

Rewriting the Renaissance Language of Love and Desire: The “bodily burdein” in the Poetry of Mary, Queen of Scots

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Pour lui aussi j'ai jeté mainte larme.
Premier, quand il se fit de ce corps possesseur,
Duquel alors il n'avait pas le coeur.
Puis me donna une autre dure alarme
Quand il versa de son sang mainte dragme
Dong de grief il me vint laisser douleur
Qu'il me pensa ôter la vie et frayeur
De perdre las le seul rempant qui m'arme.
Pour lui depuis j'ai méprisé l'honneur
Ce qui nous peut seul pourvoir de bonheur.
Pour lui j'ai hasardé grandeur et conscience.
Pour lui tous mes prents j'ai quitté et amis,
Et tous autres respects sont à part mis.
Brief, de vous seul je cherche l'alliance.

This sonnet is a woman's disclosure of rape which is preceded and “closed” by poems conceiving the rapist as an object of an exalted and ennobling desire. It belongs to the critically neglected sequence of eleven sonnets and sixain attributed to Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots (1542-1587). Such a violation of the female body (in an ostensibly amatory sequence) contradicts the conventions of male-authored Petrarchanism. This dominant sixteenth century ideology of poetic love created a lover who never achieves physical consummation yet still reveres and, at the same time, despises an eternally desired, yet herself undesiring, woman.

Most probably composed in the mid-1560's, history has conferred on these “Casket Sonnets”, so-called because discovered in “one small gilt cofe nat fully ane foote lang”, the allure of treachery.¹ They are alleged testament to Mary's “mad loue, infamous adulterie, and vile passionne” for Bothwell, which, as the polemical *Detectioun* of 1571 claimed, compelled her to murder Darnley, her husband.² Such censure of Mary, the sonnets, and their passionate

intensities echo early patristic denunciations of female desire: “woman’s love in general is accused of ever being insatiable—put it out, it bursts into flame; give it plenty, it is again in need; it deprives a man’s mind of its vigour”.³ Yet once justly freed from the pressure of historical and moral judgements, Mary’s poems (the first sonnet sequence in Scottish literature) emerge as a purely poetic document which depicts with extraordinarily ironic power that Catullan paradox of desire, *odi et amo*. Their contribution to the history of women’s erotic poetry is not only to defamiliarise but to render uniquely feminine what the Neoplatonic element of Castiglione’s courtly Renaissance treatise named the “bodily burdein” of love.⁴ In contrast to the otherwise persuasive notion that early women writers inevitably wrote within the constraints of contemporary poetic discourses,⁵ Mary’s sonnets fashion a different language of desire. As Mary’s lover does not explicitly renounce the corrupt beloved so her sequence refuses easy resolution of its emotional and sexual complexities. The rape sonnet weaves many ironies. Its quiet lucidity, though seeming to desecrate the heart of Renaissance love ideologies, is only an extreme realisation of their characteristic premise: woman as object of desire. The common expression of Renaissance love as antithesis—whether as rhetorical figure or as the larger antagonism of sacred and profane—is resisted by Mary’s difficult vision of female desire. This essay thus seeks to persuade that Mary’s secular poetry achieves, to some degree, within its temporal context both sexual and poetic enfranchisement from what Cixous terms “the literary enclosure”.⁶

As recent critical writings amply demonstrate, the Renaissance woman who wrote defied prescriptive feminine ideologies. Conduct books implored her to display only the “ornament of silence”.⁷ Verbal fluency, let alone literary eloquence, could signify sexual promiscuity. The “feminine” was simultaneously revered and chastised by a wealth of amatory lyric writing, and condemned by the philosophical and satirical debate of the *querelle des femmes*, resurgent in the mid sixteenth century. When Louise Labé’s poetic “I” declares “Baise m’encor, rebaise moy et baise”,⁸ a different aesthetic is announced, one which transposes “woman” from object to subject, to render her an agent of desire. This same audacity is witnessed in the stress placed by Mary’s lover on her culpability in loving: “pour vous aimer, j’en puis recevoir blâme” (s. 3, l. 7); “Et si ose de moi tant présumer” (s. 10, l. 3). Assertions of love and desire which are “merely rhetorical” should be measured against the Renaissance backdrop of female sexual proscription.

Yet to what degree Mary herself as sovereign ruler was subject to such interdictions is debateable. Eloquence was a desirable quality for Mary to possess at the humanistic French court. One contemporary French biographer records an oration delivered by Mary “en l’age de treize a quatorze ans” defending womens’ rights “de sçavoir les lettres et artz liberaux”.⁹ Yet at the politically vigilant Scottish court of the 1560’s, Mary’s words required prudent control. Controversialist detractors seized precisely on the imprudent excesses of this “young woman, sodenly advancit to the hiest degree of authoritie”.¹⁰ In

the cloistered, intimate environment of the court, her tenderness for Riccio, the musician, famously found censorious comment; she is cautioned about “any thing which could be therein misrepresented”.¹¹ Yet Mary’s reign also coincided with a period of prodigious lyric writing in Scotland within which the amatory mode predominates. That Mary as a female sovereign should have presided over these poetic, courtly love exchanges accords well with such earlier “feminised” courts of aesthetic patronage as Elinor of Acquitaine’s. As exemplified by studies of Elizabethan court dynamics, the relation of sovereign and subject inevitably provides rich play for the lyric idiom *amour courtois* and its discourse of social power and privilege. Mary’s own sonnets, though scarcely drawing on *courtois* language, depict a sovereign subjugated by her subject.¹²

Consonant with recent critical awareness that the sonnet sequence often eschews narrative cohesion, Mary’s work appears to resist a clear temporal chronology or thematic logic. A brief résumé of their order in the *Detectioun* suggests an essentially repetitive or “circuitous” patterning.¹³ The female lover prays that the beloved may realise her worth (sonnet 1); a catalogue of the moral and familial sacrifices she is prepared to endure will demonstrate her faith (s. 2); in the first allusion to the beloved’s wife, the lover regrets that only she, the virtuous one, is condemned for her love (s. 3); the expedient rival has made no real sacrifices to gain the beloved (s. 4); the latter’s sexual frigidity and hypocrisy are impugned (s. 5); the jealously provoked wife, now possessive, claims the beloved (s. 6); the lover laments that she is wrongly perceived by her beloved (s. 7); as her love deepens, the lover will remain virtuous and faithful (s. 8); she recalls her rape, the beloved’s unspecified accident, her contemplated suicide (s. 9); yet he is the sole reason for her existence (s. 10); the beloved has failed to fulfill his promise of reunion and she fears his neglect of her (s. 11); his perpetual absence compels the lover now to write (s. 12).

The lyric form *per se* which is structured by the poetic figure of “I” communicates itself as a confession. In Mary’s sequence, the confessional aspect is intensified by the first sonnet’s opening invocation of God, and sustained in eight sonnets by allusion to “vous”, inferred as the beloved. The final sixain draws out the epistolary nature of the poems which appear as if retrospectively conceived in his absence (“Ne vous voyant... / J’ai mis la main au papier”, ll. 1-2), and sent ultimately as a kind of provocation. The enigmatic last couplet, “Mais je sais bien qui mieux aimer saura, / Vous direz bien que plus y gagera”, makes sudden and reductive offer of their love as a psychological game. Yet throughout the sequence any element of playful *amour courtois* has been subdued by the disquieting sense of greater sacrifices on the lover’s part. The sixain’s emphasis on the written vindication of love mirrors earlier and repeated testaments of love conveyed by “épreuves” (s. 2, l. 14), or acts of sacrifice:

J’ai hasardé pour lui et nom et conscience;
 Je veux pour lui au monde renoncer:
 Je veux mourir pour lui avancer,
 Que reste il plus pour prouver ma constance? (s. 1, ll. 11-14)

Lines 12-13 exemplify the paradoxical gain of what may be termed the lover's heroic martyrdom (as suggested later, the violation sonnet lends to this notion of "amour vrai" an ironic pathos). Worldly love merits an almost religious asceticism. Yet the lover aspires for glory—that is, love's earthly realisation—in the present. "Pour lui", the voice declaims, "je veux garder santé et vie" (s. 8, l. 12). Renunciation is part of the lover's persuasive strategy.

Pour lui je veux faire tête au malheur.
 Pour lui je veux rechercher la grandeur
 Et ferai tant qu'en vrai connaîtra
 Que je n'ai bien, heur, ni contentement,
 Qu'a l'obéir et servir loyalement. (s. 8, ll. 6-10)

Self-renunciation is also a prerequisite of the ideal love (in the sense of being posited rather than realised). To renounce oneself for the beloved is a double bind: it entails the sacrifice of selves both physical (the "corps" sexually possessed) and moral. Regarding the latter, apparent passiveness can enable the lover to realise moral and intellectual capacities. In this, Mary's philosophy of love closely reflects the doctrine of love expressed by Plato's preeminent Italian Renaissance commentator, Marsilio Ficino. The loved one signifies a perfected version of the lover. Loss of selfhood is only the prelude to the lover's spiritual resurrection.¹⁴ This notion informs the willing resignation of the sonnet, "De vous je dis seul soutien de ma vie":

Car c'est le seul désir de votre chère amie
 De vous servir et loyalement aimer
 Et tout malheur moins que rien estimer
 Et votre volonté de la mienne suivre.
 Vous connaîtrez avec obéissance
 De mon loyal devoir, n'omettant la science
 A quoi j'étudierai pour toujours vous complaire,
 Sans aimer rien que vous ... (s. 10, ll. 5-12)

This mode of love, which belongs to the "coeur" rather than the "corps" in the simple dualism of the ninth sonnet quoted earlier, declares its purity. Mary's poetic love evinces boundless generosity. The claim "Mon amour croît et plus en plus croîtra / Tant que je vivrai et tiendra à grandeur / Tant seulement d'avoir part en ce coeur" (s. 8, ll 1-3) blends present assertion with an intimation of the eternal as passion. The "ardeur" of the eighth sonnet is thus conveyed as a palpable entity. Yet in whose heart will it attain such "grandeur"? The sense of self-possession so heroically stated in those earlier examples is sacrificed munificently. The capacity of her love does not distinguish between self and other. The devotional and the transcendent are glimpsed in the assertion of love aggrandised as a secular "foi" sustained through life and death: "... je veux sans nulle fiction / Vivre et mourir" (s. 10, ll. 13-14).

This anxious justification of loving prompts a significant distinction between its uniqueness and conventionally perceived feminine love:

Vous soupçonnez qu'autre amour me transporte.
 Vous estimez mes paroles du vent.
 Vous dépeignez de cire mon las coeur.
 Vous me pensez femme sans jugement. (s. 7, ll. 10-13)

The orthodoxy refers to the symbolic alliance of *femina* with emotion, *vir* with rationality while the feared accusation of female inconstancy is a *topos* common to Roman satire, Aristotelian biology, Scripture, and the love poetry of male Renaissance sonneteers.¹⁵ Though Mary's lover demands her right to the "masculine" half of this binarism, she does not relinquish her claim to an all-consuming, feminine "ardeur" (s. 10, l. 14).

This devotional purity portrays the lover as a paradigm of virtue, a useful strategy in persuading the beloved to neglect his wife, her rival. This third protagonist distinguishes Mary's sequence from the conventional "I/thou" paradigm of the love lyric. The effect is to render specific the obstacle to love's realisation as opposed to the abstractions of petrarchistic suffering. Mary's *dramatis personae* are almost exclusively referred to by the personal pronoun: *je, vous*, or *il/elle*. The degree of intimacy, even respectability, conferred by a named beloved (archetypally, Laura or Beatrice) is replaced by a dramatic insistency which Mary uses to plangent effect: "Elle, pour son honneur, vous doit obéissance / Moi, vous obéissant, j'en puis recevoir blâme" (s. 3, ll. 1-2). Yet the lover is conscious of conventional naming: the sign, "femme", should denote constancy, and "mari" merit absolute devotion. The rival does not fulfill her assigned role as her written professions of love only feign integrity. At first, the rivalry between wife and lover assumes the simple dualism of material and immaterial: love that is rooted in the wealth of "maison en honneur" (s. 4, l. 2), and love sanctioned by spiritual and moral rights. But the lover also implicitly advocates her sexual superiority. The first quatrain of the fifth sonnet piquantly criticises the rival's frigidity in spite of the beloved's physical passion:

Quand vous l'aimiez, elle usait de froideur.
 Si vous suffriez pour l'amour passion,
 Qui vient d'aimer de trop d'affection,
 Son doigt montrait la tristesse de coeur ...

The phrase "Un si grand heur" in line 13 seemingly alludes to the consummate moment of his "grande ardeur" (l. 5) which is now expediently cherished by the wife's sexual possessiveness. At this point, the lover's defense of female love — passion and sense combined — becomes fragile. The cumulative portrait is of the rapacious, garrulous (cf. s. 6, l. 11) and sexually possessive wife of patristic commentary and medieval satire.¹⁶ Yet her criticism of the loveless marriage, and seemingly of the Christian institution in general, is only partial. Despite the

measured bitterness of the expression, “N’étant, à mon regret, comme elle, votre femme” (s. 3, l. 3), the yearning quality of “regret” is felt deeply. If *she* were to become wife, the marriage might by implication regain its sacramental virtue. Writing in the ostracised role of the adulterer (who even confesses to a son), the lover seeks to regain orthodox acceptance.¹⁷ Virtue must subdue sexual jealousy.

Yet this paradox is only one facet of the sequence’s greater paradox: how can the lover’s insistence on the purity of both her love and beloved be reconciled with the physical violation? The latter is the sole textual indication that the loved one is less than the *exemplum* of “beauté ... bonté ... constance” (s. 4, l. 13). Her praise of “l’amour d’un tel amant” (s.6, l. 3) is imbued with a rhetorical sense of the Platonic ideal (although ironically exalting sexual rather than moral perfection). The beloved who rapes can scarcely fulfill the twin states of “seul bien ... seul espérance” (s. 7, l. 3). Love compels Mary’s poetic self to give “toute à lui” (s. 2, l. 4); yet the beloved takes possession of her physically and not spiritually. Two contrasting allusions are made to this precarious alliance between body and heart/spirit: in the quatrain already quoted, and in the opening sonnet where the beloved is “en possession” of both (ll. 5-6). Here, the implication is of emotional *and* physical assent; the sacrifices then willingly enumerated in the subsequent two lines ascribe courage to both body and heart. Whether this willing offer of possession occurs after the rape cannot be determined; and is not the term “willing possession” an oxymoron? To be possessed is to act passively, or to be defined as the commodity or property which the quatrain’s impersonalised, objectivising phrase “ce coeur” implies. The physically subjugated lover seemingly strives to assert or gain *moral* possession of herself.

While verbally striking, the ninth sonnet (violation sonnet) is riddled with contradictions. Imagistically, the lover’s tears, a common Petrarchan *topos*, suddenly fuse with blood (his, though the associative link with the violation remains in one’s mind). The sense of violent desecration is intensely conveyed. At this point, the poem may either be conceived as “anti-Platonic”, or the orthodox poetic tropes of the erotic, Petrarchan and Platonic, may be discarded as critical tools. Neither the *Symposium*’s condemnation of physical contact as “common” nor Bembo’s dismissal of sexual desire—“pleasure fals” at the expense of the “holye way of love”—adequately or sensitively interpret this new degradation of the female body.¹⁸ Unlike the lover’s own Platonic raptures, the beloved perceives her merely as matter, as if to realise literally the biblical and scholastic equation of woman with corruption of the flesh.¹⁹ The lover contemplates suicide on fearing the loss of “le seul rempart qui m’arme” (l. 8). Though belonging to the second quatrain which mourns the beloved’s enigmatic accident, the phrase may persuasively signify her virtue or integrity, qualities then evoked in the loss of “honneur” (l. 9), “conscience” (l. 11), “tous autres respects” (l. 13). Otherwise, conventional expression acquires ironic resonance once knowledge of the rape is gained. She offers herself “toute une” (s. 8, l. 14),

and yet he fragments her in body and spirit. Though she gladly yields her soul "assujettie" (s. 2, l. 3), her body "assujettie" causes suffering. The fourfold apostrophe to the beloved, "Mon coeur, mon sang, mon âme et mon souci" (s. 11, l. 1) may serve as a verbal emblem of the sequence's tensions between the sexual and the spiritual: he is her heart and soul, her life-blood (literally he has possessed a physical part of her), yet her anguish.

That love is professed "malgré toute l'ennui" (a resonant phrase found in both s. 2, l. 6 and s. 10, l. 4) is a paradox which receives its most startling expression in the concluding line of the violation sonnet: "Brief, de vous seul je cherche l'alliance". The apostrophised "vous" suddenly replaces the pronouns "il" and "lui" which lent the retelling of the rape a certain psychological distance; as if the beloved formerly *in absentia* appears to accept this pledge of unity. The line is richly equivocal. Is this promise of unity a reparation for the first brutal "union"? Does the use of the intimate pronoun and new present tense signify a forgiveness which relinquishes suffering to mere narrative recollection? Yet the violation sonnet weaves such subtle ironies through the sequence that one may conjecture that the lover in this line speaks to God. Divine supplication only occurs twice in the sequence: in the first sonnet and in the last as proverbial exclamation. This suppositional movement from the secular to the sacred would align Mary's poetic love with the archetypal sublimation of the human to the divine as found exemplarily in Petrarch and later imitative sequences. Mary's sonnets would then accord with, rather than transgress, convention. Mary's sequence appears to differ from this archetype by refusing, as in the first poem, to *oppose* the lover's faith in God with faith in the innate perfectibility of profane love. The platonic (and religious) antitheses of divine and secular simply do not exist in mutual tension. In a similar fashion, the two "versions" of the beloved—who both corrupts and inspires the speaker—are never offered as irreconcilable. The characteristic moment of renunciation in the petrarchistic sequence fails to occur. This ironic adoration of an inferior beloved may even suggest that the "vous" refers not to the one who rapes, but to an ideal beloved of the imagination. This is consistent with the contemplative nature of Mary's sequence which tentatively rests its expression of desire on possibility and conjecture rather than actual realisation (especially when the latter amounts to desecration).

The temptation or refuge of the imaginatively construed beloved is exemplified by the contrast between what is desired and what is real in the penultimate poem.

Las, vous m'avez promis qu'aurions ce plaisir
 De deviser avec vous à loisir
 Toute la nuit où je languis ici,
 Ayant le coeur d'extrême peur transi
 Pour voir absent le but de mon désir. (s. 11, ll. 2-6)

Union with the unfaithful beloved is permitted only by the sensual conflagration of imagination and yearning. Its gentle solace "toute la nuit" is nevertheless made poignant by the physical solitude of the phrase "où je languis ici". "Ici" indicts the present place of isolation, "languis" conveys frustrated sensuality. This may be evocatively compared with the erotic imagination first witnessed in Mary's earliest documented poem, the elegy composed on the death of her first husband, Francois II.²⁰ Here, the delicate and playful sensuality threaded through the poem's imagery converts a poetic act of mourning into a celebration of "Amour vrai et non feint". An ostensible rhetoric of loss discovers beauty and comfort in the lover's imagined presences:

Si parfois vers ces lieux
Viens à dresser ma vue,
Le doux trait de ses yeux
Je vois en une nue;
Soudain je vois en l'eau
Comme dans un tombeau.

Si je suis en repos,
Sommeillante sur ma couche
J'ois qu'il me tient propos;
Je le sens qu'il me touche;
En labeur, en reçoi,
Toujours est près de moi. (ll. 43-54)

Although the poem's opening movement rebukes the beloved for dying, it submits to a gentler, visionary recreation of the latter as a diffused, pantheistic presence. The almost playful image of the beloved in the sky, as if to suggest a quasi-Platonic elevation or an angelic presence, is suddenly and literally reduced in line 47 to a reflection in water. This couplet evokes both the myth of Narcissus (now feminised) and the Platonic identification of self with beloved. The disquieting reference to "un tombeau" then intimates the lover's own fragile mortality, not simply the physical recollection of the beloved's resting place. If love and death here find gentle fusion, the next stanza claims sensuous belief in the essential oneness of lover and beloved. Although unity is vouched by a cautious nearness ("près de"), its intimacy is offered "en repos" as well as "en labeur, en reçoi". Public duty paradoxically permits the tenderness of "touche", and private rest the still erotic consolation of his voice. Sensuality is intimated rather than overtly recreated, harmonious with the elegy's general purity of love. Ultimately, the beauty and erotically charged intensity of the elegy's portrait of reciprocal love may be aligned with the perfected moral love of the sonnet sequence. Both possess pathos, even the elegy in which the privately conjectured consummation of love is supported by the simply factual verbs of "vois", "ois", and "sens".

In the sonnet sequence, the exemplary beloved of private imagination is

degraded by a single action, powerfully exemplifying the breach between the actual violation and the desired fulfilment. What is ultimately desired resists simple definition. Is it a reciprocity based on the spiritual refinement indicated by the speaker? On this reading, she then desires him to love her in order to create a relationship founded on equality of feeling. Or does the final sixain convey the desire for a physical consummation different to that of sonnet nine? Both yearnings, the latter expressive of the elegy's gentle eroticism, accord with the definition of desire offered by Leone Ebreo's Neoplatonic treatise of 1535: "while love seems to be common to many good things possessed and unpossessed, desire is only for those things which are not possessed".²¹ In one sense, the Renaissance love lyric *per se* derives its rhetorical and emotional power from the lack or absence of an ideal towards which the lover can perpetually aspire. In this respect, Mary's sequence is no different. Yet it eschews the often simplistically rigid oppositions of the period's derivative poetic love schemes which "order" and conform desire to a preconceived denouement. Continuity rather than irreconcilable difference is perceived between Mary's sexual and spiritual ideals. Only by the intervention of the disquieted female reader can the sequence be conceived as ironically disclaiming the beloved who rapes in favour of the apostrophised "vous" of Mary's ideal secular (or religious) imagination.

Love poetry written by sixteenth century women is inescapably transgressive. As suggested earlier, the genre rewrites amatory poetic norms by its articulation of female desire usually suppressed by the ideological positioning of woman in Renaissance lyric and treatise. In their contemporary context of specifically female love poetry, Mary's sonnets further redraw the boundaries of "the erotic", or in Lady Mary Wroth's phrase, "the discourse of Venus".²² Assertions of love's spiritual purity, the condemnation of feigning and emphasis upon the superior virtue of the *female* lover, may evoke Wroth's sonnets, "Pamphilia to Amphilanthus".²³ The sensual playfulness which enables Louise Labé to declare her poetic self the "corps" as opposed to the beloved who symbolises "ame" may superficially recall Mary's sensuous imagination, but fails to attain the latter's bleaker ramifications.²⁴ Yet the violation sonnet deepens the psychological and rhetorical capacities of sexual expression in early women's lyric poetry. Neoplatonic adoration of the female body as merely the outer vestment of spiritual beauty becomes the startling depiction of a female *corps* all too physically present. Mary's intense, highly wrought sonnets thus suggest that "the erotic" in European Renaissance poetry by women eschews the simplicities of convention. Cixous' (in)famous claim that woman writes "with her body" has acquired a new, searingly ironic meaning: "her flesh speaks true".²⁵

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Notes

- * The publication history of Mary's sonnets (original manuscript in Cambridge University Library, Oo. 7. 47, ff. 46r-48r) is complex. For ease of reference, extracts from the poems are taken from the most recent, orthographically modernised edition of Mary's poems, *Bittersweet Within My Heart*, edited by Robin Bell (Pavilion, 1992, 1995). The chronological ordering of the sonnets is based on that found in their first printed form, the *Detectioun* of 1571 (see note 1 below). The appended translations are also taken from the latter text.
1. *Ane Detectioun of the duinges of Marie Quene of Scottes, touchand the murder of her husband, and hir conspiracie, adulterie and pretended mariage with the Erle of Bothwell. Translated out of the Latine quhilk was written by G.B.,* (n.p., n.d.), f. 197r.
 2. *Ibid.*, f. 190r. The sonnets are prefaced thus: "Certaine French Sonnettes written be the quene of Scottes to Bothwell befor hir mariage with him, and (as it is sayd) quhile hir Husband lyuit, But certainly befor his diuorce from hys wife, as the wordes thamselues shew, befor quhom she here preferreth hir selfe in deseruing to be beloued of *Bothwell*". That Mary's sonnets have not received the critical attention deserved (with the exception of a brief resume in Betty Travitsky's invaluable anthology, *The Paradise of Women: Writings by English Women of the Renaissance* [Greenwood Press, 1981], pp. 187-92) may be related to the apparent equation of authorship and incrimination, as witnessed in Mary's otherwise ardent poetic advocate Pierre de Bourdeilles, Seigneur de Brantôme (c. 1540-1614). Yet (if necessary) Mary can be exculpated by analysing her lyric "I" (as any other Renaissance love poem) as a purely rhetorical construct rather than the expression of a post-Romantic "sincerity". Still, in the *Detectioun*'s assertion that "Bothwel was through the garden brought into the Quenis chamber, and there forced her agaynst hir will" (f. 160r), her life and art movingly collide. An earlier polemic contains the following resonant clause: "ye erll Bothuell abusit hyr bodie at his plesr": *The Indictment of Mary Queen of Scots as derived from a manuscript in the University Library at Cambridge hitherto unpublished*, edited by R. H. Mahon (Cambridge University Press, 1923), p. 35.
 3. St. Jerome, cited in *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, edited by Alcuin Blamires, Karen Pratt and C.W. Marx (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1992), p. 68. The infamous *dictum* of woman as *hominis confusio* informed contemporary moral and satirical denunciations of Mary; see J.E. Phillips, *Images of a Queen* (University of California Press, 1964).
 4. Count Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby, edited by Virginia Cox (Everyman, 1994), p. 344.
 5. Ann Rosalind Jones, "Assimilation with a Difference: Renaissance Women Poets and Literary Influence", *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981), 135-53, defines the "revisionary and interrogative ways" (p. 135) by which the (French) female poet embraced the amatory mode, but concedes that these innovations are made *within* the existing philosophical and rhetorical modes of Petrarchism and Neoplatonism. In the violation sonnet, Mary writes from "without" what may be termed the "phallogocentric" system of Renaissance poetic desire.
 6. "Sorties": Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, translated by Betsy Wing (University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 67. The classic exposition of such antithetical rhetoric is given by Leonard Forster, *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism* (Cambridge University Press, 1969).

7. Francesco Barbaro, "De re uxoria", translated by Benjamin G. Kohl, *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society*, edited by Benjamin G. Kohl & Ronald G. Witt with Elizabeth B. Welles (Manchester University Press, 1978), p. 204. See also Ann Rosalind Jones, "Nets and Bridles: early modern conduct books and sixteenth century women's lyrics", *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*, edited by Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (Methuen, 1987), 39-72.
8. Louise Labé (1520-1566). Sonnet 18, line 1, *Sonnets*, edited by Peter Sharratt and translated by Graham Dunstan Martin (Edinburgh University Press, 1979), p. 36.
9. Brantôme, "Discours Troisième sur la Reyne d'Ecosse", *Receuil des Dames*, edited by Roger Gaucheron (Paris: Librairie Payot, 1926), p. 44.
10. Buchanan, *ibid.*, f. 189a.
11. James Melville, *The Memoires of Sir James Melvil of Hal-hill* (London, 1683), p. 54.
12. A detailed assessment of the complex nature of *amour courtois* is found in Roger Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love* (Manchester University Press, 1977). For analysis of the relationship between sovereign and poet in the English Renaissance, see the work of Louis Adrian Montrose, for example, "Celebration and Insinuation: Sir Philip Sidney and the Motives of Elizabethan Courtship", *Renaissance Drama* 8 (1977), 3-35; R.D.S. Jack, "Mary and the Poetic Vision", *Scotia* 3 (1979), 34-48, considers manifestations of Mary in Scottish poetry of her reign and James VI's; for the cultural ramifications in Scotland of Mary's marriage to Darnley and the birth of her son see Michael Lynch, "Queen Mary's triumph: The Baptismal Celebrations at Stirling in December 1566", *Scottish Historical Review* 69 (1990), esp. 20-21. The full extent of Mary's influence upon the poet-courtiers of her reign has yet to be studied but, as Jack concedes, to engage in literary dialogue with the discredited queen after 1567 was politically unwise. While Mary's court entertained the poetic and musical performance of love lyric whether she herself recited love poems of her own making before her subjects seems improbable. Mary's writing as a whole is intensely private in nature. The later non-secular writing (especially the fragments of the *Book of Hours*) strike one as acts of catharsis.
13. To avoid confusion, I use the term "lover" when referring to the lyric "I", "beloved" to denote the male figure to and for whom the poems are composed and "the rival" for the latter's unnamed wife.
14. This philosophy is principally expounded in the Second Speech, chapter VI, where lovers are compelled to lament "because they are losing, destroying and ruining themselves; they rejoice because they are transferring themselves into something better": *Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium: The Text and a Translation*, with an Introduction by Sears Reynolds Jayne (University of Missouri, 1944), 141. The common Platonic aspiration of the lover to *become* the beloved is made cruelly ironic when compared to the forced physical identification of the "lovers" in the violation sonnet.
15. Classically expressed in the "dual, hierarchical oppositions" which begin Cixous' "Sorties". In the *Etymologiae*, Isidore of Seville asserts that "Man [*vir*] is so named, because there is greater force [*vis*] in him than in women [*feminis*]-hence also the word 'strength' [*virtus*]-or, he is so named because he controls woman [*feminam*] forcefully [*vi*]" : Blamires *et al* ed., 43.
16. Antimatrimonial satire, the genre of *molestiae nuptiarum*, is discussed by Howard R. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (University of Chicago, 1991), in the context of literary and patristic sources. The Scottish Bannatyne

- Manuscript, compiled during Mary's reign, provides extensive arraignments against "evill wyvis": see volume IV of the series edited by W. Tod Ritchie (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1928-34), 22-48.
17. According to the persistent medieval classification of states of female chastity—marriage, widowhood, virginity (in ascending order)—Mary is doubly fallen. Orthodox Renaissance Christianity sanctioned marriage as the only licit form of sexuality; see Sara F. Matthews Greico, "The Body, Appearance, and Sexuality", *A History of Women in the West. III. Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, edited by Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge (Harvard University Press, 1993), 46-84. Ironically, Mary's lover perceives no contradiction between her pious invocations of God, not least her professing of virtue, and her travesty of Christian marriage.
 18. "A lover is bad if he is of the common type, who loves the body rather than the mind": Plato, *Symposium*, translated by Robin Waterfield (Oxford University Press, 1994), 17; *The Courtier*, op. cit., 352, in which Bembo declares that "who so thynketh in possessynge the bodye to inioye beawtie, he is farr deceived" (342).
 19. Ironically, amatory neoplatonism still revered physical beauty by conceiving the body as the manifestation of an immanent spiritual and moral beauty; as Grieco, states "The body's outer envelope became a window through which the inner self was visible to all" (op. cit., 58). In Mary's religious poetry, the self seeks purity within and without, desiring "un corps chaste": "L'ire de Dieu par le sang ne s'apaise", (l. 11, Bell, op. cit., 78).
 20. The elegy first appeared in Brantôme's *Vies des Dames de France Illustres*, published posthumously at Leyden by Jean Sambix in 1665, reprinted in *Receuil des Dames*.
 21. From the *Dialoghi d'Amore*, cited and translated in Nesca A. Robb, *Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance* (London, 1935), 198, 209. Mary possessed a copy of Ebreo's work; see Julian Sharman, *The Library of Mary Queen of Scots* (London, 1889).
 22. Lady Mary Wroth (c. 1586-c.1640). "My muse now hapy, lay thy self to rest", (l. 9, *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, edited with introduction and notes by Josephine A. Roberts [Louisiana State University Press, 1983], 142.)
 23. In Wroth's sequence, the female lover exhorts the beloved to contemplate her "sacrifices made / Of pure, and spottles love which shall nott vade / While soule, and body are together found" (s. 26, ll. 12-14). Mary's contrast between rhetorically extravagant, thus "unfeeling", love and the emotional integrity of verbal restraint is found in Wroth's rejection of "fond, and outward showes" (s. 40, l.2) compared to the sanctity of "the soule... / Guarded by faith" (ll. 12-13). The second quatrain of Wroth's sonnet 42 offers rich comparison both with Mary's physically violated lover, and with the defiant self-abnegations which stud Mary's sequence (in particular, the repetitious "I" of Wroth's poem recalls the glorifying "moy" of lines 2, 7, 10 and 12 in Mary's third sonnet): "Then looke on mee; I ame to thes adrest, / I, ame the soule that feelles the greatest smart; / I, ame that hartles trunk of harts depart / And I, that one, by love, and griefe oprest".
 24. Sonnet 7, ll. 3-4, "Je suis le corps, toy la meillure part: / Ou es-tu donq, ô ame bien aymee?"
 25. "Sorties", op. cit., 92.

Appendix

These appended translations are taken from the *Detectioun* of 1571 (some orthography modernised, and unfamiliar words in Scots glossed). Though often clumsily literal and inelegant, they interestingly represent a contemporary “interpretation”. The elegy’s translations are derived from Robin Bell’s *Bittersweet Within My Heart*, pp. 16-18.

Pour lui aussi...

For him also I powred out many teares, First quhen he made himselfe possessor of thys body, Of the <i>quhilk</i> then he had nat the heart.	<i>which</i>
Efter he did geue me one uther hard charge, quhen he bled of his blude great quantitie, through the great sorrow of the <i>quhilk</i> came to me that dolour,	<i>which</i>
That almost caryit away my life, and the feire To lese the onely strength that <i>arnit</i> me.	<i>arned</i> <i>have</i>
For him since I <i>haif</i> despisit honour, The thing onely that bringeth felicitie.	<i>friends</i>
For him I have hazardit greitnes and conscience, For him I have forsaken all kin and <i>friendes</i> , And set aside all uther respectes, Schortly, I <i>seke</i> the aliance of yow onely. (s. 9)	<i>seek</i>

pour vous aimer ...

And I for <i>luifing</i> yow may receive blame (s. 3, l. 7)	<i>loving you</i>
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Et si ose ...

Ye, and dare presume so much of my selfe (s. 10, l. 3)

Ne vous voyant ...

Not seing yow ... / I put my hand to the paper (sixain, ll. 1-2)

Mais je sais bien ...

Bot I knaw well <i>quho</i> can best <i>lufe</i> ,	<i>who/love</i>
Ye may tell <i>quha</i> sall wyn <i>maist</i> . (sixain, ll. 5-6)	<i>who/most</i>

J'ai hasarde ...

I haue put in hasard for him baith fame and conscience, I will for his saik renounce the <i>ward</i> ,	<i>world</i>
I will die to set him <i>forwart</i> .	<i>forward</i>
What remayneth to <i>gif</i> proof of my constancie? (s. 1, ll. 11-14)	<i>give</i>

Pour lui...

For him I will conserve health and life (s. 8, l. 12)

Pour lui je veux faire ...

For him I will strive against <i>wan weard</i> ,	<i>one fate</i>
For him I will <i>reecerfe</i> <i>greitnes</i> ,	<i>reserve/greatness</i>
And shall do so <i>mikle</i> , that he shall know	<i>much</i>

That I haif no wealth, hap, nor contentation,
But to obey and serve him truely. (s. 8, ll. 6-10)

Car c'est le seul désir ...

For that is the onely desire of your dear loue,
To serve and loue you truely;
And to esteem all *wan hap* lesse then nothing, *misfortune*
And to follow your wyll wyth mine,
You shall know wyth obedience;
Not forgetting the knowlege of my *leal* deuty, *loyal*
The *quhilke* I shall study, to the *fine* that I may ever please you; *which/end*
Louying nothyng but you ... (s. 10, ll. 5-12)

Mon amour croît ...

My loue increseth, and more and more wil increase,
So lang as I shall *leif*; and I shall hold for a great felicitie *live*
To have onely *pairt* in that hart (s. 8, ll. 1-3) *part*

je veux sans nulle fiction ...

... I wyll, without any fictioun,
Liue and die ... (s. 10, ll. 13-14)

Vous soupçonnez ...

Ye suspect that other love transporteth me.
Ye thinke my wordes be but wind:
Ye paint my very heart, as it were of waxe,
Ye imagine me a woman without iugement. (s. 7, ll. 10-13)

Elle, pour son honneur ...

Sche for hyr honour *awis* you obedience: *owes*
I in obeying you may receiue dishonour (s. 3, ll. 1-2)

Quand vous l'aimiez ...

When you louit hyr sche usit cauldness,
Gif you sufferith for her luif passioun.
That commith of too greit affectioun of luife,
Hyr sadnes schew the tristesse of hyr hart ... (s. 5, ll.1-4)

seul bien ...

mine onely wealth, and mine onely hope (s. 7, l.3)

toute à lui

... all *subdewit* / To him ... (s. 2, l.4) *subdued*

Mon coeur ...

My heart, my *bloude*, my soule, my care ... (s. 11, l.1) *blood*

malgré toute l'ennui

... in spite of all envie (s. 2, l. 6; s. 10, l. 4)

Las, vous m'avez promis ...

Helas, you had *promisit* that I should haue that pleasure,
To deuise with you at leysure.
All the night where I ly and languish here,
My heart beyng overset with extreme feare,
Seeing absent the butte of my desire (s. 11, ll. 2-6)

promised

Si parfois vers ces lieux ...

Sometimes in such a place
His image comes to me.
The sweet smile on his face
Up in a cloud I see.
Then sudden in the mere

I see his funeral bier.
When I lie quietly
Sleeping upon my couch,
I hear him speak to me
And I can feel his touch.
In my duties each day
He is near me alway. (elegy, ll. 43-54)