.5-6). Compassionate Musella initially derides Lissius' mocking observations, but soon joins him in describing the scene: "Musella: But look, he kneels, and weeps. Lissius: And cries, 'Ah me!'" (II.i.9). Meta-theatricality permeates the scene, as the shepherds and shepherdesses engage in play by adopting spectator roles, thereby gesturing towards the audience of *Love's Victory* as playful voyeurs of the pastoral action. Aside from the meta-theatrical value, the scene that Musella and Lissius observe has a profound effect on the former, who observes the strain that chastity places upon love and then notes the value of constant love and the pitiable state of it being unrequited. This informal spectator game, therefore, shows her dedication to heterosexual love. She will not follow in chaste Silvesta's footsteps. At the same time, Musella is not interested sexually in Lissius. The spectator game in which the two engage develops the platonic camaraderie between the characters. Informal game-play appears again in Act II, with Rustic and Philisses—both suitors to Musella—playing a pseudo-conversational game which limns Rustic as inferior in passion as well as oratorical skill. Their debate centers on love and, similar to the first act's singing contest and the upcoming fortune and riddling games, anticipates Rustic's ultimate failure in his pursuit of the female protagonist. Even as this

informal game effectively juxtaposes Rustic with Philisses, it also underlines male interest in heterosexual love.

Following the unstructured game-play, Arcas tantalizes the shepherds and shepherdesses, announcing that he has "a sport" for them, provided that they approve it (II.i.133-4). Prodded by Philisses, Arcas describes the second act's formal game, explaining, "Here is a book wherein each one shall draw/ a fortune, and thereby, their luck shall be/ Conjectured" (III.i.135-7). Though the bucolic characters clearly enjoy playing, all except Dalina express hesitancy to read their fortune. Nobody reads their own fortune: Philisses reads those of Musella and Dalina, and Dalina reads that of Philisses. Like the other "sports" in *Love's Victory*, the fortune game establishes character positions in the pastoral society. First, the fortunes suggest Musella's future fulfillment of the heteronormative wifely role: she needs patience, but, ultimately her "best wishes" will be answered (III.i.160-3). Likewise, Philisses hears that he must endure pain in order to gain (husbandly) bliss (III.i.177-80). While Arcas' fortune game foretells happiness for the protagonists, its main function is to expose Dalina's fickleness:

> They that cannot steady be
> To themselves, the like must see.
> Fickle people, fickly choose,
> Slightly like, and so refuse. (II.i.193-6)

A conventional pastoral character—the changeable nymph—Dalina rejects this reading, though she concedes, "'Tis true I have fickle been" (II.i.201). The fortune limns Dalina's position as one that is insecure and greatly defined by her inconstancy. Because of its degrading implications, Dalina's unfortunate fortune effectively ends the game-play. The other shepherdesses and shepherds fear receiving a similar fate. Yet, the love-lives of several shepherdesses are soon also exposed in the context of play.

A feminine coterie comprised of Dalina, Phillis, Climeana, and Simeana confesses love-life secrets in the third act. Again, Dalina incites this "sport" and is most eager to divulge her tale of the shepherd, the rich farmer, and two jolly youths. Though she confirms her fickleness through her confession, she uses this game as an opportunity to refigure herself. Her inconstancy, she asserts, was "folly in my youth,/ Which now I'll mend" (III.ii.50-1). Despite her protestation, Dalina contrasts the other shepherdesses, Simeana and

Phillis, who profess their constancy in love. Phillis even suggests that "thus [Philisses]/ Should be unkind, my love shall still be clear" (III.ii.75-6). Nonetheless, the "sport" allows Dalina to clarify and renegotiate her position: she *was*, but *is* not, the archetypal fickle nymph. Playing also sparks a rivalry between Climeana and Simeana, as the two shepherdesses engage in rhetorical competition for Lissius. Paralleling the debate between Rustic and Philisses in Act II, Climeana and Simeana compare the strength of their love. The object of the shepherdesses' affection is named, which heightens the stakes of the competition. Degrading Climeana (and, by extension, Dalina), Simeana questions Climeana's faithfulness and challenges her to "win [Lissius] if you can" (III.ii.414). Accepting the challenge, Climeana experiences swift rejection and it is her exit that best "wins" Lissius' approval (III.4.196). Then, as Act II, scene ii presages, Simeana wins Lissius after trying her "fortune" (III.4.13). The language that surrounds Climeana and Simeana's conflict underlines the implicit game-play. The confession-turned-competition showcases divergent responses to heteronormative love by allowing female characters to construct their love-lives and associated agency, or lack thereof. Yet, despite the potentially fruitful female rhetorical space that manifests through play in this scene, the shepherdesses challenge each other: they all attempt to limn themselves as constant in love, but then they question the validity of each other's self-depiction. For instance, how can the audience perceive Climeana as faithful if Simeana does not? With the self being forged in the 'public' realm, identity becomes inflected by social group dynamic.

The final pastoral game—riddling—also highlights the conflict between self-presentation and social reception. When determining the fourth act's "sport," Climeana and Simeana reignite their feud:

> Simeana: And, indeed [riddling is] good.
>
> Climeana: But, methinks, not lest they be understood.
>
> Simeana: Understood? Why so shall all be that I make.
>
> Climeana: Tush, you'll say one thing, and another take.
>
> Simeana: You'll still be wrangling.
>
> Dalina: Aye, and for a man! (IV.i.355-359)

Though Dalina hints at what really causes this brief debate (a shared interest in Lissius), Climeana's concern regarding the comprehensibility of the riddles is shared by Phillis.

Further, Musella and Rustic point to their incapacity for riddling. Prefacing her riddle, Musella declares, “Then I’ll begin, though scarce the play I know” (IV.i.364). Yet, she constructs a riddle well—with no commentary or criticism from the group—and, thereby, displays her rhetorical skill. Rustic, on the other hand, resists Philisses’ push to “Bring forth your riddle” (IV.i.388), proclaiming twice that he “cannot riddle” (IV.i.391, 401). Already, conversational play has established Rustic’s rhetorical and poetic capabilities as weak. The riddle game confirms these weaknesses: he explains, “I was not taught/ These tricks of wit” (IV.i.391-2). Rustic recognizes that his role in the pastoral society is partly defined by his disruptive inadequacy at play, which differentiates him from Musella and, most importantly, her other suitor, Philisses. But Dalina interprets Rustic’s performance positively. She, rather unproductively, attempts to limn his inability to riddle as an admirable characteristic that makes him “An honest man” who is “sufficiently…understood” (IV.i.404, 402). However, the dense Rustic continues to pout, effectively killing the riddling “sport,” though Philisses and Lissius unsuccessfully try to revive the game. Musella’s exit specifically signals the conclusion of the game, which is—despite their plans—the last “sport” in which the bucolic characters partake.

It’s all fun and games until someone attempts suicide; therefore, no pastoral playing appears in the final act. However, the overriding, supernatural game of the play—Venus’ challenge to Cupid—peaks. Leading up to the suicide pact between Philisses and Musella, Venus and Cupid meddle in the shepherds’ and shepherdesses’ love-lives. The first scene of *Love’s Victory* focuses on Venus’s proposal that her son “Wound [the pastoral figures], but kill them not” to restore the “ancient glory” of love (I.i.17, 33). The opening scene, which appears only in the Penshurst manuscript, establishes the world of play and underpins the action and structure of *Love’s Victory*. After launching their game, Venus and Cupid interject between the shepherd’s scenes. The sporadic appearance of the supernatural pair is reminiscent of Samuel Daniel’s *Queen’s Arcadia* and serves to remind the audience that the pain endured by the lovers is a contrivance of the supernatural pair’s game-play. Larson rightly identifies Venus as the driving force behind the game that becomes *Love’s Victory* (183-4), and Cupid becomes the agent of her game. He will deliver “Joy” and “Sorrow” to the humans in order to render love victorious (I.i.7, 8). The pair closes the first act, as Venus derides her son for his leniency: “Fie, this is nothing! What? Is this your care?/ That among

ten the half of them you spare/ I would have all to wail and all to weep" (I.iv.1-3). She presses Cupid to "perform [his] oath" that "Love's Victory shall shine"(I.iv.27, 25). The performative utterance—Cupid's oath to illuminate the value of love—is a speech act which results in or produces an action. "[In] uttering our performatives we are undoubtedly in a sound enough sense 'performing actions'" (Austin 181) and, through the remainder of the play, Cupid enacts his "oath."

Though Venus and Cupid reappear at the end of Act II (only to hear the Priests invoke their power), it is their intercession in the third act that underlines the supernatural pair's playing and sees Cupid pleased with the fulfillment of his promise. He seems particularly delighted after the confrontations between Climeana, Simeana, and Lissius. Presumably witnessing the love confessions that incited the two shepherdesses' disdain for one another—Cupid and Venus could conceivably remain on stage throughout a production—he revels in his work, laughing,

> Is not this pretty? Who doth free remain
> Of all this flock, that waits not in our train?
> Will you have yet more sorrow? Yet more woe?
> Shall I another bitter arrow throw? (III.iii.1-4)

Actor and director choices may deviate, but the series of questions clearly indicates his amusement. Venus is not as impressed as Cupid, commenting, "'Tis pretty, but 'tis not enough" (III.iii.7). Putting their manipulations into contest play terms, she suggests that such "easy winning breeds us more neglect" (III.iii.13); in other words, they have won their game, but not in a satisfying way. The failure of her son's performative utterance is implicit. Of course, ineffective performative utterances are not necessarily failures as much as they are infelicitous (Austin 178). Reassuring the game-master, Cupid guarantees that Lissius will "sufficiently taste misery" (III.iii.28). The third act ends only with Cupid's promises rather than their fulfillment, but by the conclusion of the following act Cupid "hast performed [his] promise" (IV.ii.5).

The motivation for the overriding, supernatural game is clear: Venus, frustrated at the shepherds' and shepherdesses' neglect, desires respect; Cupid serves his mother's will. Venus may incite play because she has freedom to do so. Nonetheless, it is a demonstration of power and a cry for attention. Eliciting performatives and demanding specific outcomes

from Cupid, she oversees the game of *Love's Victory*. She also, I contend, informs the pastoral "sports" that appear in each of the first four acts. Love inspires play in *Love's Victory* and even the playing in which the bucolic characters engage feeds into her overarching game, as their play illuminates—though defers—potential love matches and sparks feuds. The "sports" stem from a desire for distraction, but dwell on heterosexual love, suggesting that love distracts them from their work. Further, the lesson that the shepherds and shepherdesses learn points to Venus: "Faith in love should never shake" (V.vii.6). While this lesson accords with the theme of love that pervades Wroth's *oeuvre,* it also implies that play is not freedom. Rather, the pastoral playing becomes inextricably linked to the confrontation of external—in this case, supernatural—forces.

Thanks to the sport of Venus and Cupid, doubt, lies, deceit, and near-deaths plague the bucolic characters. Yet, rather than take responsibility for the trouble stemming from their interference, the supernatural figures construct themselves as unifying forces. First, Cupid casts Arcas as the common enemy and concludes the gaming with a song that invites his punishment:

> Now my wars in love hath end,
> Each one here enjoys their friend;
> And so all shall henceforth say
> Who my laws will still obey.
> Mother, now judge Arcas' fault
> All things else your will hath wrought. (V.vii.135-140)

Venus relegates Arcas to a life of shame even as she takes credit for the union of Philisses and Musella, never revealing to her subjects that she orchestrated their suffering. After the protagonists "*arise from the altar*" (stage direction following V.vii.66), Venus positions the female guide, Silvesta, as her agent. Further, she boasts, "Lovers be not amazed! This is *my* deed,/ Who could not suffer your dear hearts to bleed" (V.vii.67-68, emphasis added). As the title suggests, love—or Venus—wins. Scholars tend to emphasize the feminist underpinnings of Venus' power, as well as the playing in *Love's Victory*. But if Venus drives the plot and, therefore, the game-play, does her authority extend to the female players? Larson would argue so.

Limning the rhetorical spaces that the games facilitate as free from constraints on female speech, Larson interprets Wroth's play as a showcase of women's skill and leadership (167). Further, she argues that ludic conversational games in *Love's Victory* serve to "cultivate authorizing rhetorical spaces for women" (188). However, how do we reconcile the categorizations and unflattering characterizations of women—which primarily emerge through play—with overriding notions of female agency? Insecurity affects even the most powerful female character, Venus, and drives the play's play.

With Venus working to reassert her authority through play, why do the shepherds and shepherdesses play? Is it to gain rhetorical authority, and does Wroth afford female characters more freedom via play than male characters? Certainly, Dalina seems to be the impetus behind much of the pastoral playing, but most of the bucolic characters, male and female, indicate desire for play. Also, with the exception of the love confession interlude, playing gives voice to both genders and gives the bucolic characters opportunities to engage in self-construction, thereby limning ludic spaces as authorizing for both shepherds and shepherdesses. For example, Musella establishes her disinterest in occupying the role of Rustic's wife in the singing game, as well her platonic friendship with Lissius in the spectator game and wifely potential in the fortune game. Playing games exposes Dalina, who contrasts the protagonist, as fickle; nonetheless, she employs the confession and riddle games to negotiate an alternate position that aligns her more with heteronormative Musella. Therefore, female agency in constructing social role emerges through play. Similarly, though, Philisses fashions his position as dedicated lover, primarily through his informal debate with Rustic. In awkward parallel to Philisses, Rustic attempts to fashion himself as a lover, but also acknowledges his failure to impress in conversational games. Through play, then, the bucolic characters possess agency in constructing their own identities and such self-construction represents the potential for freedom in that agency. Yet, they remain constricted by the framework of Venus' game, which limits their agency in forging relationships and, ultimately, de-stabilizes relationships. The bucolic play stems from the resulting insecurity in love and a need to affirm identity, and the bonds that support that identity. Through the "sports," there is consciousness of performance, whereby the characters recognize and embody—or reject—their roles of fickle nymph, lover, friend, guide, villain, or spectator.

The spectator, or off-stage player, is integrated into play in *Love's Victory*. As noted above, Musella and Lissius find entertainment in playing the role of spectator, observing the meeting between Silvesta and Forester in Act II, scene I as though it is a play-within-a-play. Venus and Cupid similarly enjoy watching the effects of their meddling. Like the shepherds, shepherdesses, and supernatural figures, the audience observes the play with a sense of play. There may be a 'willing suspension of disbelief'; however, as I have proposed, the intimacy of household theatre challenges such disbelief. What replace that disbelief in the intimate mode are play and its presumed distance from ordinary life. *Love's Victory* relies on the ludic convention of "isolated or semi-isolated playing spaces" (Larson 167) and, aside from the game of Venus and Cupid, all of the "sports" occur in green spaces that are detached from work. Work space does not appear on stage; neither do the sheep to which the characters refer. Moreover, from the audience's perspective, the pastoral lifestyle is certainly separate from ordinary life. Therefore, the bucolic characters' "sports" suggest a freedom from urban constraints that pushes against supernatural power and then transfers to the audience. The shepherds and shepherdesses divert anxieties through playing, and in parallel to this those engaging in or watching the theatrical performance can temporarily escape courtly life, its obligations, and its constrictions.

Even if the bucolic characters' freedom through play is compromised by Venus' overriding game and Wroth's parameters, the audience, as well as the actors, gain freedom by immersing themselves in the pastoral world, which melds imaginary bucolic figures with real-life courtly figures. Again, limiting freedom are the conventions to which the shepherd's games and the real-life theatricals should adhere. Nonetheless, playacting and play-spectating open up possibilities for the spectators, playwright, and players to experiment with behavioral codes. There is a sense of freedom through which the playing of *Love's Victory* is filtered, as intimacy facilitates freer playing in the household play. Yet, audience familiarity with the playwright and players poses a threat to Wroth's social position, as she imprints herself in the text. The various forms of play of and within *Love's Victory* depend upon a spectator who interprets that play and, with Wroth potentially casting herself as Musella and performing for a known group of spectators, playing becomes a tool for self-reflection and -construction for the playwright as much as her characters.

III. "Your shadowed self": Wroth/Sidney Family Allegories

The playing in which the pastoral characters of *Love's Victory* partake begs the question: how did Mary Wroth engage in play, and to what—if any—end? Letters exchanged between her parents tend to emphasize her humanist education, which early modern educational theorists connect with childhood play. Margaret Hannay "easily imagines" Wroth and her family, especially the Earl of Pembroke, "playing conversational games and participating in musical evenings" (192). In line with this, I posit that her representation of pastoral games in *Love's Victory* suggests her own participation in similar "sports." The singing contest seems particularly likely to represent Wroth's experience of play and pleasure. Her predilection for music is evinced in her work (songs are interspersed throughout *Love's Victory* and *Urania*) and highlighted in John de Critz's portrait of her, where she holds an archlute. The more 'public' mode of play in which she engaged—dancing for Elizabeth I in 1602 and performing in Jacobean masques—displayed her abilities and affirmed her elite social position. Her social identity became intertwined with courtly play and in *Love's Victory* she links playing with self-construction and thereby emphasizes the embeddedness of identity in the social milieu. Engaging in play and imagining herself in pastoral roles further enable Wroth to reflect upon her selfhood beyond patriarchal absences.

By the time she penned *Love's Victory*, Wroth had lost her husband and son and probably shifted her affections to the Earl of Pembroke. Widowhood burdened Wroth financially, but it was her affair with her cousin that threatened her social status as widow. With continued "pressure to live under male governance" and maintain chastity (Mendelson and Crawford 175), pursuing a heterosexual relationship outside of the bounds of marriage would disrupt Wroth's socially-accepted widow role and render her deviant. Certainly, Wroth ventured beyond normative boundaries by becoming her cousin's mistress and bearing his illegitimate children. Yet—situating the composition of *Love's Victory* near the outset of the Pembroke-Wroth affair—I argue that the playing in which Wroth partakes through the household drama allows her to consider the implications of pursuing unsanctioned love. For instance, Musella and Philisses would rather commit suicide than fulfill parental will and see the former married to her betrothed, Rustic. Despite their deviance, Wroth lets them live. Does she suggest that real-life "social suicide" can similarly be averted? Also, the women's roles, which demonstrate various degrees of chastity and heteronormativity, highlight the

tension between widow and whore. But Wroth raises questions about the chaste/whore binary: can deviance be renegotiated, as in Dalina? Is the wise woman's celibacy in fact ideal? Does heterosexual love supersede parental will and social norms? In *Love's Victory*, Wroth conveys inner conflict by weaving debates about love, chastity, fickleness, loyalty, and fate into game-play and through intermingling characterizations. Wroth often renders her shepherds and shepherdesses with overlapping features and similar self-constructions. For example, female deviance is not exclusive to Dalina, just as faithful chastity is not exclusive to Silvesta: Simeana, Climeana, and Dalina claim fidelity and Musella defies patriarchal authority but maintains chastity by joining with Philisses in death. The intermingling characterizations in *Love's Victory* suggest that the categories of maid, wife, and whore are insufficient, because—even in a world populated by stock figures—women are complex and possess features that belong to each of these categories. The complexities that Wroth represents in her female characters mirror her own shifting roles. Again reflecting the 'inwardness' of the household theatrical mode, Wroth embeds herself in her play, alluding to herself in the parts of Musella, Silvesta, and Dalina.

S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies suggest that Wroth "conveys the general idea [of love] through her own experience of it, and whatever she chose to call her main protagonists they always represent her and William Herbert [Earl of Pembroke]" (92). Though it is potentially reductive to assert that Wroth implants herself in the roles that she creates, the function of play in the formation and performance of identity for Wroth should not be undervalued. Yet, according to most Sidney scholars, there are two distinct possibilities for familial allusions in *Love's Victory*.[29] Cerasano and Wynne-Davies outline the two possibilities nicely. Looking back to Wroth's aunt and uncle, they see Philip Sidney as Philisses and Penelope Rich (his Stella) as Musella, with her husband, Robert Rich denigrated as Rustic; Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, and Matthew Lister become Simeana and Lissius (94). As Cerasano and Wynne-Davies note, the characters' names fit the real-life figures nicely, as Wroth employs quasi-anagrams (94). Gary Waller privileges this reading of the play and he focuses on the potential of Wroth exploring her Uncle Philip's fruitless love for Stella through *Love's Victory* (238-40). Although I do not challenge the

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[29] Heide Towers distinguishes her work from others by primarily considering Wroth's play as a commentary on Prince Charles' marriage arrangements (440).

validity of his interpretation of the characters as the older Sidneian generation, the alternate, contemporaneous familial allusions better account for the resonances of themes from Wroth's prose and poetry, as well as the debates that appear in the drama. Moreover, challenging Cerasano and Wynne-Davies' and Waller's assertions that *Love's Victory* alludes to the romance between Philip Sidney and Penelope Rich, I question the extent of Wroth's knowledge of the affair given that she was born after he died. Wroth was certainly familiar with Sidney's sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella*, in which he dwells on the wounds of love and casts Rich as Stella. However, the sonnets do not make explicit the details of a real-life courtship between Sidney and Rich, the disrupted marriage arrangements made between Sidney and Rich's father, Walter Devereux, in the mid-1570s, or her subsequent marriage to Baron Rich in 1581. Further problematizing a focus on the Sidney-Rich affair is Wroth's connection with Philip's daughter, Elizabeth, who was the issue of his wife Frances Walsingham. The cousins' bond may prevent Wroth from representing Sidney and Rich's love story. On the other hand, Elizabeth died in 1614, likely well before Wroth wrote her household play, and the appeal of linking her text with her uncle's literary legacy—which relies heavily on the elusive Stella—may have been enough for her to play out a happy resolution to his affair. Wroth could allude to both generations simultaneously; however, I suggest that she privileges her present moment and its affairs, most likely alluding to her relationship with the Earl of Pembroke.

Mapping the later Sidneian generation onto the pastoral's cast of characters, Cerasano and Wynne-Davies place Wroth and Pembroke as Musella and Philisses, Robert Wroth as Rustic, and Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, and his wife as Lissius and Simeana (94). While I agree with these possibilities, I contend that the most plausible case for familial allusions in *Love's Victory* actually involves combining the old and the new generations that Cerasano and Wynne-Davies identify. Before examining Wroth's self-referential characters, I will consider the roles of Lissius and Simeana. The Earl of Montgomery and his wife, Susan de Vere (to whom Wroth dedicates *Urania*), serve as suitable supporting figures for the Wroth-Pembroke coupling. Yet, the jealousy that surrounds Musella and Lissius' relationship much better fits Wroth's rumored sexual relationship with Matthew Lister. Turning to the older generation, then, I concur with Cerasano and Wynne-Davies' suggestion

that the secondary love match of the play, between Lissius and Simeana, alludes to the Countess of Pembroke and Lister.

Though the inception of their affair is unclear, rumors of the Countess' affair with—and marriage to—the young Lister, a prominent physician to the Stuarts, appear in 1617. The relationship could have started much earlier, though. The Countess was widowed in 1601 and Lister had been a friend of the Sidney family, possibly even treating Lady Anne Herbert in 1606 (Hannay 132). Nonetheless, by 1619, the affair between the two was clearly evinced by his assistance in plans for the Countess' house at Houghton (Hannay 204). There are hints that the Countess suspected Lister and her niece, Wroth, of having an affair.[30] While Lister and Wroth most likely knew each other, there is no evidence of an illicit relationship and Wroth asserts their platonic bond through Lissius and Musella. In the play, Philisses—representing the Countess' son—makes an incorrect assumption regarding the relationship between Lissius (Lister) and Musella (Wroth), assuming Lissius to be the "Master of [her] affections" (III.i.74). Jealousy also temporarily disturbs the bond between Lissius and Simeana (the Countess). Because the timing of the Wroth-Pembroke affair may have overlapped with Lister's affair with the Countess, it is plausible that she merged the two love stories in *Love's Victory*. If Wroth were representing her aunt Mary and uncle Philip, as well as their lovers, there is a lack of temporal continuity: it was over a decade after Philip Sidney's death that the Countess and Lister were together. Certainly, she may take authorial liberty with her allusions. Nonetheless, timing and the parallels between the aunt and niece make the depiction of both of their affairs within the play a compelling possibility. Both women were well-educated and widowed early. Margaret Hannay characterizes the Countess as "a merry widow" who "took tobacco, shot pistols, danced, played cards, and generally enjoyed life" (196). Yet, the Countess seems to have retained elite status, partly because she mitigated her authority as writer by translating and editing. Further, with stable financial resources, the Countess was able to travel to the Continent for extended periods, even establishing a literary circle there. In contrast, Wroth's social life and mobility were more limited because of inherited debt (Hannay 196-7). The controversial publication of *Urania* also threatened her social position. Therefore, by placing her own affair alongside that of her aunt in *Love's Victory*, Wroth works to dismantle jealousies, justify her potentially

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[30] This suspicion often forms the basis for arguments that Pembroke wrote Shakespeare's "dark lady" sonnets.

subversive behavior, and emulate her aunt's security in socio-economic identity. Mary Ellen Lamb argues that the hostility that Wroth faced in widowhood actually facilitated her authorship, because "Wroth had perhaps less to lose" (149). Dismantling this, I argue that through playing *Love's Victory* and implanting herself in the pastoral characters, she reconsiders the value of social security.

If *Love's Victory* is a play about the role of play in self-consciousness, and performance, then we might inquire, what is at stake for Wroth in writing and playing (that is, engaging in a theatrical performance of) this work? In *Love's Victory*, Wroth may imagine herself as chaste, fickle, or constant to the point of self-destruction. Playing the parts affords her freedom to explore potential selves as she determines the societal position that she elects to occupy. Through the contrast between Musella, Silvesta, and Dalina, Wroth explores the conflicts between love, chastity, and fidelity that defined her widowhood, with her insecurity manifesting through her shepherdesses. She embeds herself in these three characters to consider whether to fulfill or resist norms as a widow. Though none of the shepherdesses is widowed, all three have loved or been contracted to men that they have, sometimes willingly, lost. As mentioned above, Musella alludes to Wroth. The references to "worth" in relation to Musella affirm the character as a reflection of Wroth, as other poets—Ben Jonson, in particular—use this anagram to refer to her. "[S]o much worth," or Wroth, lives in Musella (III.i.95). The final scene repeats the anagram. Lacon claims, "No worth did live, which in her had not spring,/ And she thus gone, to her grave worth doth bring" (V.v.24-5). Though Lacon refers to Musella's presumed death, the allusion here might also remind the audience of James Wroth, the playwright's deceased, legitimate child. Also deploying the anagram of "wroth," Silvesta implicitly refers to Rustic, the presumed embodiment of Robert Wroth:

> She's happy, yet in death, that she is free
> From such a *worthless* creature. Can this be?
> Such virtue should in her fair breast abound,
> Yet to be tied where no *worth* could be found? (V.v.112-5, emphasis added)

Though Mary and Robert Wroth's marriage may have been happier than some scholars indicate, the debts that she inherited from him probably negatively affected her impression of the relationship. Financially, he was "worthless". In addition, she transferred her affection

to the Earl of Pembroke, who might have (but did not) provide her with economic security. Wroth/Musella's transference of love crystallizes when Silvesta facilitates a "worth-binding tie" (V.vii.92) between her and Philisses (Pembroke). The playwright remarries her alter-ego: Musella was bound to Rustic until he freed her from the obligation, enabling her to unite with Philisses. Likewise, Wroth shifts from a marital bond with Robert Wroth to a relationship with Pembroke. However, unlike the fictional characters of the pastoral, Wroth's normative social position diminishes because she occupies the sexualized mistress role rather than a chaste wifely role. While self-allusions are apparent in the female protagonist, we might consider why Wroth would include so blatant a reference to a heterosexual bond between herself and Pembroke if it points to her own subversive behavior. As I argued in the first chapter, the intimacy of household theatre allows her to explore her social identity, and the potential ramifications of deviating from norms, in a secure way. "Wroth's play suggests an audience receptive to her authorship" (Lamb 152), enabling her to allude to family and friends, especially when two possible castings (the older and younger Sidney generation) can diffuse gossip.

Exploring female identity as connected to heterosexual relationships, Wroth ventriloquizes her preoccupation with fidelity and loyalty. Like Musella, Silvesta "loved Philisses"—Wroth's Pembroke—"as [her] life" (3.1.53). Rather than be defined by heterosexual love and the pain that accompanies rejection, Silvesta chooses an alternate path and represents self-control through her election of celibacy. However, even after devoting herself to Diana, she affirms her loyalty and service to Philisses and his beloved (3.1.97-8). In the third act, two of Wroth's alter-egos, Silvesta and Musella, meet to reflect on heterosexual love. Silvesta begins by expounding her new-found peace and bliss in celibacy. Musella, however, argues that chastity and therefore her friend's happiness spring from love:

> Chastity, you thus commend,
> Doth proceed but from Love's end.
> . . .
> Love lost, bred your chastest thought,
> Chastity by Love is wrought. (3.1.18-9, 22-3)

Though Silvesta laments that Musella is "bound" by love (3.1.25), revisiting themes from Wroth's sonnet sequence, she encourages her friend to pursue it. Musella dubs Silvesta the

"saver of two hearts" (3.1.92). In the end, chaste love and homosocial love facilitate the union between Musella and Philisses. Therefore, though Venus takes credit, Silvesta—unburdened by heterosexual love—restores the pastoral social unit to happiness. Unrequited love, in this circumstance, is productive. Nonetheless, Silvesta stills struggles with her position in the heterosexual community, with Forester in constant pursuit. Similarly, Dalina, the fickle nymph, struggles to redefine her role. As I observe above, Dalina attempts to (re)fashion her identity through play. She acknowledges, but rejects, her inconstancy and strives to fulfill a normative, wifely position by pursuing Rustic. If the Wroth-Pembroke affair in fact began prior to Robert Wroth's death, then Wroth might allude to an early conflict between "proper" wifehood and love. Even if she does not imprint herself on the fickle nymph, though, Wroth's concern with constancy and social acceptability clearly manifests in Dalina.

Whether circulated amongst a coterie or staged for select family and friends, *Love's Victory* is entrenched in a social circle, paralleling the pastoral playing that occurs within the household drama. Wroth "did not perceive her drama as giving a few good actors 'good parts' and the others 'supporting roles,' but as a meeting of friends whose mutual pleasure and interest would have been of primary importance" (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 94). Because there is not enough evidence to affirm a performance, let alone a performance date, the cast—the players of the play—can hardly be speculated in the way that familial allusions can. Nonetheless, Wroth, her cousins, and the Derings are among those who might have 'played' *Love's Victory*, with the playwright herself potentially assuming the role of Musella.[31] Wroth's representation of play within the text extends to her own theatrical playing, which allows an alternate performance of the self. Her playing, then, might be an 'interlude' in daily life, but it is also intimately linked to reality. The characters and the spaces that she represents and likely embodies are not strictly distinct from ordinary life. For Wroth, there is overlap between her life and the plot and characters she crafts for play. She plays—creating spaces and characters which were at once imaginary and concrete—through writing and performance play. Through *Love's Victory*, she examines and (re)envisions her

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[31] Though I am skeptical of a wider theatrical audience for *Love's Victory*, Lamb suggests that "it seems likely that Wroth may have participated [in Dering's theatricals in the 1620s], even writing her play for such a group" (Lamb 152).

social identity. While play represents freedom to consider normative and deviant female categories, it also becomes a realm of control over self-presentation.

IV. "I would have performed": Playing in *The Concealed Fancies*

The consciousness of self-presentation in *Love's Victory* is subtle when compared to the Cavendish sisters' comedy, *The Concealed Fancies*.[32] As in Wroth's play, *The Concealed Fancies* limns play as a tool for constructing identity. As opposed to the structured, primarily competitive play in Wroth's household play—with a call for "sports" followed by singing, riddles, fortunes, or confessions—the play element in *The Concealed Fancies* manifests through disguised ruses, artifice, and the characters' highly theatricalized performances of the self. Brenda Liddy argues that the Cavendish sisters "intimat[e] that courtship and marriage are more like ritualised performances in which men as well as women act their parts" (73). Rather than ritual, I suggest that the Cavendish sisters represent courtship, and subsequently marriage, as a game that is bound by conventions. Playing the courtship game and turning the world into a stage, Luceny and Tattiney—inflected by their authors—test the boundaries of heteronormative roles. The fictional characters demonstrate awareness of their performances, and draw attention to the theatrical and gendered parameters within which they play. Moreover, as the male leads delineate and underline contrived performances in the opening scene, they remind the audience of the playing in which the playwrights, Brackley and Cavendish, also engage.

At the outset of the household play, Courtley and Presumption highlight the artifice of their mistresses' behavior. Presumption laments that his mistress, Tattiney, "knows her scene-self too well . . . she will not lessen herself at all by valuing me" (I.i.3-4, 5-6). In other words, recognizing her socio-economic position as distinct from his, Tattiney acts her 'proper' elitist part by shunning her suitor. The phrase "scene-self" has obvious theatrical implications and quickly informs the audience of the character's tendency to construct herself in a deliberate, rehearsed manner. Courtley and Presumption reinforce the theatricality of Luceny and Tattiney, the Calsindow sisters, before the heroines appear on-stage:

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[32] Parts of this section derive from my article "Voicing the Feminine and the (Absent) Masculinity in The Concealed Fancies" (*Women and the Gendering of Talk, Gossip and Communication Practices across Media.* Ed. Sarah Burcon and Melissa Ames. McFarland Press. 2011. 75-89.)

"Presumption: Come let's go to them and see how they will act their scenes. Courtley: Agreed. I'll see your mistress, and you shall see mine, in their posture of coyness" (I.i.52-55). Again, the stress that Presumption places on the "scenes" that Tattiney and her sister play hints that their behavior is deliberate. In Act I, scene iv, the sisters affirm this. Luceny echoes Courtley and Presumption when she inquires as to her sister's humor in courtship and asks, "Prithee, tell me how you acted your scene?" (I.iv.1-3). When Tattiney, the younger sister, defers to the elder's experience, Luceny reveals how she calculates her encounters with her suitors, Courtley and Corpolant. She plans her "scenes." The two sisters are studied players in the courtship game and their rehearsed behavior, the audience sees, will extend into the sisters' married lives.

Throughout the play, Luceny and Tattiney explicate how they will enact wifehood. At once accepting gender norms and disparaging associated power imbalances, Luceny and Tattiney project authority and liberty onto their married selves. Luceny rejects her sister's suggestion that "'I take thee' shall alter me" (I.iv.43). Courtship and marriage become game-like for Luceny, as she plans to "cheat" male cunning (I.iv.45) and boasts "of making who I please believe I am an obedient fool" (II.iii.137-8). She anticipates playing rather than earnestly occupying a subordinate wifely position. Luceny affirms this once married: she refuses to be a slavish "mechanical wife" (Epilogue 40). Therefore, while she fulfills her heteronormative role as wife, it is only with reluctant obedience rather than complaisance, thereby undermining the role itself. Mirroring this, Tattiney resists her husband's authority. Recalling, "I gave [Presumption] a modest return of wife, and yet appeared his mistress" (Epilogue 81-2), she focuses on the outward performance of wifehood. Also, gesturing towards the tension between proper female modesty and potentially threatening female authority, Tattiney dwells on the social reception of wifely performances. She asserts the value of equality in her marriage and derides "those people that will not understand matrimony is to join lovers" (Epilogue 86-7). Strategizing and reflecting upon their demeanor in courtship and marriage enable the sisters to gain authority and, thereby, challenge normative positions without fully disrupting them.

In parallel to the Calsindow sisters, Courtley and Presumption discuss how they will instill obedience in their spouses. Again implicitly referring to theatrical performance—and now echoing Luceny—Presumption asks his friend, "Prithee, how pretend you?" (III.iii.57).

Courtley replies, "Faith, I pretend to possess my sweet Luceny of my sincere affection, and if I can to make her passionately love me, and so to gain her father's friendship, and then by love to gain her observancy" (58-62). The goal of his pretense is to establish equality and friendship in his future marriage. In contrast, Presumption expresses his intent to control his (soon to be) wife, "teach[ing] her fashion to obey" (III.iii.38-9, 44). To render Tattiney "a fool" and establish himself as "a true kind husband" (III.iii.92, 95), Presumption plans to manage her attire. He will "let her know that garb, that doth best become her, is ill-favored" (3.3.11-12) and allot her "once a year . . . a gown in fashion" (3.3.31). In this way, although England's sumptuary laws were abolished in 1604, Brackley and Cavendish's *The Concealed Fancies* highlights the social significance of clothing.[33] As women were unable to own any property in the milieu, including their clothing, clothes demonstrated the dependency of women on their husbands (Worsley 71). Yet, the sisters anticipate the imposition of patriarchal authority:

> Luceny: . . . Presumption doth throw his cloak as if he intended to govern you.
> Tattiney: Aye, but as I hope to continue my own, I will make him lay his cloak off if his carriage be to slight me . . .
> Luceny: You're right for I intend to be the same with Courtley. (2.3.106-110, 114-115)

Recognizing the intentions of their suitors to exert patriarchal power, both of the female leads defend their own abilities to determine their dress and, linked to this, behavior as wives.

Although women could not own clothing, their role in the production of clothes and costumes in the early modern period, particularly for theatrical use, allowed them entry into a potentially authorizing space. Therefore, clothing represents potentiality for female authority. Natasha Korda emphasizes women's roles in "the production of stage-props, costumes, and scenery for masques and other court entertainments" (214), noting that "[b]ecause women worked in great numbers in the textile and clothing trades, they were particularly actively involved in the manufacture and retail of costumes, props made out of fabric, and other fashion accessories" (212). In *The Concealed Fancies*, the female leads attempt to control their roles and self-representation, and Alison Findlay rightly contends that

[33] Passed in 1363, the first sumptuary law in England was titled "Statute Concerning Diet and Apparel." Queen Elizabeth's sumptuary law was reinforced by her declaration in Greenwich on June 15, 1574.

Brackley and Cavendish fashion clothes as "tools of resistance for Luceny and Tattiney" (Findlay, "She gave you" 268). In the convent, they give the first poor woman a "bow of hope" (4.1.15), or a ribbon, to alleviate her grief. The gift of a ribbon suggests that clothes and accessories afford women agency, or the hope of agency. In addition, it is strongly evident that Luceny and Tattiney will not be submissive housewives and will use clothing as a means to protest their subordinate position; still, they also remain dutiful wives, holding their "petulant garb" (Epilogue 79). For instance, in the Epilogue of the play, Luceny asserts, "I looked soberly, as if I would strictly observe him, yet dressed myself contrary to his instruction, and my behavior was according to my dress" (14-17). She also explains that she will "a wife in show appear / . . . I'll look as if obey" (V.v.3, 6). Thereby, Luceny claims to pretend obedience while tacitly asserting control over her body. The attention paid to accessories and clothing anticipates Restoration emphasis on "appearances and dress" (Hopkins 36), and with power linked to appearances in *The Concealed Fancies*, clothing is connected to agency. However, it is not only a tool for women. The action of the play casts doubt on the extent to which Luceny and Tattiney exercise authority and, despite the sisters' calculated self-presentations, the male leads strategically use disguise to mitigate the potential for female power.

In the fourth act, the male-driven capture of Ballamo interrupts the performances of the Calsindow sisters. Consequently, Luceny and Tattiney defer courtship and assume roles as nuns, donning habits. Their identities as players diminish, as do their prospective wifely positions. Most significantly, they look beyond their own artifice. Rather than rehearse or reflect upon "scenes," they advise and bless the poor. Yet, the sisters' suitors still consider the young women as engaging in play, viewing their nun positions and garb as part of the game of courtship. Despite Luceny's election of celibacy, Courtley woos her and refers to his own "hopeful vows" (IV.i.39). She scolds him for "profan[ing] [her] sacred priesthood" (IV.i.44), and her song emphasizes her—and by extension her sister's—chastity, sacred position, and grief at the imprisonment of her cousins. This causes Presumption to mock Tattiney:

> And I have found thy most sacred self here,
> Whose presence turns all sex to joy, not fear.
> So I'll kneel with adoration to thee

. . .

. . . that a she

Should thus so like a pure just goddess be. (IV.i.57-9, 63-4)

He sees her new role as an alternate, but highly artificial, self and gives her credit for *appearing* "so like a pure just goddess." Tattiney's response to her suitor echoes Luceny: she decries his attitude towards her new position as a woman religious and then expresses sadness. Moreover, she conveys shock that Presumption would "speak to [her] as if [she] were not true" (IV.i.66), that is, as if she were continuing to present a theatricalized self. In this scene, Luceny and Tattiney work to assert chaste identities, but, similar to Wroth's shepherdesses, other characters undermine them. Courtley and Presumption, in effect, cannot accept their mistresses' retirement from the courtship game and rejection of player roles. Therefore, the suitors turn to pictures—a concrete representation of artificial self—to admire their ladies before devising a plot to unravel Tattiney and Luceny's newfound positions as women religious.

Courtley and Presumption reassert masculine authority, as they convince their ladies to "*remove their nuns' habits and put on the ordinary cloaks*" (stage direction following V.iii.38). Moreover, the men reinstate the playing and restore the sisters to self-conscious performers: Tattiney quickly inquires, "How do I in this habit look?" (V.iii.41). Luceny and Tattiney's costume changes reflect their unstable identities: as their positions shift so does their garb. Courtley and Presumption take advantage of this instability, manipulating Luceny and Tattiney into rejoining the courting game through play and costuming. Like their mistresses, Courtley and Presumption self-consciously perform roles as suitors. Pointing to his artifice, Tattiney instructs Presumption to declare "how rarely [he has] acted [his] part" (II.ii.25). Further emphasizing their theatricality in courtship, Courtley and Presumption mimic masque conventions, employing godly disguises and devices, to strip Tattiney and Luceny of their nuns' habits and win the approval of Monsieur Calsindow. The authority the male leads possess over their own costumes extends to control over their future wives' clothing, fulfilling Presumption's desire. Courtley also proves the power of clothing when he deploys a costume earlier in *The Concealed Fancies* to trick Corpolant, the competing suitor, in an attempt to impress Luceny. The audience is privy to the quickly-hatched plan when Presumption and Courtley "*step aside*" from the intended victim: "Courtley: Now

[Corpolant's] drinking, I'll put myself in the habit of one of my mistress' servants and see if I can cozen him of his pouch of gold. Presumption: It will be worth your change of habit." (II.i.81-4). Disguise becomes central to Courtley and Presumption's tricks and clothing and appearance become key to 'winning' in courtship.

The centrality of clothing in *The Concealed Fancies* accentuates the theatrical artifice of the characters, as well as a consciousness of spectators. Costumes are a vital component in the visual element of play. Though the male characters underscore their own performances, Katherine O. Acheson turns her attention back to "the women [who] are archly artificial, acknowledge themselves as performers, and appear to believe they can exploit the gaze to their advantage" (9). As the female characters anticipate male reception of their performances and the male characters observe, the gaze of the patriarch becomes important. Courtley and Presumption, I have noted, perceive their mistresses' behavior. Moreover, Luceny "view[s] herself by all so looked upon" (V.vi.13). The male gaze appears most prominently in Ballamo castle, where Luceny and Tattiney's cousins play even in their captivity. Catherine Burroughs has examined the sexual undertones of the scene in which the cousins, Sh., Is., and Cicilley, invade the private male space of the closet. In the scene, Sh. particularly wishes to cast the absent patriarch as a spectator (Burroughs 27). To escape French lessons and entertain themselves, the three young women look for and then take their patriarchal friend's cakes. As they consider this friend's possible reaction to this invasion, Sh. says, "I wish he saw us in a prospective" (III.iv.47). Sh. proposes further recreation for the following day, which entails "pick[ing] his cabinet locks" to explore his love tokens (III.iv.72). The besieged cousins' invasion of the cordials and cabinets might mimic one of the Cavendish sisters' own diversions while in captivity and the Duke of Newcastle—assuming he was a reader or spectator of this scene—might have suspected such.

Aside from bringing the patriarchal gaze to the forefront in the cordials scene, the subplot of the imprisoned cousins serves two purposes. First, the capture of Ballamo—and thereby Is., Sh., and Cicilley—incites Tattiney and Luceny's (temporary) turn away from artifice. Second, contrasting this, the cousins mirror the protagonists and replicate the theatricality that is inherent in their behavior and dress. At Ballamo, the besieged castle, the three cousins explicitly relate their behavior to scripted performance play. Findlay rightly observes that Sh. and Cicilley, two of the cousins, "deliberately theatricalize their status as

victims" ("Upon" 76). Like actors reflecting on a performance, they review how they behaved and appeared during the seizure of their home:

> Sh.: Pray, how did I look in the posture of a delinquent?
>
> Cicilley: You mean how did you behave yourself in the posture of a delinquent?
>
> . . . And how did I look?
>
> Sh.: As yourself; that's great, though in misfortune.
>
> Cicilley: So did you.
>
> Sh.: How should I do otherwise, for I practised Cleopatra when she was in her captivity
>
> . . . I would have performed his gallant tragedy and so have made myself glorious for time to come. (III.iv.4-18)

The opening of the dialogue here is interesting, because Cicilley corrects Sh.'s use of the word "look." Cicilley replaces "look" with "behave," suggesting an important distinction between the two terms. However, after analyzing her sister's behavior, she reverts to the question, "And how did I look?" Ending the analysis of their own performances, Sh. indicates her penchant for acting, even implying that her hypothetical performance of Shakespeare's Cleopatra would garner her fame. Certainly it would draw attention, as only male actors would have filled the role on the English stage at that point. Her interest in theatrical performance, though, is primarily of note because of the similarities and differences between the cousins' play and Tattiney and Luceny's theatrical artifice. Whereas the Calsindow sisters primarily use play in their negotiation of heteronormative roles, the cousins at Ballamo work to "recreate [them]selves" (III.iv.24) and their identities—as captives—more pointedly. Similar to Luceny and Tattiney, Is., Sh. and Cicilley sing, but do so more in sport, paralleling the pastoral characters' play in *Love's Victory*. To open Act V, the cousins sing a song in which they play at freedom:

> Cicilley: Let us merrily think.
>
> Is.: Now we're at liberty,
>
> Cicilley: What we shall wish to thee,
>
> Is.: 'Gainst we you married see.
>
> Cicilley: Think not of beauty,
>
> Is.: Nor of duty,

Cicilley: But, resolve to be —

Is.: A pretty toying she! (V.i.2-9)

Like the Calsindow sisters, the cousins attempt to shape their positions through play. Yet, the besieged cousins do not establish themselves—or their ideal selves—in specific relation to heteronormativity; rather, they want to be wistful and free, physically and from "duty." Their explicit "resolve" to achieve freedom through play contrasts the more implicit impulse for greater liberty from heteronormative conventions that Luceny and Tattiney seek through play. Therefore, the cousins at Ballamo serve to establish the Calsindow sisters' identities as players in search of freedom.

Cavendish and Brackley set Luceny and Tattiney up as young women who pursue a wifely role, but who resist its constrictions. In their comedy, the early female playwrights support their characters' exploration of gender boundaries by creating character pairs. The clearest examples of this are Luceny/Tattiney and Courtley/Presumption: both Luceny and Tattiney are hyper-aware of constrictions associated with marriage and look to subvert norms; both Courtley and Presumption pursue one of the Calsindow sisters and play dress-up in their pursuit. This is not to say that the characters are in no way distinct. Especially in the case of the Calsindow sisters, Luceny conveys more self-assuredness and does not solicit advice to the extent that Tattiney does. Nonetheless, the overlaps between Luceny and Tattiney and Courtley and Presumption sometimes render the characterizations indistinct. Interestingly, the sad shepherdesses of "A Pastorall" and their suitors similarly possess few distinguishing features. I suggest that the overlapping of female characters within both of the Cavendish sisters' dramas secures the boundary-pushing explorations regarding the heteronormative wifely role. For instance, a shepherdess would stand out as deviant if the sad shepherdesses did not all defer marriage in "A Pastorall." Likewise, were only one sister in *The Concealed Fancies* to challenge the woman's subservient position in relation to wifehood, critics might dismiss her as 'the deviant one.' Because the fictional sisters stand united in their manipulation of their suitors and in their questioning of prescriptions, a critique of seventeenth-century norms emerges more strongly. The attention paid to the patriarch in the conclusions of "A Pastorall" and *The Concealed Fancies* pointedly reaffirms the submissiveness of the shepherdesses, the Calsindow sisters, and the playwrights

themselves. Nonetheless, the Cavendish sisters bolster the potentially deviant opinions and behaviors of their lead female characters by not positioning one of them as the 'outlier.'

If the intermingling of characterizations in the Cavendish sisters' dramas supports the female characters' challenging of gender norms, how does this affect the playwrights' own self-constructions? I suggest that the way in which the three besieged cousins at Ballamo pretend to have liberty indicates the function of *The Concealed Fancies* itself. Performance play enables the Cavendish sisters' freedom, even if it was only an imagined 'interlude' in ordinary life. The characters of the household drama consciously enact roles and scenes in order to explore the tensions between particular identities—wife and mistress, husband and master, prisoner and self-governor—and attempt to forge an identity. In parallel, through playing, Brackley and Cavendish consider the implications of freedom and imprisonment, and independence and wifehood. Like Luceny and Tattiney, the playwrights support each other's exploration of heteronormative boundaries.

V. "Playing the scene self": The Cavendishes, Play, and Self-Representation

The cousins at Ballamo play by "practis[ing] Cleopatra" and imagining that they are "at liberty"; likewise, the Cavendish sisters play by crafting and assuming roles as the cousins and the protagonists in *The Concealed Fancies*. Brackley and Cavendish grew up in a household that hosted entertainments, some written by Ben Jonson for royalty. Yet, their father, the Duke of Newcastle, also penned dramatic pieces that they likely would have seen in (some form of) performance. The Cavendish sisters would have been exposed to, and probably would have engaged in, performance play before they wrote *The Concealed Fancies*. I argue that the sisters use their comedy and the playing it proffers as sources of pleasure and diversion during the Civil War, but also as tools to navigate identities and relationships that were in flux. With their father and brothers in France, the Cavendish sisters struggled to preserve Newcastle's property. Despite the Parliamentarian capture of the family estates, Welbeck and Bolsover, Newcastle's three daughters remained at the former property in direct parallel to Is., Sh., and Cicilley at Ballamo. This is significant because the estate is a concrete remnant of their father. It represents a connection between the women (both real-life and fictional) and their absent family.

The Cavendish sisters' play serves to sustain this link, boasting roman à clef features that are impossible to deny. Appropriately, scholars, including Comfort Starr, Findlay, and Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, have addressed the link between the characters and the playwrights. Just as Wroth inserts herself into *Love's Victory*, the playwrights of *The Concealed Fancies* map their wartime struggles onto two sets of fictional characters: "the three besieged cousins represent Jane, Elizabeth and [younger sister] Frances, although the first two sisters are also mirrored in the play's heroines, Luceny and Tattiney" (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies 129). Affected by the absence of the patriarch—which they emphatically represent in "A Pastorall"—the Cavendish sisters also entrench their male relatives in their comedy. In particular, Cerasano and Wynne-Davies identify the Stellow brothers as the playwrights' real-life brothers, Charles and Henry, and Monsieur Calsindow as Newcastle, as well as the soon-to-be Duchess of Newcastle as Lady Tranquility (129). Wroth imprints her potential subversion of norms into her play, but the two possible familial allusions temper reception. In contrast, and partly because the allusions in *The Concealed Fancies* are more marked, complexities in terms of performative potential arise.

If Lady Tranquility is in fact a caricature of Brackley and Cavendish's stepmother, the play may have, in part, caused the strain that I noted in the last chapter between Newcastle and his daughters. Margarete Rubik contends that *The Concealed Fancies* influenced Margaret (Lucas) Cavendish's comedies—implying that she was familiar with her stepdaughters' writing—but also notes that a performance of the play in front of (Lucas) Cavendish would have been in bad taste (16). Therefore, Rubik indicates that the allusion to Margaret Lucas is not only pointedly clear, but offensive. But why would the Cavendish sisters want to offend their father's love interest and, by extension, Newcastle himself? Assuming the play was composed before Newcastle's remarriage, the sisters may have satirized Margaret Lucas to incite him to reconsider courting the young lady. The household drama's embodiment of the patriarch, Monsieur Calsindow, rejects marriage. It is also possible that Lady Tranquility does not specifically or solely represent Margaret Lucas. Lady Tranquility and Toy—a second option for Calsindow—might, rather, signal Newcastle's sexual prowess. He was, after all, rumored to have affairs with household staff (Worsley 122). Either way, to critique their father's love life would be presumptuous and convey disrespect in a way that contradicts the admiration that Brackley and Cavendish

convey in numerous verses and dedications. Perhaps, then, they wrote the play without intending to send it to Newcastle. As with "A Pastorall," the patriarch, living in exile, would be absent for a theatrical performance of *The Concealed Fancies*. Trying to avoid their father's displeasure might also account for the play's exclusion from the Beinecke manuscript. Yet, as I discuss below, Newcastle was likely acquainted with the play. Further, the prefatory and concluding material of *The Concealed Fancies* indicates that the play is meant to please "his Lordship," presumably Newcastle. Acheson rightly observes that "The whole performance is offered . . . by the authors and the characters to their father, and their control of the scopic economy must be seen as limited within his purview" (9). Specifically, "An epilogue, in particular to your Lordship" parallels the verses that follow Brackley and Cavendish's pastoral, where entreaties for patriarchal approval are explicit. Similar to the cousins' scene at Ballamo castle, Tattiney requests that, to show his approval of the play, the Lord a "cordial give" (Epilogue 127). Therefore, the epilogue of *The Concealed Fancies* casts the Lordship as spectator—"Then are our scenes even happy in your sight" (110)—and limns him as a reader, referring to the play as "pen and ink" rather than theatrical performance (124). Whether on the stage or on the page, the performance play of Luceny and Tattiney, and of the Cavendish sisters, falls under the male gaze. The early female playwrights perform for the patriarch.

Insulated and inspired by their father and his estates, Brackley and Cavendish's performance playing pays homage to the dramatic mode to which scholars predominantly attach Newcastle, Cavalier drama. Alfred Harbage delineates key features of the mode's plots, including conflict between neighboring places, the "Rival Friend Dilemma," and the "Child Recovered" motif (31-33). These features appear in *The Concealed Fancies*, with some in modified form. First, the conflict manifests overtly in the capture of Ballamo; second, the lead characters all demonstrate friendly rivalries in terms of 'being the best player,' and Corpolant's role as failed suitor tacitly lends itself to the "Rival Friend Dilemma"; finally, the sisters lose security in identity and the cousins at Ballamo lose physical security, though these losses are only partly recovered. Further, *The Concealed Fancies* aligns with Harbage's characterization of Cavalier plays as "not racy and roistering comedies" (28). There is a sense of decorum that pervades the playing in which the Cavendish sisters' characters engage. For instance, the male leads hope to see their

mistresses in the "posture of coyness" (I.i.52-55), and, indeed Luceny and Tattiney are not forward in courting their love interests. Also, though they challenge their subordinance to the patriarch, the cousins at Ballamo idealize being "A pretty toying she" (V.i.2-9). The Cavendish sisters, therefore, render a playtext appropriate for their Cavalier father. It fell under his gaze, as Newcastle seems to have been familiar with *The Concealed Fancies*. His approval is implied by his reuse of some names from the play in his "The Humorous Lovers" (1677) (Hopkins 37). His references to his daughters' play and Margaret (Lucas) Cavendish's presumed use of the play suggest that *The Concealed Fancies* did not offend, but rather inspired, the Newcastles. How they interpreted Lady Tranquility and the disruption of Monsieur Calsindow's sexuality can only be speculated. However, I suggest that it is most likely that they recognized the (Cavalier) household drama as an exercise in play, where artifice and the intersection of the imaginary and the real are necessary.

While the Cavendish sisters write and 'play' the fictional women of *The Concealed Fancies* in response to their father's absences and rumored liaisons, they also use the forum of play to explore the boundaries surrounding gender roles and their shifting socio-economic identities. Like Wroth in *Love's Victory*, the Cavendish sisters imagine more than one alternate self. The division of Brackley and Cavendish into two character sets, the Calsindow sisters and the cousins at Ballamo, enables and reflects self-dissociation as much as construction of the self in relation to social groupings.

The overlapping characterizations of Luceny and Tattiney work to establish an intimate coterie that reflects the closeness between the playwrights themselves. Brackley and Cavendish render fictionalized versions of themselves who are inseparable mentally and physically. This applies to the protagonists and their besieged cousins. Parallels in the emotional journeys of Luceny and Tattiney—from plotting love-seekers to retreating nuns to gossiping wives—connect to the spaces that they both inhabit. As well, the cousins, isolated at Ballamo, unite as captives. By the time their father's estates were threatened by Parliamentarian forces, Brackley and Cavendish would have experienced some separation due to the former's marriage. What the emphasis on inseparable women suggests, therefore, is that the sister playwrights worked to sustain their bond. Even war does not disrupt 'sisterly feelings,' as Findlay would put it, and the connection between the Calsindow sisters and their cousins at Ballamo affirms the strength of these feelings.

The Cavendish sisters represent wartime captivity alongside courtship game-play and artifice, contemplating their doubly-confined positions as victims of war and of patriarchal strictures. Only the cousins are captured. Yet, Luceny and Tattiney's grief at the event seems greater than that of Sh., Is., and Cicilley who keep playing. Colonel Free and Corpolant attribute the female protagonists' turn to the nunnery to male absence (III.v.2-4). However, the scenes of the sisters and the cousins mimic each other in shifts of mood, suggesting the link between them. Physically unrestrained, Luceny and Tattiney respond to the seizure of Ballamo and their cousins by restraining their own sexuality and mobility. This elected constraint might offer more freedom from heteronormative roles than playing, and through it the Cavendish sisters indicate their own reactions to the Parliamentarian capture of family estates. Brackley and Cavendish's mobility and security were affected by Parliamentarian forces, but the sisters—like those in *The Concealed Fancies*—also defer heterosexual relationships and focus on their sisterly relationship. As I discussed in the last chapter, Brackley remained distant from her husband for the first few years of marriage and Cavendish did not marry until 1654.

Even as the Cavendish sisters point towards their war-time experiences, they also suggest a detachment from it. Brenda J. Liddy argues that "The female solidarity in the face of poverty and ruination represented in . . . *The Concealed Fancies* proves that women are important agents in conflict and post-conflict situations" (194). As noted above, however, female authority is complex. Luceny and Tattiney certainly grieve the situation of Is., Sh., and Cicilley; yet, all of the female characters passively await rescue. This contrasts the managerial role that Cavendish, in particular, adopted in her father's absence. Further, it is thanks to the playing of Courtley and Presumption and the return of the patriarch that Luceny and Tattiney are able to rise above grief, and as far as they know their cousins still suffer in confinement. Especially once Luceny and Tattiney hear of Monsieur Calsindow's return, any concern for Is., Sh., and Cicilley disappears. This suggests that, despite the link between the Calsindow sisters and their cousins, male authority threatens female homosocial bonds. The Cavendish sisters highlight this threat, with separation between the two sets of characters emerging through the physical separation between the protagonists and their cousins, both in the context of the play's settings and in the representation of the action through the scenes. Luceny and Tattiney only appear on the stage alongside their Is., Sh., or Cicilley once and

never speak to each other. This indicates the thematic undercurrent of wartime separation, but also suggests the potency of male presence, as patriarchal figures trump besieged cousins.

In her exploration of gender performativity in *The Concealed Fancies*, Findlay highlights the way in which the (presumed) casting of Cavendish and Brackley in the roles of Tattiney and Luceny "evokes gender sameness" ("Playing the 'Scene Self'" 169). However, Findlay's emphasis on the real-life sisters and the play-world sisters results in a disproportionately small discussion of the position of the male characters and the real-life men that they represent. As there is, quite inconveniently, no cast list provided in the manuscript, it is impossible to know which role was performed by which actor. Findlay makes it clear that Brackley and Cavendish's play was intended for performance, and that the authors likely took on the lead roles. In "Sisterly Feelings in Cavendish and Brackley's Drama," Findlay specifically casts Brackley as Tattiney: "Elizabeth, playing Tattiney, was already married, and therefore well entitled to the confidence of presuming to teach her elder sibling about courtship" (197). However, Tattiney asserts that "a younger sister cannot have the confidence to teach an elder" (I.iv.5). Therefore, if confidence demarcates Brackley for Findlay, then the young playwright might better occupy the role of Luceny, who displays stronger self-assurance than Tattiney. Still, both casting choices are feasible and the Cavendish sisters also probably played, along with younger sister Frances, the cousins at Ballamo. Doublecasting is possible given mobility constraints during the Civil War and would account for the lack of scenes between the protagonists and their cousins (although some staging problems might arise in the final scene where both sets of characters appear, Is., Sh., and Cicilley could easily remain off-stage).[34] Furthermore, it heightens the meta-theatricality: the Cavendish sisters each play more than one character, who also play divergent parts. It is also possible that Brackley and Cavendish took on male roles as well as the female leads. Drag is an important component of early modern theatre. Male actors performed as female characters, and numerous Shakespearean characters, for example, cross-dress. *Twelfth Night's* Viola, *Cymbeline's* Innogen, and *The Merchant of Venice's* Portia, to name a few, benefit through donning male disguises. Moreover, those who performed in *The*

[34] Lisa Hopkins discusses doublecasting in "Judith Shakespeare's Reading: Teaching the Concealed Fancies" (*Shakespeare Quarterly* 47.4 (Winter 1996): 396-406).

Concealed Fancies may have been dressed in drag, reinforcing the centrality of costuming in the drama. Brackley and Cavendish's male relatives were absent during the presumed time of production of *The Concealed Fancies*; there are, though, twenty male roles to cast in the play, many of which can be easily double cast. Cerasano and Wynne-Davies note that, alongside the three Cavendish girls, their two brothers may have been included on a cast list, had one existed (129). However, because of the absence of the Cavendish sisters' father and brothers, it is likely that the male servants of Welbeck Abbey performed as the male characters. This is not unprecedented. It is evident that household servants, or, rather, the servants' children, participated in the household dramas of Rachel Fane. Nonetheless, that the play's authors cast themselves or their sister in male roles is not unthinkable.

The play element pervades *The Concealed Fancies* in a way that simultaneously adheres to and subverts theatrical and gender conventions. Brackley and Cavendish parody their future stepmother, their family, and themselves "in [their] captivity." They do not take courtship and marriage seriously, but, rather, render it as a sport with the men and women reflecting upon dress and behavior as they play roles. Focusing on the historical context of war, Liddy contends that "In this increasingly fragmented world, they [the women of *The Concealed Fancies*] find a way to deal with the trauma—a way that is both positive and constructive" (85). For the Cavendish sisters themselves, playing, from more 'private' imaginings of alternate selves to more 'public' performance play of these selves, becomes central to the way in which Brackley and Cavendish cope with the Parliamentarian seizure of their homes. The overarching game of Brackley and Cavendish's household drama is play itself. The prologue and epilogue material establish the work as an interlude in 'ordinary' life—with no "plot in any act/ Nor any rigid, high, ignoble fact" (Prologue 15-6)—that solicits patriarchal approval even as it displays the playwrights' wit and skill. The sisters engage in play through *The Concealed Fancies* because it provides temporary freedom from everyday life and identity. At the same time, by creating intersections with their real lives and social roles, the Cavendish sisters examine their status and reflect upon their insecurity. Play might be freedom in itself, but the Cavendish sisters also imagine restored freedom and stability through theatrical play.

VI. Conclusion: Freedom in Play

Play manifests in markedly different ways in *Love's Victory* and *The Concealed Fancies*. Wroth depicts rhetorical competition and organized play that fall within the boundaries of Venus' gaming. In contrast, Brackley and Cavendish construct courtship and marriage as games that demand theatrical artifice. Despite the divergent representations of play, both household dramas foreground its utility in self-presentation and self-definition. Wroth and the Cavendish sisters primarily depict non-theatrical playing in their household dramas, but the audience-awareness that pervades both plays, especially *The Concealed Fancies*, points back to performance play. The early female playwrights create potential freedom from their real-life roles by setting up and engaging in theatrical play. In playing, there is a temporal separation—a choice to suspend ordinary life and identity for play—but I contend that the intimacy of household theatricals *depends* upon the intersection of home and stage.

Huizinga suggests that there is freedom in play. However, there are also constrictions. The playing that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters represent in their dramas conveys this tension between liberty and limitations, extending this tension to the navigation of female roles in the milieu. If playing offered freedom to these early female playwrights, they likely sought it because of the constraints they faced as women in a patriarchal system. Yet, as I argued in the last chapter, insecurity and loss are productive for Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, as they refigure their relationship to the patriarch through a pastoral lens. Even as they expose the anxieties and instabilities surrounding parallel identities, in occupying an authorial position, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters perform yet another role. Seventeenth-century female authorship was fraught with insecurities, layering onto those already possessed by these three women. However, to then limn Wroth, Brackley, and Cavendish as uniformly sad, dispossessed, and anxiety-driven is misguided and unsubstantiated by evidence. The identifications of Mary Wroth, Jane Cavendish, and Elizabeth Brackley are complex and reflect the shifting status of women within seventeenth-century culture more broadly, and specifically in relation to theatre. Through the intimate household theatrical mode, the pastoral mode, and play, these early female playwrights question the parameters of the normative roles that they occupied. There may be freedom in

play, but, as these early female playwrights demonstrate, there is also potential for agency and productive self-construction through play.

Chapter Four

Continuities between the Court, the Closet, the Household, and the Playhouse

I. Drama and Female Identity in the (Extended) Seventeenth Century

In the first chapter of this project, I argued that Wroth's *Love's Victory* and the Cavendish sisters' *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" exemplify the intimacy of household theatre, and thereby privilege insulation from the scrutiny of 'public' dissemination over political or commercial interests. They engage with theatrical play in order to explore their identities within the context of early Stuart England, but these explorations are very much protected by the space—physical and rhetorical—of the household. Defining and securing the self is what is at stake in their plays and the dramatic mode that they employ. Yet, their impulse to question normative gender roles and to do so through theatrical play necessitates a widening of scope to consider the place of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters in relation to women's early theatrical compositions and performances outside of the household. Like Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, other women participating in drama in the milieu did not play only for play's sake. For women like Elizabeth I, Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke, and Aphra Behn the stakes of playing manifest 'outward,' extending into 'public' claims of identity. Tracing women's position in theatre from the late Tudor period to the Restoration, some discontinuities arise in terms of the role and identity that female playwrights and performers *want to claim* and why. This chapter will examine the ways in which women sought security through dramatic productions on-the-page and on-the-stage. Although affinities to Wroth and the Cavendish sisters appear, it is attempts to attain political status, 'public' authorial prestige, or income that primarily motivate female dramatic presences in the (extended) seventeenth century.

The paid 'professionals' of the 1660s and 1670s have garnered much scholarly attention, more than the intimate performance play of household theatre, with scholars predominantly projecting their gaze towards the Restoration when considering women's early participation in theatre. It is only recently that critical attention has turned to uncovering the modes and means through which women contributed to the *early modern* stage. The recovery of women's writing and women's place in theatrical performance has been the task of feminist scholars in the past few decades, and much has been recovered:

female playwrights, performers, patrons, and producers of materials. Specifically, in their introduction to *Women and Dramatic Production, 1550-1700*, Alison Findlay and Stephanie Hodgson-Wright cast their eye towards women's pre-Restoration participation in theatre, specifically theatrical performances, so as to undo the privileging of "the professional over the amateur, the public over the private, and the commercial over the non-profit making" (12). Justifying Findlay and Hodgson-Wright's concern with these imbalances, Nancy Cotton privileges Aphra Behn's 'theatrical' writing in her investigation of early female playwrights (60), which points to the noteworthy appearance of women in the 'public' Restoration playhouses even as it elides the earlier and contemporaneous theatrical contributions of elite women. Indeed, interrogating and weakening the boundaries between the 'professional' and 'amateur,' the 'public' and 'private' (and 'intimate'), and the commercial and non-profit making is as important as undoing imbalances, as the relationship between women's early modern plays and performances and women's venture into 'public' playwriting and acting demands more examination.

Studies on the first female players on the London stages focus predominantly on the novelty, sexualization, or exploitation of the first actresses, while paying insufficient attention to what precisely led to the emergence of women on the 'public' stage at the re-opening of the playhouses. Elite women had played onstage before—albeit on courtly or home stages—so what incited the presence of women in 'public' theatre, both as 'professional' actors the playhouse stages and as 'professional' playwrights? I contend that, to begin to understand the marked appearance of women in theatre in the Restoration, we must analyze continuities between female presences in the court, the 'closet,' the household, and on the 'commercial' stage. For instance, do the theatrical compositions and performances of the early Stuart period enable the work of Katherine Philips, Aphra Behn, or Nell Gwynn, and their explorations of gender roles? Because questions remain about how women came to 'public' theatrical space, tracing such links is, at the best times, precarious. Further, many earlier female presences in drama were contained within manuscripts or enclosed performances; therefore, it is highly improbable that women writing for the Restoration stage encountered works like *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, or "A Pastorall."[35] Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to begin to consider a *more* coherent history of

[35] One notable exception is Margaret (Lucas) Cavendish, who very probably read the Cavendish sisters' plays.

women in theatre, one that does not embolden what Paul Salzman calls the "artificial dividing line that is drawn at 1660" (3).

The scope of this chapter is too broad to give due attention to any one playwright or performer. Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle, and Aphra Behn take up more space than others, but it is still not proportionate to their significant contributions. Yet, my objective here is not to analyze individual dramatic pieces and performances, but rather to find patterns in how women render their own positions through their dramatic works, and how this reflects and inflects the social position of women more broadly. Because the women to whom I attend here turn their playtexts and theatrical performances 'outward'—they predominantly open up their self-constructions and performances to an audience that is beyond the household and, for women in the milieu, is relatively broad—I consider the effect of this 'outwardness' on their status. Does freedom enter their performance play? For instance, does entering the male-dominated realms of publication and theatre increase or restrict liberty as performers and playwrights? To what extent and to what end do women capitalize on the 'publicness' of their plays and performances?

Looking at divergent female presences in drama is not only productive in discerning what is at stake for these women. It also offers insight into the shift of female playwriting and performance from the context of household, closet, and courtly drama to the context of 'public' commercial theatre. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is twofold. First, I work to diminish the boundary between the early modern 'closet' and the Restoration 'public' stage by looking for continuities between the presences of seventeenth-century women in drama. With this in mind, I examine theatrical performance in terms of mode, permeating periodic boundaries, rather than focusing chiefly on chronology. Second, to support my consideration of continuities, I attend to the purpose behind the dramatic product and how it connects to the construction of identity. If the household plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters are noteworthy because the stakes lie in constructing a secure self in an unstable social context, then it seems as though the other female dramatists and performers of the seventeenth century, by contrast, might privilege the political, the 'public,' and the commercial to the exclusion of personal anxieties. Yet, concern with identity and security still emerges, though in divergent ways. While maintaining the distinction that household plays like *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" sustain intimacy, I contend that women

operating in other dramatic modes in the milieu also assert identity through play. The stakes and levels of dissemination might differ, but at the core is women's growing dissatisfaction with constrictive gender roles and spaces.

II. Positioning Women in the Early Theatrical Space

An excerpt from Loretta's prologue in *Swetnam the woman-hater arraigned by women*, which was staged in 1618 or 1619 and published in 1620, exemplifies the complexities surrounding women's participation in theatre in seventeenth-century England:

> *How wee shall cleere our selves, there lyes the doubt.*
> *The men, I know, will laugh, when they shall heare*
> *Us rayl'd at, and abused; and say, 'Tis well,*
> *We all deserve asmuch. Let [them] laugh on.*
> *Lend but your kind assistance; you shall see*
> *We will not be ore-come with Infamie,*
> *And slanders, that we never merited.*
> *Be but you patient, I dare boldly say,*
> *(If ever women pleased) weele please to day.* (5-13)

Loretta is simultaneously defensive, defiant, and placating. Her speech, and the entire anonymous comedy, responds to a misogynistic tract by Joseph Swetnam, *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (1615), and the defenses of women that appeared in the following years. In this opening passage from the play, Loretta positions women squarely on stage, in the purview of the men who "laugh" at (probably Swetnam's) abuse of women. Yet, she is primarily addressing her female spectators. Identifying herself as a slandered woman, using the pronoun "we," she takes the stage doubtful that women will be able to escape slander. Nonetheless, she asserts that women "weele please to day," an assertion that can be read in two distinct ways. The first possibility is that the ensuing play will please the women in the audience, because it will exonerate their sex and punish their accuser, Swetnam. However, it is equally possible that Loretta turns to the male spectators when she shifts to "you" in line 12; in this reading, the women will please the men, with clear sexual implications. Loretta's speech complicates the position of women, then, because she—as a representative of her sex—both pleases and demands satisfaction, and is therefore

normative and disruptive. Of course, the milieu's theatrical conventions complicate this speech further: in the context of a performance, the 'women' on stage would be men, subverting the potential sexualization of women. Whether the author of *Swetnam the woman-hater arraigned by women* is male or female, the impulse to mitigate a strong female position with compliant attention to the male gaze, reflects the anxiety surrounding female presence in the 'public,' masculine realm of discourse and theatre.

Silent, chaste, obedient. S.W. Hull's influential monograph stresses how the literature of the early modern period dictated these prescriptions for women. Female playwrights and players always already deviate from the tenet of silence, which inherently compromises obedience. Any 'public' dissemination would also compromise chastity. Therefore, female presence in drama was problematic and women were excluded from playing on the 'public' performance in the early seventeenth century. Yet, this exclusion was not always in place.

James Stokes refers to "women's ubiquitous involvement in traditional performance" connected to parish life prior to the Reformation (35). Performing at local festivities and touring as part of troupes, women appeared in 'public' and 'private' theatrical contexts in the medieval period. The Protestant Reformation led to the decline of medieval theatre, but, with the secularization of drama and the erection of 'private' and 'public' playhouses in the late sixteenth century, theatre flourished in Elizabethan England. Despite its re-popularization, theatre endured attacks on moral and religious bases, making it difficult for men, let alone women, of repute to act. John Northbrooke's *A Treatise against Dicing, Dancing, Plays, and Interludes, with other idle pastimes* (1577) suggests that promotion of idleness in youth and lack of parental corrections led to the appearance of "so many adulterers, unchast, and lewde persons, and idle rogues" and "such plentie of dicers, carders, mummers, and dauncers" (12). By placing performers alongside "lewde persons," Northbrooke degrades them. Stephen Gosson's *The School of Abuse* (1579) similarly associates theatrical play with sinfulness, frequently invoking the deadly sin of gluttony. He also specifically mocks the female playgoer (17). Interestingly, even some plays in the milieu disparaged 'public' theatre and its actors, including John Marston's late sixteenth century play, *Histriomastix, or the Player Whipped.* Defenses soon followed, but the debate over the depravity of theatre prevailed

until the 1642 playhouse closure, and beyond. While most polemical tracts and plays censure all actors, they specifically target women on stage.

A politically-charged tract, William Prynne's *Histrio-Mastix: The Player's Scourge, or Actor's Tragedy (*1632) contains one of the most pointed critiques of female on-stage presence. Prynne does not only attack female performers, but also the very inclusion of female roles (performed by men):

> For first, Plays themselves, at leastwise the personating of the Bawd's, Adulteress's, Whore's, or Sorceress's part, which savour of nought else but lewdness and effeminacy, are evil: therefore the very putting on of woman's apparel to act such parts, *cannot be good*. Secondly, Plays, and female parts in Plays, admit they be not simply evil, yet they *are but mere superfluous vanities*[.] (183)

While the attention to and restriction of women's theatrical performance is not surprising considering the way in which performance deviates from the tenets of silence, obedience, and chastity, Prynne's assertion that assuming a female part threatens a man's masculinity further hampers the presence of women in theatre. Predominantly interpreted as an attack against Henrietta Maria—who spearheaded and performed in courtly dramas—Prynne's *Histrio-Mastix* denounces the female body on stage and the burgeoning female voice in the milieu.[36] Stokes contends that "the newly repressive environment in English society from the late-sixteenth through the mid-seventeenth centuries appears to have signaled the end of that acceptance of women in performance" (40). However, just as antagonism towards actors and plays—as well as an ordinance closing playhouses in 1642—did not prevent theatrical playing, attacks against female performers in late Tudor and early Stuart England did not entirely eliminate their presence on the stage. Women only remained relegated to more limited stages and roles.

III. Playing for Power: Female Presences on the Courtly Stage

Elizabeth I occupies a key role in early modern dramatic and non-dramatic literature, sometimes functioning as a Faerie Queene and sometimes patronizing the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Portraits of her emphasize her youth and beauty, but also her control

[36] Because Prynne's *Histriomastix* was perceived as a slight against Henrietta Maria, he was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment, as well as a £5000 fine.

over the globe; her speeches render her a complicated figure, who is at once chaste and kingly, and therefore both normative and problematically masculine.[37] The way in which she engaged in theatrical playing likewise displays a tension between 'proper' femininity and boundary-pushing command of presence. There is inherent theatricality in her dress, mannerism, and rehearsed words, and her 'public' processionals foster her persona as the virgin queen. John King contends that "the royal image was fashioned dynamically by Elizabeth and her government from above, and by her apologists and suppliants from below" (36). At stake for her was her political security, and "The culturally widespread discourse of [P]etrarchan worship engaged by the cult also helped Elizabeth to subordinate the political nation of men to a chaste, desirable, and sacred beloved" (Hamrick 7). Artists, poets, and politicians helped Elizabeth I to craft and increase the stability of her role as queen. Her continued performances of a 'public' self extended into performance play. Bella Mirabella's study stresses the courtly displays of Elizabeth I's dancing as 'public' and politically-charged displays (see especially 69-70). Like her father, Henry VIII, Elizabeth danced with and in front of foreign ambassadors, using "the language of dance and the dance of language . . . to 'persuade' those observers that she was not only a great dancer and a brilliant speaker, but also a youthful, competent, in-control, and virtuous female ruler" (Mirabella 68). Her 'public' dancing was for a restricted public, and contained in courtly spaces. Outside of the court, she primarily cast herself—and playwrights cast her—as an honored and influential spectator, or off-stage player.

One of the most remarkable records of entertainment for the queen is *A Letter: Wherein Part of the Entertainment Unto the Queenz Majesty, at Killingwoorth [Kenilworth] Castle*.[38] The letter provides an account of Robert Dudley's hospitality during Elizabeth I's nearly three-week visit to Kenilworth in 1575. Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, was rumored to be a suitor to the virgin queen, and had hosted her several times before, and the letter describes the elaborate clustering of banquets, hunting trips, and interludes with which he engaged her for nineteen days. Whereas she danced to cultivate a youthful (and therefore fertile) and strong monarchical image and encourage political allegiances, figures in this

[37] For instance, the Ditchley portrait of Elizabeth demonstrates her political power, with her standing on a map, but her dress signals femininity. Elizabeth I's "Speech to the Troops at Tilbury" exemplifies the tension between her feminine attributes and her masculine position of power.
[38] George Gascoigne also describes this entertainment.

entertainment now “dauns before the Queen” (Laneham 29). The performance both highlights the status of Dudley through his display of hospitality and affirms the queen’s position as honored spectator. Continuing to situate Elizabeth I as such, Dudley hosted another entertainment, Sir Philip Sidney’s *The Lady of May*, at his seat at Wanstead for her. However, for this pastoral, Sidney calls for Elizabeth I’s contribution. In the entertainment, a woman invites the queen’s participation as adjudicator in the lady of May’s dilemma. The question is posed: should the title character marry Therion or Espilus? The text suggests that the queen selected Espilus as the victorious suitor after the debates and a singing contest concluded.[39] This implies, then, that Elizabeth I participated in *The Lady of May* as Sidney required, breaking down distinctions between on-stage player and off-stage spectator. Nonetheless, she still fostered a role of detached judgment rather than immersed performer in the Sidneian drama. With moral attacks on acting, engaging more fully in theatrical play as an on-stage player would have compromised the virginal persona that she cultivated. By limiting her participation in formal performance play, Elizabeth I avoided identification as a “lewde” female performer. But this does not mean that she did not support plays and players.

Some of the players that danced for Elizabeth I were women. Again, this is significant because of the diminished presence of women in theatre following the Reformation. James Stokes traces three specific instances:

> In 1575 at Kenilworth, several of the shows—notably the pageant of the Lady of the Lake and the Brideale—included females. In 1591, at Cowdray, Sussex, country people presented a dance for the queen, in which her hosts, Lord and Lady Montagu, themselves took part. At Bisham, Berkshire, in 1592, Elizabeth ‘was greeted by a pastoral pageant and among the characters were two shepherdesses, played by the daughters of her host, Lady Elizabeth Russell.’ (30)

Each of these instances presents female players in non-‘public’ performance scenarios, outside of London and its playhouses. In addition, the latter two examples indicate that elite women assumed parts in the entertainments. The “country people” to whom Stokes refers

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[39] If this was indeed Elizabeth I’s choice, then she likely offended the host of *The Lady of May*, Dudley. Sidney represents Dudley—who was pursuing Elizabeth I at the time of the entertainment at Wanstead—as Therion, the unsuccessful suitor. While there are other interpretations of *The Lady of May*, Helen Cooper’s argument that the suitors represent Dudley and Sir Christopher Hatton is the most compelling.

may include female performers as well, but he singles out Lady Montagu and Lady Russell's daughters, who were linked to the hosting estates. In this way, he points to a trend in enclosed entertainments that would prevail into the Restoration (but also and be markedly reversed in the Restoration 'public' playhouses): the earliest recorded female performers are predominantly aristocratic, often part of the queen's inner circle. In Jacobean England, this is extended to include the queen herself, with James I's queen consort performing in masques alongside her coterie.

Anna of Denmark inserted herself in courtly entertainments, rendering her a greater on-stage presence than Elizabeth I. *The Magnificent Entertainment* accompanied the Stuarts' royal entry into London in 1604, celebrating England's new royal family, complete with an heir already in place. Despite the initial revelry, this royal family incited a shift in England's political theatricality: "[d]uring King James's reign the masque evolved into a theatrical presentation which began with professional musicians, dancers and actors, and concluded with royal and aristocratic amateurs" (Botonaki 67). As a royal 'amateur,' Anna of Denmark often positioned herself centre stage, and offered her husband the role that Elizabeth I assumed in relation to theatricals: honored spectator. She stepped onto the courtly theatrical stage in Samuel Daniel's *Vision of Twelve Goddesses* in the first year of her husband's reign and then famously danced in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* while pregnant, becoming a symbol of consummated marriage that starkly contrasted the virginal Elizabeth I. Before her son's death in 1612, Anna performed in six masques, and Leeds Barroll suggests that the masques "deflected attention from the King and his own circle to focus on the new court of the Queen" (121). In the Jacobean masque, the female body fell under the male gaze, but in a way that connoted potential for creative agency and assertion of status. With *The Masque of Blackness*, in particular, Anna "establish[ed] a new transgressive mode of womanliness, one calculated to arouse masculine anxiety and yet present itself as newly fashionable" (Bevington and Holbrook 12). In line with this, Stephen Orgel argues that Anna chose the colors for the costumes for *The Masque of Blackness*, adding that the other female dancers could presumably modify the costume designs ("Marginal Jonson" 152-3). Anna established her own identity as sexually-charged on-stage player, who forwarded her own power. Mitigating her potential deviance as empowered performer was the undercurrent of praise for the patriarch in the masques. Although less conventional than the position that Ben Jonson

assigns Barbara Gamage in "To Penshurst," Anna of Denmark staged and performed in spectacles to convey her role as a good hostess. The participation of her children—including her daughter, Elizabeth, in *Tethys Festival* in 1610—promoted the royal family. At the same time, she helped to secure the positions of her coterie, including Mary Wroth; as Barroll suggests, the cast lists and ladies' and men's positions in masques reflected the status of the performing courtiers (128). Held in contained, elite spaces and featuring female aristocrats as dancers in sometimes provocative costumes, these masques served to secure England's new royal family and their supporters. The spectacles also acted as a notable (re)entry point for women into theatrical performance in post-Reformation England.

As with the household theatrical mode, masques were not widely accessible. For instance, Daniel's and Jonson's masques were held at Hampton Court Palace and the Banqueting House at Whitehall, respectively, maintaining some insulation. However, courtly drama lacked the intimacy of the household theatrical mode, and therefore female presences on stage still became subject to scrutiny. This becomes particular evident moving into Caroline England, when Prynne allegedly attacked the performances of Henrietta Maria. Nonetheless, the greater distance between Anna, the queen consort, and the throne—she did not have to possess "the heart and stomach of a king" like Elizabeth I ("Speech" 763)—and limited dissemination of her performances enabled her, as well as other elite women, to identify as a player in the male-dominated theatrical realm. Yet, records do not indicate any speaking roles for the women of Anna's court. The term "*acted*" was only attached to a female performer once in a Jacobean masque—in *Cupid's Banishment* (1617) (McManus 182)—and "women in masques were mute [indicating] that the power of their performance lay chiefly in their sumptuous appearance and physical movements" (Tomlinson 21). Therefore, Jacobean female performers seem to adhere to the prescription of female silence, even if obedience and chastity become questionable. Disrupting this silence, the court of Charles I—son of James I and Anna—and Henrietta Maria produced pastorals that facilitated the shift from female dancer to actor on the courtly stage.

Melinda J. Gough suggests that the scope of female performance changed under Henrietta Maria (205). Henrietta Maria and her sisters had performed in the French court and, only a year after coming to England, she performed in the pastoral *Artenice* (February 1626). In 1633, Henrietta Maria and her ladies took to the courtly stage in Walter Montagu's

The Shepherd's Paradise. Though decades removed from Elizabethan entertainments, Montagu's drama similarly honors the king and queen consort. As Saphira, Henrietta Maria is "Matchlesse" (172), but as Bellesa, she is a queen with a voice:

> I *Bellesa* as a Queen do sweare,
> To keep the honour, and the regall due,
> Without exacting any thing that's new.
> And to assume no more to me than must
> Give me the meanes, and power to be just.
> And but for charity and mercies cause,
> Reserve no power to suspend the Lawes.
> This I do vow, even as I hope to rise,
> From this, into another Paradise. (22)

This speech is significant for two main reasons. First, her assumption of a speaking role in the pastoral differentiates her mode of performance from Elizabeth I's spectatorship and informal dancing and from Anna of Denmark's scripted dances. Henrietta Maria was not the only elite woman to move beyond dancing, though; a female player also held a speaking role in the 1632 premier of *Tempe Restored* (Leapman 298). Although *The Shepherd's Paradise* and *Tempe Restored* may not be the first instances of female performers speaking on stage, these courtly performances implicitly sanctioned the figure of the voiced actress.[40] This is particularly noteworthy for the Cavendish sisters, who were "ladies-in-waiting to Queen Henrietta" (Rubik 15) and would then write two dramas with prominent female speaking parts. Other than signaling Henrietta Maria's claim to a theatrical voice, Bellesa's speech is significant because it underscores the contemporaneous instability of her husband's reign. In 1629, Charles I dissolved Parliament, ushering in eleven years of Personal Rule. Tacitly criticizing Charles I's tyrannical political move, Bellesa promises justice, mitigated monarchical power, and the renewal of the country into "another Paradise." Shifts in female authority in the masque undermine Bellesa's implicit critique. Nonetheless, the call for stability and renewed Paradise point to the political unrest in England.

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[40] Henrietta Maria's performance in *The Shepherd's Paradise* is often considered the earliest occurrence of female 'acting'; however, as discussed in chapter two, Rachel Fane's and Mary Wroth's plays, both of which have women's speaking roles, were likely earlier occasions of female acting.

In 1642, Henrietta Maria retreated from the Banqueting Hall to Hampton Court before fleeing to the Hague in February, and by August, Charles I was embroiled in war against his own Members of Parliament and their supporters. With the royal family insecure and displaced, expensive courtly entertainments were not feasible, and "The last performance of a play at the prewar court, as far as we know, took place on 6 January 1642, before Prince Charles, when the King's Men acted John Fletcher's old comedy *The Scornful Lady* in the Cockpit Theatre at Whitehall" (Astington "Actors and the Court after 1642" 1). Along with playhouses, courtly masques were shut down. It was not until November 1660 that theatre returned to England's court.

Reflecting Ben Jonson's prominent role in early Stuart courtly masques, his *Epicoene* was the first play staged at the restored Stuart court. John Denham's prologue to *Epicoene*—added for this Restoration performance—overtly links theatre to the monarchy:

> *Greatest of Monarchs, welcome to this place*
> *Which* Majesty *so oft was wont to grace*
> *Before our Exile, to divert the Court*,
> *And ballance weighty Cares with harmless sport*.
> *This truth we can to our advantage say*,
> *They that would have no* KING, *would have no* Play:
> *The* Laurel *and the* Crown *together went*,
> *Had the same* Foes, *and the same* Banishment[.] (1-8)

The shared "Banishment" and the shared restoration of the monarchy and the theatre implies an inextricability of the "Laurel *and the* Crown," the royals and the "*harmless sport.*" English royalty employed theatrical entertainments as a political tool, to display the court's wealth (even when the coffers were strained), construct idealized images (like Elizabeth as the virgin queen, or James as King Solomon), and affirm allegiances. Courtly theatre, which facilitates monarchical self-construction, collapses without the court. Appropriately, then, when Charles II ascends the throne, courtly theatre re-emerges as means for the royal family to (re)entrench itself in the national and international political scene and reassert its status.

Analogous to Jacobean and Caroline England, the Restoration period saw royal women perform in courtly theatricals. These performances occurred a decade after the reinstatement of the Stuart monarch, probably because the princesses who engaged in theatrical

performance were only born in the 1660s. Records indicate that Princess Mary and her sister Anne, as well as other elite women, acted in courtly plays: "the young ladies at the court of York also performed such popular plays as Nathaniel Lee's *Mithridates,* George Etherege's *The Man of Mode,* and Dryden's *Aureng-Zebe*," with performances beginning in April 1670 (Winn 45). Mary also acted as Clorin alongside "many young ladies" (qtd. in Avery, Scouten, et al. I:169) in Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*, harkening back to the popularity of the pastoral in the court of Henrietta Maria. Most well-known, though, is Mary's assumption of Calisto in John Crowne's *Calisto: or, The chaste nymph* (1675). James A. Winn suggests that "Crowne wrote [*Calisto*] specifically for an all-female cast" (45), and Mary, who would become queen in 1689, was only thirteen when she performed this title role. The full printed title of the courtly masque indicates that the princess' performance may have been repeated, *"as it was frequently presented there, by several persons of great quality.*" This particular play was elaborate (though not actually in the masque style) and because it recalled the splendor of earlier courtly theatricals, Eleanore Boswell Murrie calls it "the culmination of the Court stage" (177). It was staged in the Hall Theatre at Whitehall, and, once again, royal women and their coterie were taking the courtly stage, with their performances safely ensconced in elite spaces. Like their predecessors, Anna and Henrietta Maria, the royal women of the Restoration continued to push theatrical boundaries—taking on even more important speaking roles in the plays—but their performances were still restrained to a limited, politically-inflected faction of the 'public.'

Participating in courtly theatricals throughout the seventeenth century, the Stuart women facilitated a shift towards female acting. Following the Reformation's decrease in female presence on stage, Anna of Denmark (following Elizabeth I's lead) promoted elite female dancing, specifically producing masques for herself and her coterie. Still, it was Henrietta Maria and her ladies, as some of the first women to take speaking parts, who affirmed the (re)emergence of women's theatrical performance. The Restoration performances of young royals, Mary and Anne, further confirmed the viability of female actors, even if still apart from the 'professional' stage. If the Restoration royal women built upon the tradition of courtly female performance that the early Stuart women had established, how do such performances function alongside the emergence of female playwriting and acting in much more 'public' forums, which begins to in the 1660s? Are the modes of

performance of royals and ‘professionals’—though both theatrical—distinct? As this dissertation has argued, the boundaries between ‘public,’ ‘private,’ and ‘intimate’ theatrical performance are unstable; nonetheless, because audiences are restricted and political interests outweigh commercial interests in courtly entertainments, there is certainly an important distinction. Although female performers began to appear in the playhouses, royal women remained on the courtly stage in order to maintain status. To confirm their identities as elite, heteronormative women, the princesses played within the context of courtly tradition and preserved their distance from the ‘public’ theatre, a space where the actress, playwright, and spectator were heavily scrutinized. At stake in these female courtly performances are power and prestige. The women played to construct themselves as skilled and vital presences on a (political) stage, while still retaining heteronormativity by associating female authority with virginity, fertility, or marital bliss. Aside from the royal court, women turned to the closet and household dramatic modes in order to venture into drama while mitigating the social censure associated with the ‘public’ stage.

IV. Playing for Authorship: Manuscripts, Closets, and Print

With restrictions and anxiety surrounding female theatrical performance in seventeenth-century England, the aristocratic home provided an alternate space, away from the court and playhouse, for women to experiment with miming, dancing, acting, and authorship. The royal women, especially Anna and Henrietta Maria, sometimes receive credit for their agency over their masques. However, early female dramatic authorship is primarily located in the ‘closets’ and households. Courtly theatricals, closet drama, and household theatre belong to the same tradition of elite performance. Placing the three modes on a spectrum, however, indicates the ‘publicness’ or ‘intimacy’ of each performance. First, the players of courtly drama engage in enclosed theatrical performances that nonetheless betray a ‘publicness,’ as audiences comprised of political allies as much as coterie members and performers’ political statuses are reaffirmed. In contrast, closet dramas sometimes diminish potentiality for ‘public’ theatrical performance. Between the closet and courtly dramas lies the household play, wherein the intimacy of the performative mode facilitates ventures into both acting and playwriting for elite women. While the Stuart royals primarily participated in courtly entertainments as performers, the women who engaged with closet

drama or intimate household drama were first and foremost playwrights. The potentiality for acting still emerges in both closet drama household theatre, but evidence of women privileging authorial status appears in relation to playtexts that turn 'outward,' sometimes diminishing the centrality of the inner self or the family and sometimes inviting a more 'public' element through publication. This 'outward' turn, which manifests to different extents in the works I discuss below, contrasts the mitigation of authorship in *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall." Through this turn, though, we might see the beginnings of female acting in the courtly plays and the precedents for the 'professional' female playwrights of the Restoration manifest in the closet and household dramatic modes.

Rachel Fane, who situates her dramatic texts in her family home, Apethorpe Hall, positions herself as an author, conveying "considerable intellectual ambition and some literary ability" (O'Connor 92). As noted in the prologue, Fane plays a supporting role in this project because, for all that she contributes to drama—including four complete pieces—her work hovers between modes, and resists 'inwardness.' Certainly her works remain linked to the household; however, unlike Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, she does not use the household dramatic mode to interrogate and secure her own identity. Instead, her dramatic pieces attend to family members' presences more than her own. Aside from the allusions to specific family members in *May Masque at Apethorpe* (see chapter one), "The Wishing Chair" masque possibly "refer[s] to the courtship and betrothal of her brother, Mildmay" (Findlay *Playing Spaces* 96). Fane's presence still comes through: the play fragment gestures towards domestic activities, and her *May Masque* explores "questions about female sexuality that" might have "preoccupied Fane" (Findlay *Playing Spaces* 42-3, 101). However, she actually emerges more in her critique of one of her (missing) masques than through the dramas themselves. She seems to take her work in drama seriously in her critique, demonstrating reflection on her work and its potential performance: "I haue considerd of this & like all very well/ but for want of actores I intend to leaue out" (qtd. in O'Connor 104). Rather than insert herself in her fictional characters, she primarily positions herself as objective playwright. This does not mean that she did not engage in performance play. In fact, she was only fourteen when she took on a speaking role in her *May Masque* (performance ca. 1627), but, again, she does not convey self-consciousness of performance to the extent that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters do. Nevertheless, her *May Masque* is the first

recorded female performance that ventures beyond dancing. It is also significant that the performance included four young women in addition to Fane. In this way, she created acting opportunities for other young women, even as she pursued her interest in authoring and producing theatrical entertainments. Fane used drama to promote her household more than herself, but also to craft an authorial position, even if that position was not 'publicly' known. Like Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, Fane insulated her authorship by not publishing her work despite a precedent for the dissemination of female-authored drama in print.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Countess of Pembroke and Lady Falkland published their plays. Pembroke's *The Tragedy of Antonie* and Falkland's *The Tragedy of Mariam* both derive from male-authored source texts, implicitly sanctioning 'public' consumption of the plays.[41] Yet, the printed works attach Pembroke and Falkland to the texts, offering the women authority over them. The 1592 edition of *Antonie* directs the reader to the original author, Robert Garnier, but also indicates Pembroke as the translator in the same size of font. By the 1595 printing, Pembroke takes center stage; Garnier is absent from the title page. For *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Falkland relies heavily on Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, and Thomas Lodge's translation of it. However, she takes great poetic license with the story of Mariam, emphasizing "Christianity and the role of women" (Cerasano and Wynne-Davies "The Tragedy of Mariam Introduction" 46). There is progression, then, from Pembroke's position as translator to Falkland's position as author: whereas *Antonie* was "Doone into English" (1595 title page) by Pembroke, *Mariam* was "*Written* by that learned, vertuous, and truly noble Ladie, E.C. [Elizabeth Cary]" (1613 title page, emphasis added). Though 'publicly' displayed as skilled in translation or composition through their textual products, Pembroke and Falkland use the closet dramatic mode to qualify their entry into a male-dominated field. Further tempering their potentially disruptive foray into drama, they diminish their participation in the 'public' theatrical realm by containing—if not cutting off—possible theatrical productions. In conjunction with reliance on source texts, the closet mode's privileging of text over performance enables the two early women writers to (moderately) claim authorship. This mode connects to Pembroke's source

[41] For further analysis of the significance of the Countess of Pembroke's roles as translator and as author, see my article "'My body joined with thine, my mouth with thine': The Sur-vival of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine* and Mary Sidney's *Antonie*" (*Journal of Drama Studies* 5.2 (July 2011): 54-64).

text, as well as the Senecan models that Falkland employs, and it also situates these women within an elite tradition of early modern reading culture.

While not entirely dismissing closet drama's performative potential, Marta Straznicky identifies 'readerly devices' as characteristic of closet drama. Such devices, which appear in the plays of Pembroke and Falkland, include an introductory argument, long speeches, and a chorus (Straznicky 12). As noted earlier, scholars often position *Love's Victory* as a closet play; indeed, it possesses (to a more limited extent) some 'readerly devices' though it lacks the introductory argument that frequently opens a play in that genre. Still, Wroth's performance history, the play's form and the impulse of many scholars to locate its performance suggests the potential for an intimate theatrical performance. In particular, Towers underscores the likely staging of Wroth's play, even suggesting that the audience would have been comprised of Herbert family members (442). Similarly, the Cavendish sisters likely performed *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" for intimate audiences. Rubik also claims that Brackley and Cavendish's play "was certainly meant to be performed" (15) and, despite her assertion that *The Concealed Fancies* "was probably never performed," Lisa Hopkins agrees that it "was almost certainly written for performance" (32). Particularly considering the usage of space I discussed in chapters one and two, the dramatic works of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters indicate a strong impulse for theatrical performance—with a call for bodies onstage more than words read aloud—that is supported by the playwrights' connection to theatre. While this, in addition to the attempt to sustain intimacy, might render Wroth's and Brackley and Cavendish's plays distinct from closet plays, the (limited) theatrical possibilities of closet drama establishes an affinity between the closet and household dramatic modes.

Karen Raber criticizes Straznicky for "draw[ing] too great a distinction between staged and closet drama" (13), but then blurs the distinction between staged and non-staged drama, obscuring the closet drama genre (34). At the same time, Raber predominantly continues Straznicky's emphasis on closet drama's separation from the physical stage, defining closet drama as "compositions intended for reading or private recitation rather than for theatrical performance" (13). But does *intent of theatrical performance* differentiate the household drama from closet drama? One could certainly argue that, like the plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, the early modern closet plays of Pembroke and Falkland are

'stageable'; such is the productive line of argumentation of *Women and Dramatic Production, 1550-1700*. Whether a text can be massaged into a theatrical production speaks more to the capabilities of the modern director than to the suitability of that text for the stage, but—from the defiant speeches of Falkland's Salome to the impassioned suicidal rant of Pembroke's Cleopatra—the theatrical potential emerges in some closet plays. However, again, Pembroke and Falkland, and the closet dramatic mode more generally, inherently prioritize the textual product and therefore the authorial role. Publication of female-penned closet dramas demonstrates how seventeenth-century women could begin to enact a 'public' authorial role without fully engaging in the theatrical sphere.

Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle—who began writing plays while she lived in exile with her husband, the Cavendish sisters' father—similarly prioritizes the textual product, though she more explicitly distances her dramatic work from the stage. Recent productions indicate the theatrical potential of her plays, with one of the more 'stageable' plays, *The Convent of Pleasure*, being produced twice in the past decade, in 2005 at the Sixth Biennial International Conference of the Margaret Cavendish Society and in 2012 by The Toronto Masque Theatre. However, many scholars categorize her plays as closet dramas, pointing to her own resistance to performance of her dramatic texts. Her hesitancy to see them on the 'public' playhouse stage stems from concern regarding reception; she worries that her plays would be "hissed off from the Stage . . . to have [her] harmless and innocent Playes go weeping from the Stage" (*Playes* A3). Margaret Cavendish also explains that she positions her plays in print rather than on the stage partly because of the difficulty in finding "a whole Company of good Actors" (*Playes*, "To the Readers"). Further, pointing to one characteristic of closet drama, she admits, "most of my Playes would seem tedious upon the Stage, by reason they are somewhat long" and therefore are more conducive to reading (*Playes*, "To the Readers"). She reiterates this through the duologue of "An Introduction":

> 1. *Gentleman*: Come *Tom* will you goe to a play?
>
> 2 .*Gentleman*: No. 1. *Gentleman*: Why?
>
> 2 .*Gentleman*: Because there is so many words, as so little wit, as the words tire me more than the wits delights me[.] (*Playes* 1)

Indeed, some of her plays, including *Bell in Campo* and *Loves Adventures,* are separated into two parts because of length, which might render them less appealing for production. Moreover, Margaret Cavendish explicitly cuts off theatrical potentiality, qualifying her texts as plays:

> . . . for it would be too great a fondness to my Works to think such Plays as these suitable to ancient Rules, in which I pretend no skill; or agreeable to the modern Humor, to which I dare acknowledg my aversion: But having pleased my Fancy in writing many Dialogues upon several Subjects, and having afterwards order'd them into Acts and Scenes, I will venture, in spight of the Criticks to call them Plays[.] (*Plays, never before printed*, "To the Readers")

Despite resisting theatrical staging in her prefatory material, Margaret Cavendish composes plays that reveal more indebtedness to *The Concealed Fancies*, if not to 'public' plays, than to *Antonie* or *Mariam*.

Indeed, her plays do not uniformly possess characteristics of closet drama. For instance, *Loves Adventures* has no introductory argument or other 'readerly devices.' Also, both *Loves Adventures* and *The Convent of Pleasure* address "*Noble Spectators*" in the prologue or epilogue material (*Plays, never before printed* 3, 40, 53) and detail even subtle stage directions. She also frequently indicates visual elements, including the Prince's pivotal disguise in *The Convent of Pleasure*. The way that Margaret Cavendish sets the scene for the last act of *The Convent of Pleasure* further suggests some thought to theatrical performance. Part of it reads, "*the Lady* HAPPY *takes a Ribbon from her arm and gives it to the* PRINCESS, *who gives her another instead of that, and kisses her hand. They go in and come presently out again with all the Company to Dance*" (45). These directions could be read aloud rather than used for staging, but that the closet drama contains a specifically visual moment, with no speech, is noteworthy. Though she does not invite performance of her works in the way that Brackley and Cavendish do, Margaret Cavendish's predilection for—though self-imposed distance from—the stage aligns her with the Cavendish family's tradition of household entertainments. Like Brackley and Cavendish, she attributes her interest in drama to Newcastle. Addressing him, she suggests,

> [you] did Create a desire in my Mind to write Playes also, although my Playes are very unlike those you have writ, for your Lordships Playes have as it were a natural

> life, and a quick spirit in them, whereas mine are like dull dead statues, which is the reason I send them forth to be printed, rather than keep them concealed in hopes to have them first Acted" (*Playes* A3).

Here, she praises the theatrical potential—"a natural life, and a quick spirit"—of Newcastle's works, while simultaneously discounting that of her own. Rather than suffer her "dull dead statues" to see the stage, then, she published them in two volumes, *Playes* (1663) and *Plays, never before printed* (1668). Her identity as playwright is blatantly evident on the title pages. Margaret Cavendish also seems to identify as the director, actor, and spectator of her work. She points to an internal form of performance, describing her "brain [as] the Stage, my thoughts were acting there" (*Playes* A2). A form of acting occurs, but its internality markedly distinguishes it from the performances that occur in 'public' theatre, the recitation of closet plays, or the 'intimately'-staged household plays. Still, like her stepdaughters, Margaret Cavendish engages with a theatricality that is separate from the 'public' playhouse culture even as she anticipates—and perhaps fosters—Restoration emphasis on challenging and re-negotiating gender roles. Many of her plays, from *The Convent of Pleasure* to *Bell in Campo* include dynamic female characters that wield agency. Yet, by restricting any 'performance' to her "brain the Stage," Margaret Cavendish limits her audience to the literate and precludes the sort of female acting that could underscore the strong female characters that she creates. In this way, she claims authority over her work, but signals the continued location of female-authored plays within 'brains,' 'closets,' and coteries.

In Margaret Cavendish's dramatic work, there is a tension between self-deprecating enclosure and pursuit of 'public'—though not theatrical—dissemination. Mainly written during the Interregnum and published following the Restoration, her plays hover between the playhouse closures and women's entry into 'public' theatre. Despite the increasing 'public' circulation of female-authored plays that her work exemplifies, women in the later seventeenth century continued to show interest in restricted theatricals. Ephelia, Anne Wharton, and Anne Finch wrote plays that remained in manuscript and appeared before coterie rather than 'public' audiences. At the same time, though, like Margaret Cavendish's work, some demonstrate a pull towards dissemination beyond the household.

Ephelia composed a play, as well as some poetry, in the 1670s. Her play, *The Pair-Royal of Coxcombs, Performed at a Dancing-School* (c. 1678), would only be seen by a

coterie—though not courtly—audience. The limited 'public' dissemination extended to the textual product, with only scraps of the play appearing in print.[42] Its epilogue hints that *The Pair-Royal of Coxcombs* was "damn'd," or censored (21); the suppression was likely due to its implicit portrayal of Charles II and James II as a pair of royal coxcombs. Despite censorship, the title indicates that Ephelia's play was performed. While the performance was not in a household space, it was probably performed by amateurs or 'professionals-in-training' and remained a more 'intimate' performance "*at a Dancing-School*," outside of the court and the 'public' playhouse.[43] Ephelia clearly wrote *The Pair-Royal of Coxcombs* with theatrical production in mind. Even if the play's content prevented wider circulation, her impulse was to move her work outside of the household. In order to do so, the female playwright concealed rather than asserted her identity. Ephelia is a pen name, likely belonging to Mary Villiers, Duchess of Lennox and Richmond, whose social position was already precarious without exposing herself to 'public' scrutiny as a female playwright.[44]

Like the Duchess of Lennox and Richmond, Anne Wharton engaged in dramatic authorship which conveyed the potential for a wider (if still limited) audience. As a young woman who was frequently stricken with illness, Wharton composed a tragedy, *Love's Martyr, or Witt above Crowns* (ca. 1679). It exists only in one manuscript at the British Library (Add. MS. 28693) and, likely written during treatment for acute illness in Paris in the late 1670s, was probably never staged. Still, there are indications of readership beyond her family. Samuel Clark seems to have read *Love's Martyr*, as is evinced by his strong discouragement of her pursuit of dramatic composition and, implicitly, performance: he advised her, "[it would] afford more comfortable reflections at a dying hour, than conversing with what belongs only to, or is fit for the Theater" (Rawl. MS, letters 53, fols. 351-2). Rather than focusing on her gender or social status in declaring Wharton's dramatic endeavors unsuitable, Clark recommends that she turn to pious meditations in place of theatre to prepare herself for death. She did not compose another play after his censorious letter, and

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[42] Parts of the play were included in her collection *Female Poems on Several Occasions* (1679).
[43] E. L. Avery, A. H. Scouten, et al. propose Hicksford's as the venue for its staging (I: xv).
[44] Maureen E. Mulvihill convincingly proposes that "Ephelia" is the pen name of Mary Villiers, Duchess of Lennox and Richmond ("Thumbprints of Ephelia"). This identification presents some intriguing possibilities, as the Duchess of Lennox and Richmond appeared in Caroline entertainments and was Henrietta Maria's lady of the bedchamber following the Restoration. She therefore is closely linked to courtly theatre, in which the Princess (as well as the Duchess of Lennox and Richmond) also participated. The Duchess of Lennox and Richmond was close to the royal family, but also involved in political intrigue (Hast).

Love's Martyr did not see publication or a 'public' playhouse. Whether Wharton expected any form of performance is unclear. Nonetheless, the dialogic form of Robert Gould's "A funeral eclogue to the pious memory of the incomparable Mrs. Wharton" hints at her interest in theatrical performance and Clark's letter suggests that her dramatic composition was "fit for the Theater." Therefore, *Love's Martyr* serves to display Wharton's skill in dramatic authorship, even if its theatrical potential and its audience remained limited in order to foster her reputation for piety.

Also signaling the tension between authorial impulses and social insecurity, Anne Finch, the Countess of Winchilsea, wanted to maintain anonymity to avoid scrutiny as a "Versifying Maid of Honour" (7–8). Though she produced a considerable body of work, including two plays—*The Triumphs of Love and Innocence* (ca. 1682) and *Aristomenes* (1690)—Finch predominantly employed the pseudonym "Ardelia," and her poetry was published without her real name. For example, on the frontispiece of *The Spleen, A Pindarique Ode*, Finch is only referred to as "*a LADY.*" Entrenched in the court around the time of the Glorious Revolution, Finch was exposed to socio-political instabilities. She wrote what she knew—she had spleen attacks and was maid of honor to Mary of Modena—and claims that she wrote her second play, *Aristomenes*, to distract herself when "such dejection of mind, cou'd not have been supported" (Finch 12). Though she does not address political events as explicitly as the Cavendish sisters do during the Civil War, that she composed a tragedy shortly after the revolution suggests that she was affected by the hostile political climate. She circulated her writing amongst her coterie, and, with her fear of criticism in mind, the lack of performance records for either of her plays is unsurprising. Any potential staging of her plays would have had a limited audience, and the publication of her plays might preclude theatrical staging. Yet, Finch's attention to theatrical elements in conjunction with the printing of her work suggests an interest in increased dissemination of her work, perhaps even translating into a performance in a more 'public' venue. The staging potential of *The Triumphs of Love and Innocence* is appealing, and its attention to female agency aligns it with the household plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters. Not unlike Wroth's *Love's Victory*, "the women in [Finch's] *Triumphs* . . . are responsible for moving along the action of the play; they are more resourceful and more interesting than the men, and they are willing to take risks to bring about the ascendancy of love and innocence"

(McGovern 54). Even as Finch's emphasis on female agency implicitly points back to earlier female-authored plays, it also reflects women's contemporaneous roles as actors and playwrights in the 'public' playhouses of the Restoration. Using a pen name, she diminished her own authorial presence in a moment when many women were taking centre stage.

In the century between the Countess of Pembroke's *Tragedy of Antonie* and Anne Finch's *Aristomenes*, there was movement from translations that privilege the textual product to original plays that operate in a mode more akin to courtly entertainments and 'public' plays. While some of these early female playwrights produced works that are more conducive to theatrical performance, it is remarkable that Margaret Cavendish, Ephelia, Wharton, and Finch conveyed interest in dissemination, but did not engage in 'public' theatre in a moment when female-authored plays and female performers appeared prominently in 'public' playhouses. Indeed, the contemporaneous emergence of women as 'professionals' in London's theatrical realm indicates that there was potential for these four Restoration women to have staged their works in 'public' theatres. However, by creating parameters around the consumption of their dramatic compositions—whether restricting readership or audience, or cutting off theatrical production—Pembroke, Falkland, Fane, Newcastle, Ephelia, Wharton, and Finch protect their social positions even as they play with authorial identities. Analogous to the royal women who engaged in theatre, these elite women avoid the insecurities and scrutiny associated with 'public' theatre. Nonetheless, at stake for women writing coterie drama in the milieu is primarily the display of authorial skill. The impulse towards recognized authorship extends into the 'public' plays of the Restoration as well, but financial security also becomes a key factor for women entering the 'professional' theatrical realm.

V. Playing for Pay: 'Public' and 'Professional'

When the Stuart monarchy and theatre were restored in 1660, women did not immediately appear on the playhouse stage, nor did women's plays. Yet, the reinstatement of the monarch was key to women's participation in theatre. Clear models for female theatrical performance and authorship existed in England, but it was Continental influences that incited female presences in English *'public'* theatre. Charles II ushered in the actress

through a warrant in August 1660.[45] The warrant was significant because it authorized Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant—both of whom had seen 'professional' female performers in France—to stage plays. Further, it stated, "all the womens parts . . . may be performed by women" (qtd. in Nicoll 324). Therefore, the king sanctioned 'public' female performances. It was only after this patriarchal permission that women began appearing onstage. Though playhouses reopened in June, records suggest that a 'professional' female performer did not play in a London theatre until November or December when either Anne Marshall or Mary Saunderson assumed the role of *Othello's* Desdemona (Wilson 6). But from where did the earliest actresses emerge? Are there intersections between the 'public' presences of women on-the-stage and on-the-page? Most pertinently for my analysis here, how does the financial motivation of entering the 'public' and 'professional' theatre affect female playwrights' and players' construction of identity? In the Restoration, women 'played for pay,' while also confronting issues of class and gender prescriptions.

How women came to the 'public' playhouse stage remains unclear and, as Joanne Lafler notes, "[n]othing is known about how the first female performers in the King's Company were recruited or trained" (74). Moreover, Lafler differentiates the early English actresses from male theatre apprentices, who received training and protection from the company (73). While there are some indications that actresses learned from their colleagues and John H. Wilson proposes that actresses emerged from dancing and singing schools (8-9), more analysis of how women transitioned from 'amateur' performers to on-stage 'professionals' is necessary. In exploring boundaries of theatrical performance, an affinity between the 'amateur' performers of courtly and early Stuart household plays and the first Restoration actresses becomes evident. They all pushed against the restrictions and anxieties surrounding female performance. However, the earliest 'professional' actresses were exposed to the 'public' in a way that the women involved in more constrained manifestations of theatre avoided. The actresses' lack of "protection—and control—of husbands and male relatives" (Lafler 73) specifically connects to Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' instability stemming from patriarchal absences. Though these absences produce insecurity, they are also productive and facilitate female authorship and theatrical performance. The first women

[45] Maggie B. Gale and John Stokes discuss how the term 'actress' does not seem to have been applied to dramatic performance until forty years after the appearance of women on the English stage (1-2).

in the 'public' playhouses had to navigate the tension between creative liberty and insecurity in a way that parallels what Wroth, Brackley, and Cavendish experienced. Yet, working outside of enclosed, household or coterie spaces, the 'professional' actress, as well as the playwright, occupied an even more vulnerable position.

Contrasting the resistance to women on the pre-Restoration stage, playwrights began to underscore the presence of the female body on stage, often through prologues or epilogues. For instance, John Dryden's Shakespearean adaptation, *The tempest, or, The enchanted island*, specifically draws attention to a woman cast in a boy's role. Sexualizing the actress, the Prologue jokes, "All you shall see of her [in the context of the play] is perfect man./ Or if your fancy will be further led,/ To find her Woman, it must be abed" (Dryden). Likewise directing the spectator's gaze, Davenant was skilled in "display[ing] female performers" in courtly masques, and expanded that skill "with his female performers in the Duke's Company in the 1660s" (Lafler 71). Women in the audience also garnered particular attention. Katherine Quinsey points to Restoration playwrights "playing almost obsessively on the presence of women in the theatre" (2) and Cynthia Lowenthal argues that female playgoers "became the theatrical objects" ("Sticks and Rags" 219). Female playgoers were slandered for wearing vizards, like prostitutes. Women in the playhouse, in the audience and on the stage, fell under the male gaze, but it was actresses' assumed promiscuity—"the potential scandal, their sex lives"—that created the particular draw for male playwrights and audiences (Pearson *Prostituted Muse* 27).

The notion of the actress as whore traces back to Italy. Maggie B. Gale and John Stokes point to the historical underpinning of the trend: "The first 'actresses', in anything like the modern sense of the word, were Italian and, according to the most recent scholarship, they were, at least until the fifteenth century, mainly courtesans" (Gale and Stokes 1). Despite temporal and physical distances and significant shifts in theatre, the overlapping identities of actress and whore pervaded the English Restoration stage. The woman (person) and actress (occupation) became inextricable, and "the 'real-world' result of some actresses' display of their 'reputations' and 'persons' was a movement from playhouse to town house, or even to country house, when they were courted or kept by the aristocrats for whom they played" (Lowenthal *Performing Identities* 137). Specifically, Nell Gwynn, well-known actress and mistress to Charles II, was dubbed the 'Protestant whore.' Actress Elizabeth

Farley, also the king's mistress, sparked gossip, leaving the King's Company after becoming pregnant in 1662 (Wilson 17-18). Even actresses who avoided such scandal and attempted to construct chaste 'public' images could not entirely avoid derision as whores. For example, Anne Bracegirdle fostered a virginal persona, but her resistance to a sexualized image was in conflict with her perceived "sexual availability" (Lowenthal "Sticks and Rags" 224). As Peter Stallybrass contends, "The connection between speaking and wantonness was common to legal discourse and conduct books" ("Patriarchal Territories" 126); therefore, 'public' speaking via acting constituted violation of prescribed chastity. Furthermore, Lowenthal contends, "a Restoration audience found it doubly easy to equate the actress with the prostitute: her job demanded that she present her body, feign desire, and display this divided female self; her profession required that she regenerate, possess, and sell a series of provisional selves" ("Sticks and Rags" 221). If the queen consorts—performing in courtly rather than 'public' spaces—were scrutinized and criticized for their open presentations of the body, it unsurprising that 'professional' actresses—entering the 'public' playhouse without male protection—would be subject to the same, if not harsher, criticism.

Despite the milieu's rhetoric and modern scholarship's attention to the sexual implications of women on the 'public' stage, Deborah Payne diminishes the link between the actress and the whore (23). She rightly points to prologues and epilogues as being the main source for scholars who conclude that acting was tantamount to prostitution for a woman, but contends that "fewer than 1 percent [...] mention either the sexual availability of the speaker or actresses in general" and, further, "prologues or epilogues especially offensive on the subject were prohibited or resulted in arrest" (23). Payne qualifies the sexualization of the Restoration actress; nonetheless, the 'public' display and availability of women's bodies, as well as some off-stage affairs, troubled the social position of the earliest 'professional' female performers.

Margaret Cavendish, who neither intended her plays for 'public' performance nor took to the stage, defends participation in the theatre. She asserts,

> I cannot chuse but mention an erronious opinion got into this our Modern time and men, which is, that it should be thought a crime or debasement for the nobler sort to Act Playes, especially on publick Theatres ... [but] certainly there is no place, wayes

> or means, so edifying to Youth as publick Theatres, not only to be Spectators but Actors[.] (“To the Readers” *Playes*)

She does not associate performance play with immorality in the way that Northbrooke, Gosson, Marston, and Prynne do. Rather, she renders the “publick Theatres” as productive, but specifically for potential *elite* performers. However, “people of rank did not join theater” (Lowenthal “Sticks and Rags” 229). The first English actresses did not come from elite families, but, in contrast to the women discussed above in relation to dramas linked to the court, closet, household, they played to earn their living. Therefore, the association between paid actresses and paid prostitutes stems from class concerns, as well as the gendered chastity tenet. Quinsey asserts that “the presence of women onstage became the locus for a whole complex of questions on the inherent theatricality of social roles, as dictated not only be gender, but also by class” (8), thereby raising questions about how the actress assumed elite female roles on stage. Laura J. Rosenthal reads class and gender as interrelated, claiming that “the [Restoration] actress in her double capacity as player—an untitled and unmonied professional and character—often a desirable and marriageable lady—theatricalized an emergent instability of class identity for women” (4). There is an impulse towards class mobility and, similarly pursuing questions about how actresses’ social position affected their theatrical performances, Lowenthal examines how “women onstage enacted and embodied . . . aristocratic imperatives” (*Performing Identities* 138). But does the class distinction between actress and aristocrat suggest detachment between player and role, or are they both subject to the same imperatives? I suggest that they both must conform to gender norms to avoid accusations of sexual promiscuity. However, the actress has always already disrupted norms.

The emergent bourgeois class of the seventeenth century proffered potential of class mobility, and opportunities in the ‘public’ theatre for women similarly presented the *possibility* of earning financial stability and social mobility. In addition, radical shifts in politics, economics, and religion in the milieu extended to the theatrical realm with the arrival of ‘professional’ actresses. However, such radical changes did not undermine established gender prescriptions. If anything, the debate on women was met with the reassertion of normative gender constructions (Quinsey 6-7). Therefore, “[a]s long as the actress could not claim virtue, she could not parley her professionalized seductiveness into

class mobility" (Rosenthal 20). Consequently, the socio-economic position of the actress remained precarious during the Restoration. Still, as the distance between elite women performers and the 'public' stage suggests, even as she exposes herself to greater scrutiny and therefore risk, the actress possesses greater liberty.

Despite predominantly acting in male-authored plays, the actress gained authority through theatrical performance. The male gaze and directives do not undo the ways in which female performers influenced the 'public' theatre and its products. Lafler contends that "the skill and distinctive personalities of actresses had a long-term impact on adaptations of stock pieces, on character types and on the development of dramatic genres" (76). In particular, Gwynn established the popular 'gay couple' trope with Charles Hart, and, though she may have left the stage before she could play *The Rover's* Angellica Bianca, her performances certainly inflect Aphra Behn's female characterizations. Female and male playwrights frequently tailored their work to and employed specific actresses. The relationship between female playwright and female player in the Restoration is noteworthy, with the first 'professional' actresses inspiring and collaborating with the first 'professional' female playwrights. There was a symbiotic connection, as the playwrights also wrote for the players. Aside from creating characters that suited Gwynn's persona nicely, for example, Behn worked closely with experienced actress Mary Saunderson Betterton (Pearson "Women Spectators" 50). Given Gwynn's popularity and type-casting, Elizabeth Polwhele might have also written the part of Clarabell in *The Frolicks* for her (in Ostovich and Sauer 441). Further, Mary Pix and Elizabeth Barry were associates, with the latter performing in many of the former's plays. The intersections between the female playwright and the actress, of course, extend beyond individual texts and relationships.

Emerging in the 1660s, 'professional' female playwrights are akin to the female performers in that they worked with and against gender and class anxieties, renegotiating or eliding their 'private' identities to construct themselves in the 'public' theatrical realm. In spite of the growing presence of women in print since the Elizabethan period, authorship remained a male-dominated field, especially in connection to 'public' productions (in print and on stage). Writing for the 'public' theatre posed additional issues surrounding the playwright's authority. Because "[a]uthors were expected to read their scripts to the actors, suggest casting, perhaps direct, and certainly attend, rehearsals—activities deemed more

appropriate for men than women" (Lafler 83), it was difficult for seventeenth-century women to penetrate the 'commercial' playhouse. In her important study of the presence of women in Restoration theatre, *The Prostituted Muse*, Jacqueline Pearson asserts, "The higher a woman's status, the less likely she was to write for the commercial theatre" (121). Women writing for the 'public' playhouse threatened their social position, because they were violating gender norms. Just as actresses were always already unchaste, Pearson asserts that "[w]riting women were clearly guilty of something, and these charges were usually formulated as accusations of unchastity, madness and plagiarism" (*Prostituted Muse* 9). Some women played into this, including bawdy content—connoting deviance, vulgarity and lowness—into their work. Peter Anthony Motteux's prologue to Pix's *The innocent mistress* associates female playwriting with vulgarity, declaring, "no Bawdy, this can't be a Wom[a]n's play." Behn, one of the most prominent playwrights of the Restoration, gained popularity with her bawdy comedies, but claims that she was "forced to write for Bread" in the preface to *Sir Patient Fancy* (Av). This does not diminish the link between women in 'public' theatre and prostitutes; however, her financial need implicitly justifies her engagement with lewd material.

Because Behn and her contemporaries wrote "for Bread" in the 'public' sphere, they had to cater to popular taste in a way that Wroth, the Cavendish sisters, and others who wrote for 'intimate' performance and coterie circulation did not. I do not suggest that women writing for non-commercial contexts did not engage with contemporary trends; however, it was more imperative for 'professional' playwrights to follow trends and entertain playhouse audiences if they wanted to create continued demand for more of their plays. Jane Milling asserts that the early 'professional' female playwrights (she broadens her scope from 1660-1750) are

> widely diverging in their choice of genre, political affiliation, style, and voice … [and thereby] do not form a unique female tradition of playwriting or even attempt to consciously construct themselves as a grouping. Their work for the theater was mostly commercially driven, alert to audience expectations and desire and attuned to the political and social moment of its staging. ("Working in the Theater" 27)

Using the rake, the 'gay' heroine, and sentimentalizing the domestic sphere, Restoration women dramatists "worked within forms inherited from a male-dominated theatre" (Pearson

Prostituted Muse 142). Disguise and cross-dressing—which the Cavendish women employ in their plays, but male playwrights also frequently deploy throughout the seventeenth century—also prominently appear in many female-authored plays into the 1690s. In addition, the emergent female playwrights frequently engage with the Restoration trend of adaptation, relying on source texts. While this could lead to plagiarism accusations, it could also help women negotiate authorial positions, as with Pembroke and Falkland. Significantly, the first female-penned play known to be staged in a 'public' playhouse is a translation of a male-authored work.

Katherine Philips translated *Pompey*, from Pierre Corneille's play, for the Earl of Orrery and staged in Theatre Royal in Smock Alley, Dublin in 1663. She went on to translate Corneille's *Horace* as well. This does not discount, however, the presences of the female writer in the playtexts. Although Katherine Philips' contributions to theatre are translations, her specific selection of Corneille's *Pompée* and *Horace* are worth consideration. First, *Pompey* becomes an appropriate choice for the milieu, as it represents political conflict, and the aftermath of the assassination of a Roman leader. Pompey's widow, Cornelia, becomes a central figure, playing off of the exotic sexuality and power of Cleopatra by occupying a normative role. She is bound by duty after her husband's murder: "no extinction or decay shall be/ In that revenge which must enoble me" (52). Philips adds songs between the acts, particularly the one at the play's conclusion, to further stress Cornelia's continued connection to her dead husband:

> *But that the sorrow which she wears,*
> *So charming is, and brave.*
> *That it exalts her Honour more,*
> *Then if she all the Scepters bore*
> *Her Generous Husband gave. (64)*

Although complicated by revenge, Cornelia's virtue lies in her extended mourning, which reflects her normativity as a widow. *Horace* is apt for the Restoration because of its attention to civil war and the difficult position of women. The Prince's speech, recounted by Curtius, pointedly comments on women's connection to both sides of the battle: "Our daughters are your Wives" (77). Akin to *Pompey*, this highlights the relational position of women: rather than individual agents, they are daughters and wives to patriarchs. Perhaps Philips not only

chose Corneille's plays because of the timely political overtones, but also because of how they examine female roles in relation to those politics.

The daughter of a merchant and wife of a Member of Parliament, Philips relied on these normative positions for her self-definition. Despite her contributions to drama, she clearly wanted to maintain respectability as 'the matchless Orinda.' *Pompey* was published in Dublin and London in the same year it was performed, and the first printing sold out quickly (Beal 137). Her death in 1664 prevented completion of her second work, *Horace*. Yet, it was 'publicly' staged in the 1668-9 season at Theatre Royal (Bridges Theatre) by the King's Company after John Denham finished what she began. Even though she followed the success of her first publication with a second translation, Philips apparently did not anticipate 'public' dissemination and does not seem to have been paid for the printings or performances of her plays, certainly not for the posthumously completed *Horace*. This complicates any potential financial interests. With the stakes of her participation in drama in question, she might better fit within an elite, more 'intimate' mode of dramatic authorship, then. The staging of her plays was not strictly commercial: *Pompey* was allegedly staged by aristocratic friends rather than commercial producers and *Horace* was performed at Charles II's court, with Lady Castlemaine and the Duchess of Monmouth in the cast, before it appeared at Bridge's Theatre. In addition, she elides any 'professional' ambitions, thereby adhering more to 'proper' wifely behavior and securing a higher social standing. Philips did not intend for 'public' performance: "Tis only I … that cannot so much as think in private, that must have my imaginations rifled and exposed to play the Mountebanks, and dance upon the Ropes to entertain all the rabble" (Thomas 129-30). Further, Philips, like Wroth, claimed that her writings were published without her consent. She "never writ any line in [her] life with an intention to have it printed" and was "so Innocent of this pitifull design of a Knave to get a Groat, y^{t} [she] was never more vex'd at any thing" (Thomas 128, 142). Her resistance to 'public' dissemination indicates an attempt to construct a normative identity; she occupied a relatively stable, heteronormative position that 'public' theatrical writing could compromise. Further, she tempers her authorship through indebtedness to a male-authored text. Nonetheless, because of their wide circulation in print and on the stage, Philips' translated plays belong to 'public' theatre, even as she resists the potentially deviant identifications linked with the 'commercial' sphere.

The same season that *Horace* appeared at Theatre Royal, Frances Boothby's *Marcelia; or, The Treacherous Friend* was staged 'publicly' there and then was printed in 1670. It was the first original female-authored play performed in a London playhouse. *Marcelia* is a tragicomedy that shows the consequences of false acquisition of power. In an attempt to gain the monarch's favor, Melinet deceives his cousin, Marcelia, into believing that her lover is unfaithful and attempts to convince her to marry the king. As with Arcas in *Love's Victory*, his plot comes undone. Marcelia reunites with her lover, but only because the king, Sigismund, "give[s]" the female protagonist away (M3). Yet, Marcelia does not entirely lack agency; rather, the king makes the decision that her conflict between love and honor prevents her from making. In fact, male characters in the play render Marcelia as powerful: Melinet refers to her as "too fair, and fear that I shall find as cruel" (C) and the king says, "*For whosoe'er does see Marcelias eyes,/* Must break their faith, and fall her sacrifice (C2). She conveys heightened self-consciousness, projecting victory, though an "inward martyr" (E). Marcelia's powerful presence is held in tension with her concern for virtue and 'proper' femininity. This interest in female authority and gender codes also pervades the prologue, which limns the female playwright as insane:

> With Ballading I think she mad is grown,
> And by her Prologue fain would make it known.
> She need not be so hasty; faith her Play
> Will witness that her Reason's gone astray[.] (A3)

According to the speaker, the play serves as evidence of Boothby's madness because she is too "hasty," or perhaps presumptuous, in her 'public' presentation of an original play. The "poetess," the speaker continues, fears censure. In anticipation of the play's performance, Elizabeth Cottington expresses similar concern in a letter to Walter Aston, written in January 1669: "I shall tremble for the poor woman exposed among the critticks" (Clifford II: 60). To alleviate criticism, Boothby reaches out to the female playgoers, hoping that "the Ladies out of Pride/ And Honor, wil not quit their sexes side" (A3). Furthermore, she initially elided herself from the play, employing a pseudonym, although the published text of *Marcelia* identifies her. Unfortunately, Boothby's and Cottington's fears were justified: the only other work that Boothby produced is a poem that suggests that *Marcelia* failed. The play was an important step in Restoration female dramatic authorship despite being a critical and

commercial failure, and Boothby accepts credit in print as an author, albeit a “mad” one. In this way, Boothby casts herself, and by extension all female playwrights, as mad for daring to enter the masculine sphere of theatre. She invites the audience to laugh at her, but the joke does not undermine her authorial status. Rather, her self-deprecation suggests that women can occupy a conspicuous position in the theatre, competing with male playwrights despite denunciations.

Following Boothby’s *Marcelia*, Elizabeth Polwhele positioned herself as a playwright interested in ‘public’ dissemination of her work. She composed three plays in the late 1660s or early 1670s: *The Faithful Virgins*, *Elysium* (a lost masque), and *The Frolicks: or The Lawyers Cheated*. Whether any of these plays saw the ‘public’ stage is questionable. Of her three plays, *The Faithful Virgins* is the most likely to have been staged, as a manuscript notation indicates, “This Tragedy apoynted to be acted by the dukes Company of Actors only leaving out what was Cross'd by Henry Herbert” (49r). This aligns Polwhele more closely with the ‘professional’ playwrights of the Restoration rather than with those who desired more ‘intimate’ circulation. It not only demonstrates her interest in the ‘public’ performance of her drama (even if her work is censored), but also indicates by which company her play was to be staged. While, like *Love’s Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and “A Pastorall,” no performance record exists, it is probable that both *The Faithful Virgins* and *Elysium* saw some form of production as she refers to “those that have ever seen my *Faithful Virgins* and my *Elysium*” in her preface to her final play, *The Frolicks* (Polwhele 57). After writing a masque and a tragedy—the latter, *The Faithfull Virgins*, critiques “Charles II’s spectacularly public desire for mistresses” and “mocks the crude stereotyping of woman as whore” (in Ostovich and Sauer 440)—Polwhele explored the comedic genre with *The Frolicks.* Dedicated to Prince Rupert, it is a risqué comedy that features a witty heroine, Clarabell, who cross-dresses to avoid arranged marriage. Though the play clearly lends itself to performance, there are no indications that it was theatrically performed. If it was in fact staged, however, *The Frolicks* could have been the first ‘publicly’ performed female-authored comedy in London. Referring to her composition of the work, Polwhele claims, “[I] was encouraged much by Mrs Fame, I have for some minuets throwne my foolish modesty aside, and with a boldness that does not well become a virgin” (*The Frolicks*). Here, she acknowledges her subversion of gender norms; yet, she asserts that she writes for

fame. This, in conjunction with her indication of a potential 'public' performance of *The Faithful Virgins*, evinces her interest in recognition as a 'professional' playwright. However, without confirmation of staging or any publication, Polwhele remained relatively obscure. After *The Frolicks*, which was composed circa 1671, she produced no more plays, likely due to her marriage to Stephen Lobb, a clergyman, and greater adherence to "foolish modesty" and chastity as a 'proper' wife.

Unlike Philips, Boothby and Polwhele, who each briefly ventured into the 'public' theatrical realm, Aphra Behn sustained a career in the 'public' realm as playwright from 1670 until her death in 1689. As noted above, Behn wrote to support herself. Her husband—about whom almost nothing is known—probably died during the 1665 plague. Widowed, she became a Royalist spy, working in Antwerp from 1666-67, and her letters indicate that the Crown did not pay her. Debt led to her imprisonment. It is unclear how she shifted from prisoner to playwright, though her association with Killigrew, whose contributions to theatre were sanctioned by the king, may have supported her entry into the theatrical realm. In 1670, Behn's first play appeared at the Duke of York's Theatre. The aptly titled *The Forc'd Marriage* focuses on the consequences of arranged union between Erminia and Alcippus. In the play, Behn suggests that the position of wife does not always indicate security and happiness, and the work becomes a consideration of women's agency in relation to marriage arrangements. In the first scene of the play, the king gives Erminia to Alcippus. This disrupts Erminia's love for Phillander, as well as Galatea's love for Alcippus, and the prescription to obey the patriarch constricts the women. Erminia limns unchosen marriage as prison: "Prisoners when first committed are less gay,/ Than when they're us'd to Fetters every day,/ But yet in time they will more easie grow" (2.3.5-8).[46] Although a 'prisoner,' Erminia exercises control over her body: she obeys patriarchal decisions in terms of her marriage but disobeys the heteronormative impulse to procreate. Thereby, she conveys the complex relationship between normative female obedience and the burgeoning female voice and power in the seventeenth century. Later, pretending to be a 'ghost,' she facilitates her desired union with Phillander, again indicating potentiality for female agency in marriage

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[46] The characterization of marriage as a trap is reminiscent of Milton's tracts on divorce. In the year following his separation from wife Mary Powell, Milton published *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643). His *Tetrachordon* (1645) also focuses on the subject. However, whereas he argues that it is cruel to enforce continuation of bad marriage, Erminia indicates that the burden gets easier with time.

arrangements. However, Alcippus' violence against women—Erminia's ghost-act follows his attempted murder of her—remains a problem. Rather than suffer any meaningful punishment, Alcippus is 'forced' to unite with Galatea (5.2.98). Even the presumed happy ending, with Galatea and Erminia winding up with the men they love, becomes troubling, then. Is the wife's position secure if Alcippus is not punished for his violence? Behn's *The Forc'd Marriage* undermines the stability of marriage, and thereby troubles the wifely role.

Behn followed her first play with popular comedies that continued to play with gender roles, pointedly challenging the boundaries between normative and deviant categories. Particularly noteworthy is the way in which she refigures the courtesan position—so intertwined with the actress position—into means of escape from male directives in *The Rover, or the Banish't Cavaliers* (1677) and *The Feign'd Curtizans* (1679). Hellena of *The Rover* and Cornelia of *The Feign'd Curtizans* are both destined for the nunnery. Whereas, as evident in the Cavendish sisters' play, the convent space offers deferral of heterosexual love, Hellena and Cornelia perceive it as the disruption of their agency. They desire freedom to pursue heterosexual relationships, and, interestingly, these intended nuns display greater self-assurance than their sisters and 'partners-in-crime' (*The Rover's* Florinda and *The Feign'd Curtizans'* Marcella). Cornelia, in particular, strongly advocates for assuming the part of a courtesan: "None half so powerfull as Love, in my opinion, life Sister thou art beautifull, and hast a Fortune too, which before I wou'd lay out upon so shamefull a purchase as such a Bedfellow for life as *Octavio;* I wou'd turn errant keeping Curtizan, and buy my better fortune" (*The Feign'd Curtizans* 2.1.60-3). Her sister Marcella fears for female honor, wincing at the word "Curtizan" (2.1.64) and extending Cornelia's self-inflicted defamation to "all of her sex" (2.1.51). When Marcella in *The Feign'd Curtizans* asserts "certainly there's nothing so hard to woman, as to expose her self to villainous Man" (2.197), she is referring to the courtesan role. Yet, her claim applies equally well to female theatrical performance in the seventeenth century. As suggested above, like the courtesan, the role of female performer entails 'public' display and a commercial need to draw in men. Although the courtesan role is deviant because it positions the woman as unchaste and part of 'public' commerce, Hellena and Cornelia only take on the role in order to pursue a heteronormative, wifely role. Therefore, Behn diminishes the 'whore/virgin' dichotomy and problematizes the categories for female identity.

Playing with her own unstable social position, Behn established herself as an important part of Restoration theatre:

> She wrote more plays than anyone other than Dryden: her texts have more explicit, implicit, and specific stage directions than most and appear to allow for what was technically and mechanically possible for both the actors and the staging. She exemplifies the change from dramatist to playwright through growing consciousness of theatricality. However, she also clearly shows the social as well as the spatial relationships between the stage, the actors, and the audience in plays which were written in, about, and for a particular social context. (Lewcock 5)

Dawn Lewcock implicitly attributes Behn's success to her attention to staging, as well as her ability to respond to the cultural moment and commercial demands. Her significance in the theatrical landscape is affirmed by the posthumous productions of two of her plays, *The Widow Ranter* (1689) and *The Younger Brother* (1696). Behn's success in the 'public' theatre did not protect her. First, she was perceived as sexually promiscuous, which the suggestive content of her plays confirmed to critics. Second, critics accused her of plagiarism: in the postscript to *The Rover* she refutes claims that her play "*'twas* [Killigrew's] Thomaso *alter'd*." Third, she faced arrest for a seditious epilogue that attacked the Duke of Monmouth in 1682. Behn's bold assertion of her dramatic authorial role and 'public' questioning of constrictions surrounding women's position rendered her as disruptive, indicating sustained anxieties surrounding female entry into the 'public' sphere.

The earliest women in England's 'public' theatre did not uniformly accept their degradation as unchaste, but those who indulged and confronted the virgin/whore binary, like Behn and Gwynn, enjoyed the greatest success. For Behn and her contemporaries, presenting plays 'publicly' was not only a financial necessity, but an opportunity that they could pursue because of lower social position and separation from patriarchal figures, as well as increasing liberties in Restoration women's participation in 'public' theatre. Analogous to the earliest actresses, the female playwrights in the milieu who could withstand or mitigate gender- and class-based attacks had the chance to pursue drama in a new way, outside of enclosed spaces.

VI. Negotiating New Roles

Following Behn's success in the 'public' theatrical realm—in spite of the criticisms and personal attacks she faced—four new female playwrights emerged in the 1695-1696 season, Catherine Trotter, Mary Pix, Delarivier Manley, and Ariadne. Jane Milling underlines them as "'new,' 'commercial,' and 'politically-connected' dramatists writing" not for a coterie, but "for a newly established market for plays" ("The Female Wits" 129). In response to the appearance of so many female playwrights in one season, an anonymous writer satirized Trotter, Pix, and Manley in *The Female Wits* (1696) as Calista, a fraudulent critic, Mrs. Wellfed, a foolish and sociable poet, and Marsilia, a self-indulgent and self-possessed poet, respectively. This playful attack underlines the fact that female playwrights still struggled for authority in the 'public' theatrical sphere. Yet, they continued to establish strong female presences at the turn of the century, while experimenting with the roles that they could occupy.

Trotter wrote five plays, all of which were staged in the 'public' theatre from 1695-1706. In contrast to Behn, she hesitates to engage with popular bawdy material (in which Behn reveled), but, rather, attempts to mitigate any disruption of gender norms. Trotter's intent "is the most noble, to discourage Vice, and recommend a firm unshaken Virtue" (Dedication to *Fatal Friendship*), and her emphasis on morality resounds throughout her plays. A pointed critique of libertinism, which was particularly popular in early Restoration plays, *Love at a Loss, or Most Votes Carry It* (1701) stands out for its inclusion of strong women with agency in their love-lives. Though it depicts female characters with authority, the emphasis on virtuous marital union, which reflects the sentimental vogue, still champions heteronormative roles. Trotter herself embodied the normative wifely role, producing no plays after marrying a clergyman in 1708, analogous to Polwhele. While Polwhele and Trotter stopped writing drama after marriage, Pix negotiated positions as both wife and playwright. She married in 1684, and two of her plays, *Ibrahim, the Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* and *The Spanish Wives*, appeared on the 'public' stage in 1696. Her popularity is evinced by her long career.[47] Perhaps because Pix's marriage assuaged her potential deviance as a playwright in the 'public' realm, the depiction of her in *The Female Wits*—as

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[47] Seven plays written between 1696-1706 acknowledge Pix as the playwright; scholars have also attributed five other plays to her (Steeves lix-lxi).

overweight, but open-hearted—is the kindest. Her reputation is also interesting, because, whereas critics accused Behn of plagiarism, Pix accused George Powell of plagiarizing her play *The Deceiver Deceived* (1698) (which his theatre company had rejected). Trotter and Pix demonstrate the potential for women active in the 'public' theatre to also represent heteronormativity.

In contrast, of the three 'female wits,' Manley had the most scandalous personal life. She entered a bigamous marriage and, having separated from her husband, lived with Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland in early 1694. The arrangement ended, allegedly because of Manley's relationship with the Duchess' son, and she possibly reunited with her bigamist husband. With an unstable social position, Manley produced *The Lost Lover, or, The Jealous Husband* in 1696, and quickly became subject to allegations of promiscuity. Interestingly, she employs *The Adventure of Rivella* as a forum to deny that she had an affair with Sir Thomas Skipwit and to complain that such accusations hampered the reception of *The Lost Lover* (73-4). Manley also denounces her maltreatment in *The Female Wits* in the preface to the latter play:

> with Poetick Vanity I seemed to think my self a Champion for our Sex; some of my Witty Critticks make a Jest of my proving so favourable an Enemy, but let me tell them, this was not design'd a Consequence of that Challenge, being writ two years before, and cannot have a Smaller Share in their Esteem than mine: After all, I think my Treatment much severer than I deserved[.] (*The Lost Lover* A3v)

Here, she echoes Polwhele's suggestion that fame motivates her composition, contrasting Trotter's honorable ends. Hinting at her own deviance, she pushes boundaries as "a Champion" for women. Arguably, all of the early female playwrights (and actresses) do. Yet, Manley concedes, "I am now convinc'd that Writing for the stage is in no way proper for a woman, to whom all advantages but meer Nature are refus'd" (*The Lost Lover* A3v). The three 'female wits' seem to have had an awareness of the double standards in the industry and negotiated playwright positions nonetheless. They continued to produce plays as well as non-dramatic texts into the eighteenth century, bridging into the next wave of female playwrights.

The fourth female playwright that appeared in the 1695-1696 season, Ariadne, only produced one play, but she anticipates the eighteenth-century trend of actress turning

playwright. Ariadne's *She Ventures and He Wins* is contemporaneous with Trotter's, Pix's, and Manley's first plays; however, scant information about the playwright exists. Kendall conjectures that "Ariadne" is in fact a pseudonym that Pix used for her first play, while Milling proposes that *She Ventures and He Wins* "is clearly by someone who knew the actors, perhaps Elizabeth Currer, who had played Ariadne in Behn's *The Rover Part II*" (in Ostovich and Sauer 449). The latter suggestion is interesting, considering that the actress and playwright roles had yet to overlap in Restoration 'public' theatre. When women emerged in these 'professional' positions, the author and performer roles were distinct. For instance, Behn is not known to have acted, nor Gwynn to have written plays. The boundary between actor and playwright had been blurred by men in the 'public' playhouse—even Shakespeare acted—but for women to navigate this boundary was particularly difficult given the criticism that women in each position continued to encounter. However, moving into the eighteenth century, we see blurring between the two positions with the appearance of women with acting experience also writing drama, including Susanna Centlivre, Eliza Haywood, Jane Egleton, Charlotte Charke, Susanna Cibber, and Kitty Clive. This indicates how women's presence in theatre and drama continued to evolve after the initial of appearance of female playwrights and players in the 1660s and 1670s. At least for actresses, the development of a "celebrity culture" improved their status (Pearson "Women Spectators" 50). Female playwrights and performers were not suddenly freed from scrutiny and sexualization in the eighteenth century, but there was a growing lineage of women in 'public' theatre upon which they could rely and build.

VII. Conclusion: Eliminating the "artificial dividing line"

The entrance of women into the 'professional' and 'public' theatrical sphere as performers and playwrights in the Restoration indicates a penetration of gender boundaries, despite the entrenchment of heteronormative prescriptions, with women continuing to negotiate the border between normativity and deviance. Though a seventeenth-century progression from courtly plays to closet drama and household theatricals to 'commercial' entertainments seems implicit in the structure of this chapter, women's engagement with dramatic composition and performance does not demonstrate a linear move towards gender subversion nor the 'public' theatrical sphere. 'Professional' actresses in 'public' theatre did

not entirely displace the aristocratic dancers and players of early Stuart England. Rather, as the courtly performances of princesses Mary and Anne and the work of Ephelia, Wharton, and Finch indicate, female presences in coterie theatricals continued alongside the 'public' and 'professional' performances. At the same time, the dramatic endeavors of royal and elite women in late Tudor and early Stuart England anticipate the increasing 'public' circulation of female presence in theatre. Rather than attempt to trace a straightforward lineage from the closet to the stage, then, we might begin to eradicate the line between pre-Restoration and Restoration women in drama. By examining the different dramatic modes that allowed early seventeenth-century women to dance, act, and write, we can begin to understand the appearance of 'professional' and 'public' female playwrights and players in the Restoration. The connections and progressions in women's contributions to seventeenth-century theatre demand more attention than the distinction between 'professional' and 'amateur,' the 'public' and 'private' (and 'intimate'), and the 'commercial' and non-profit making.

Continuities between early female presences in drama are tenuous, particularly as some women—from Pembroke to Pix—attempted to embody normative gender roles even as they claimed authorship, while others—from Behn to Manley—prioritized pay and fame (or infamy) over normativity. Other distinctions also appear. Political security motivated courtly performances; authorial prestige and acknowledgement motivated closet and household coterie plays; and pay motivated 'public' performances. Yet, there are overlaps and junctures between these motivations. Political events pervade women's 'public' plays. Financial interests intersect with the political instabilities of the Stuarts. In addition, whether in the court, the 'closet,' the household, or the playhouse, female dramatists demonstrate interest in carving out positions in theatre. Moreover, continuities exist in the need to challenge gender prescriptions in order to pursue authorial or theatrically performative identities, especially with the pull 'outward' that manifests itself in many women's plays and performances. There are nuanced differences in explorations of female roles linked with this impulse 'outward,' towards increased dissemination. However, in many ways, a woman's social position—and her desire to secure that position—dictated the 'publicness' of her theatrical presence.

Confronting the anxiety and the suppression of female performance in the (extended) seventeenth century, women made important contributions to the milieu's theatrical

landscape, especially when they risked their social status through increased level of dissemination. Yet, even the works that remained insulated within the household contribute to the lineage of female playwrights and players in England, underpinning women's appearances on the 'public' stage. Importantly, as many of the women discussed here demonstrate, including Wroth and Cavendish sisters, women certainly wrote theatrically before Aphra Behn did.

Epilogue

I. Filling Dramatic Gaps

Rather than a 'desire to speak with the dead,' questions surrounding dramatic mode and its connection to life and performance inspired this project: I sought to better define the household dramatic mode by analyzing how three early Stuart women, Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley, deployed the mode. However, the relationship between literary mode, historical context, and the playwright-player-audience-space dynamic sustained this study. Texts reflect the context from which they emerge, and the household plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters reflect the playwrights' unstable identities, as well as the personal and political struggles with which they were confronted around the time of composition. Through *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall," these early female playwrights underscore their instabilities—as fallen, as entrapped, and as subjugated—even as they assert identities as tenuously empowered, but normative, women. This project offers an alternate avenue for analyzing plays, one that focuses on multivalent performances and insists upon the interaction of dramatic mode with fiction, biography, and context. Reading biographical allusions, spatial employment, or theatrical performance potential in isolation, for example, is limiting. To round out analyses of plays, and the performances attached to them, connections must be made. How does a literary mode support theatrical potentiality? What does that potentiality convey about the playwrights and what is at stake in their dramatic compositions? These questions call for 'thick description.' In this way, my study broadens avenues for scholarship by narrowing focus, as it attends more fully to three texts before considering the wider implications of insecurity related to women in drama. Further, analysis of household theatre produces a rich and informative—even compelling—narrative of female presences in seventeenth-century theatre, helping to diffuse boundaries and to challenge the roles that women could occupy in relation to theatrical performance.

Contained within the household, *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" begin to fill a gap in the history of female theatrical presences. Wroth's *Love's Victory* falls between the end of Anna of Denmark's involvement in masques following the 1612 death of her son, Prince Henry, and Henrietta Maria's on-stage appearance in 1626. Brackley and Cavendish's *The Concealed Fancies* and "A Pastorall" are wartime 'winter fruit' that presaged the works of Margaret Cavendish and Restoration playwrights. As

textual objects and multivalent performances, the household plays of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters contribute to continuities in female dramatic authorship and on-stage playing in seventeenth-century England. The household plays offer noteworthy opportunities for female acting prior to the Restoration. Moreover, in terms overlapping roles as composers and on-stage performers, the female theatrical presences of the early-eighteenth century have precedents in Wroth and the Cavendish sisters. Wroth demonstrated impulses for dramatic authorship and performance, as she composed a play and certainly danced in courtly masques, if not her own *Love's Victory*. Cavendish and Brackley also indicate their own authorial ability and their potential for acting in their dramas, especially in *The Concealed Fancies*. With women likewise occupying both playwright and player roles in the eighteenth century, then, we might consider how the work they do in the 'public' realm stems from—or discretely continues—the performances of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters that appeared in the intimate and enclosed realm of household theatre.

Love's Victory could have contributed to the resurgence of the pastoral's popularity in Caroline England. Henrietta Maria or her ladies might have been aware of Wroth's play, because Sir Edward Dering—who was linked with the court as a Member of Parliament and Royalist—possessed a copy of the manuscript. Most of his collection of manuscript plays was gathered between 1619 and 1624, shortly before Henrietta Maria's coterie performed *Artenice* in 1626 and *The Shepherd's Paradise* in 1633. Therefore, it is plausible that the queen consort, seeking performance opportunities, encountered Wroth's pastoral via Dering. Embodying the potential of female aristocratic performance, *Love's Victory* presages the important on-stage presences of Henrietta Maria. Likewise, I place *The Concealed Fancies* squarely in another gap: it occupies the space between pre-war female theatrical presences and the 'professional' and 'public' women of the Restoration. In particular, it anticipates themes and trends that pervade popular Restoration plays. For instance, looking ahead to 1677, Aphra Behn's *The Rover, or, The banish't cavaliers* constructs courtship in a manner similar to *The Concealed Fancies*: it involves a theatrical game in which disguises, artificiality, and lingering (though absent) patriarchal authority both disrupt and facilitate love matches. Any direct influence is improbable. However, the Cavendish sisters' comedy certainly filters into the plays of Margaret Cavendish, and the questions that the three Cavendish women raise regarding women's social position very much represent the

movement in Restoration drama to become “overwhelmingly concerned with questions of gender identity, sexuality, and women’s oppression, to a degree and a depth not seen in a comparably popular form of entertainment before or since” (Quinsey 1). ‘Public’ and ‘professional’ women in the Restoration theatre struggled to maintain the semblance of heteronormativity, but even Wroth and the Cavendish sisters anticipate these more pointed—and more ‘public’—challenges to patriarchalism by producing texts that underline the potential for female agency. While the ‘public’ female presences of the Restoration disrupt gender prescriptions in more overt ways, Wroth’s and Cavendish and Brackley’s household plays also confront gender norms.

Although Wroth’s and the Cavendish sisters’ plays were by no means entrenched in ‘public’ popular culture in the same way that Behn’s or Pix’s were, they are an important part of seventeenth-century dramatic tradition. To maintain scholarly accuracy, I remain tentative in my claims. At the same time, plausible conjectures are vital to opening critical dialogue. There must have been some knowledge of household plays and performances among coteries, but the extent of cultural awareness of such performances is unclear. Though I do not propose that women who engaged in ‘professional’ theatre read Wroth’s or the Cavendish sisters’ manuscripts, the actress-playwright of the early eighteenth century might have encountered coterie performances that operated within parameters similar to household theatre. Even if no explicit connections between the ‘professional’ actress-playwrights of the Restoration and the ‘amateurs’ of the early Stuart period are discernible, it is important to emphasize that women’s household plays and performances presage not only the (re)introduction of women as vocal performers and playwrights into theatre, but also their evolution in that masculine-dominated space. Therefore, I present these three primary textual objects of this study as part of the lineage upon which Restoration women rely and build in terms of engagement with dramatic forms, and I invite further conversation on their position in the emergence of the ‘professional’ and ‘public’ female playwrights and players.

II. (Limited) Freedom to Explore in the Household

The search for the significance of early Stuart household drama has taken this project into disparate spaces: from the country houses of the Sidneys and the Cavendishes to the ‘public’ stages of Restoration London. Each of the spaces—embodied, architectural, and

imagined—facilitates performance play. What the spaces represented in *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" share is their intimate connection to their author(s). Creating fictional settings grounded in real, architectural spaces that then function as potential performance sites, these early female playwrights populate those fictional worlds with their intimates. With an emphasis on the country house as a site of hospitality, the family spaces transform into theatres for performance play. As 'found' stages, the country house offers exploratory freedom even as it imprints itself upon a household play. The Penshurst gardens become Venus' altar. Welbeck Abbey, appropriately, plays the part of a convent. Wroth, the Cavendish sisters, and their coteries are at liberty to enact their 'second selves' in these spaces that are at once concrete and imaginary. But to what extent are the country houses and the household, religious, and pastoral settings epistemic landscapes? That is, do the spaces associated with these early Stuart female presences in theatre signify potential for agency and stability that can be known or actualized? The first two chapters of this study traced the claims that Wroth and the Cavendish sisters make over 'real' and fictionalized spaces. These claims imply, but do not equate to, lasting authority. Wroth did not own Penshurst, and even her authority over her late husband's property was tenuous at best. While the Cavendish sisters managed their father's Welbeck, they did not inherit it. Their agency over the patriarch-owned estates is, at best, fleeting. These women appropriate space, but only in the text and, likely, in ephemeral theatrical performance. If they cannot own their familial estates, they exploit them for rhetorical and performance space.

At stake in Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' composition is construction of identity, but also the potential for pleasure and freedom in performance play. Cavendish seeks "happinis" through "rehears[ing] a Pastorall," pointing to the pleasure derived from dramatic composition and performance play:

> After the duty of a verse
> Give leave now to rehearse a Pastorall then if but give
> Your smile I sweare I live
> In happinis, for if this may
> Your favour have, 'twill neare decay
> Now let my language speake & say
> If you bee pleased I have my pay

That passionately am. (Beinecke 43)

Her "pay" is her father's pleasure in the work, contrasting the political, authorial, and financial motivations of earlier, contemporaneous, and later women in drama. This is not to say that Cavendish had no ambitions as an author or on-stage performer. However, her poem attests self-imposed limitations of her occupation of these roles: Cavendish is only happy to engage in dramatic composition and performance if the patriarch "give[s] [his] smile" and "bee pleased." There is security in patriarchal approval. She, like her sister and Wroth, simultaneously resist and submit to the patriarchal system that constricts them and their multifaceted performances. At once, they assume masculine positions, as well as normative feminine roles of wife (or widow), daughter, and sister. The playwrights' lives filter into their household plays, and the plays become productive sites for exploration of their real-life roles.

My emphasis on the household member as playwright in the mode underlines the inextricable link between the household—as people and as space—the dramatic text, and any theatrical performance. Because of this inextricability, reading household plays for biographical allusions is not reductive, but an important move in analysis of the mode. This is especially important in relation to Wroth and the Cavendish sisters because of the ways in which they infuse their household dramas with alternate selves to explore their own social position in the unstable socio-political climate of early Stuart England. In *Love's Victory* and *The Concealed Fancies*, in particular, the playwrights complicate the roles that their fictional selves occupy. Mimicking tensions in Wroth's and the Cavendish sisters' own lives, the female characters make rhetorical gestures towards their agency, even as they remain primarily within normative, heterosexual roles. The identifications of Wroth, Cavendish, and Brackley are complex and reflect the anxieties and the possibilities surrounding women within seventeenth-century culture more broadly, and specifically in relation to theatre. In their plays and their lives, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters negotiate tension between stability and insecurity, as well as tension between powerlessness and agency. In this way, these female playwrights employ household drama to assert their (bounded) authority and establish a (tempered) voice.

Seventeenth-century female dramatists hoping to secure reputability had to *negotiate* a position within the theatrical landscape, not demand it. The relative lack of female-

authored plays in the milieu indicates the limitations placed on women. Therefore, the idea of seventeenth-century women seeking, let alone attaining, security through theatrical authorship and performance seems counter-intuitive. Female playwrights' and players' resistance to take on roles in the masculine realm of discourse and theatre without mitigation only affirms the complex possibilities inherent in their 'limitations.' From Elizabeth I to the Countess of Pembroke to Wroth and the Cavendish sisters to Aphra Behn, women underpin their theatrical presences with political necessity, derivation from male-authored texts, secure maintenance over dissemination, and a need for 'bread.' For Wroth and the Cavendish sisters—who displayed ability both as dramatic writers and (probable) performers—the intimacy of the household dramatic mode supported entry into theatre. They made no 'public' claims as authors or on-stage players in relation to their plays, but instead situate their texts and associated performances within the insulated spaces of the household. Intimate circulation threatened the effacement of the theatrical presences of Wroth and the Cavendish sisters, and criticism diminishing the value of their plays continued this effacement. What this study illuminates, however, is the intentionality behind the household plays' relative obscurity. Intimate dissemination might disrupt potential for wider recognition and influence as playwrights and on-stage performers. However, it promotes insulation and thereby facilitates *secure exploration* of alternate gender and social roles in early Stuart England, even if sustained security in identity is unattainable.

Questioning boundaries in terms of gender and social roles, theatrical modes and spaces, and biography and fiction, this study positions the household play as a site of negotiation. Women could occupy masculine positions as poets, players, hosts, and estate managers, but in doing so perpetuate identity as unstable. Shifting between normativity and deviance in and through their plays, Wroth and the Cavendish sisters therefore *destabilize* status. However, I contend that this destabilization, as manifested through the household theatrical mode, proffers opportunities for these women. For early Stuart women, security is in conflict with agency. Therefore, loss and instability are productive, enabling Wroth and the Cavendish sisters to penetrate the parameters of heteronormative roles. The household and the household theatrical mode are important because they provided an alternate, protected space for women to participate in and contribute to theatre in a moment when that participation threatened normative status. Publications of Wroth's *Urania*, Pembroke's and

Falkland's closet plays, and Margaret Cavendish's body of work suggests that *Love's Victory*, *The Concealed Fancies*, and "A Pastorall" might have enjoyed wide dissemination, had that been the design of the playwrights. However, their employment of the household dramatic mode is strategic. It fosters insulation. The intimacy of the mode creates a secure space in which Wroth and Cavendish can claim the household and the pen, and participate in theatre. What emerges consistently throughout this study is the confrontation of security and liberty with instability and constriction. Performance play proffers (limited) freedom, and the household offers (limited) participation in the male-dominated theatrical realm. The household theatrical mode, then, promises liberty and security, but with qualifications.

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