

**Jonathan Shelley, "Friend of my own choice: Female Friendship in *Urania*"**

My paper, "Friend of my own choice: Female Friendship in *Urania*," focuses on the representation of female friendship in Lady Mary Wroth's prose romance *Urania*. By replacing heroes with heroines in the established genre of prose romance, Wroth deliberately subverts the subordinating dynamics of male-female relations and imbues female desire with a distinct sense of self-control. I will focus on the relationship between two pairs of women: Pamphilia and Antissia; *Urania* and Dalinea. Each pair loves and is loved by the same man. Whereas such shared desire within male friendship frequently devolves into antagonistic rivalry, these female characters maintain friendly relations through the virtues of "choice" and "change": not only do these women pursue other possible love interests, but they reconcile their romantic competition with each other into a kind of friendship. This possibility of reasoned change in desire, I argue, challenges notions of "immutable" and "biologized" identity and contributes to a concept of unique disposition that defines friendly relations as rare, choice affiliations.

My emphasis on female friendship as a type of womanly alliance is specific. By reinterpreting friendship—a celebrated social alliance typically regarded as exclusive to men—as available to women, Wroth not only valorizes female friendship but suggests the possibility of social bonds that are not constrained by supposedly innate gender qualities.

**Cristina León Alfar, "'Manhood is melted into curtsies': Shifting Masculine Honor in *Much Ado about Nothing*"**

In this essay, I am interested in the effect of Beatrice's alliance with Hero on definitions of manhood. Masculine honor in *Much Ado about Nothing* is grounded in the military, which provides a specific kind of bond and sense of responsibility between men. Don John taps into the overlapping mechanisms of masculine honor when he approaches his brother and Claudio: "You may think I love you not," he begins, "let that appear hereafter, and aim better at me by that which I now will manifest" (3.2.95-97). Presenting himself as a loyal and careful friend, Don John lays the foundation for their trust: the reliability of male bonds. He follows this with that foundation's necessary opposite: the unreliability of female virtue and its accompanying threat of contamination to male honor. "The lady is disloyal," he tells the young bridegroom. "If you love her then, to-morrow wed her; but it would better fit your honor to change your mind" (3.2.104, 114-116). Yet Don John is neither a loyal nor a careful friend, but a rival with Claudio for the Prince's favor. As John reveals himself, Claudio "hath all the glory of my overthrow. If I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way" (1.2.67-68). The play reveals, in this respect, the basis for anxieties about cuckoldry as the competition between men for preferment and power.

The dishonorable underpinnings of Don John's story about Hero are passed on to Don Pedro and Claudio, who confront the bride in a public spectacle designed not for fact-finding, but for the unambiguous preservation of the men's honor at any cost. Having witnessed her cousin's public humiliation at the hands of her fiancé, Beatrice—left alone on stage with Benedick—explodes in a tirade against the cowardliness of manhood. Her complaint puts pressure on a masculinist system of honor and reputation that has, as she sees it, exchanged substance for exterior and superficial form. Behavior that Claudio sees as a proper defense of his own reputation makes him, according to Beatrice, a villain. While Benedick has already rejected her demand that he "Kill Claudio!" (288), she persuades him to take the challenge through a scathing deconstruction of manhood: "Manhood is melted into curtsies, valour into

compliment, and men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones too: he is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie and swears it" (4.1.318-21). With manhood thus diminished by the valorization of a form of honor that has nothing to do with truth and, therefore, with a substance of manhood, Beatrice urges another man to act on the insult to her cousin in order to reaffirm a new, substantive masculinity. Thus Claudio's accusation of cuckoldry against his bride becomes the occasion for an impassioned critique of manhood and a violent defense of Hero, shifting the attention from what feels like a male-driven narrative to another than focuses on the damage to Hero done by a false and empty masculine moral code. Beatrice's critique also unveils masculine honor as evacuated of meaning when men depend on trite stories about women's faithlessness.

### **Christina Luckyj, "'Simply Good?': Rereading Aemilia Lanyer's Transhistorical Female Alliances"**

The early heady praise of Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judeorum* as (in Susanne Woods's words) a proto-feminist "community of good women" has been so thoroughly challenged by skepticism about its divisive politics that any notion of an idealized sisterhood in this text has been deeply problematized. In particular, Lisa Schnell's groundbreaking work has thoroughly debunked Lanyer as "a feminist poster-girl not just for all women in the early seventeenth century but also for us." Since then, it has become fashionable to emphasize the barriers of class and race that haunt the poem despite its apparent celebration of female community. However, this critical corrective risks not only understating the importance of positive female alliances (as Amanda Herbert observes), but ignoring the obvious: Lanyer's female alliances are the bedrock of the poem. Yet a reassessment of the significance of this female community need not send us back to naïve first wave feminism. If, as Jean Howard claims, "[r]ather than a self-evident foundation, gender is a performative act," Lanyer's community of women is a performance of tendentious hyperbole. Frequently stretching and even outrageously violating scripture to represent women as "simply good" and without sin, Lanyer's transhistorical female alliances demand to be read not as transparently protofeminist claims but as polemical fictions. Like her male predecessors, the reform-minded Protestants Agrippa, Calvin and Bale, Lanyer deploys gender as a stand-in for religion. For all of them, the true Church of the persecuted elect united in Christ – a Church that included men -- is appropriately represented by the oppressed and marginalized collective of women opposed to corrupt magistrates and earthly kings. If we read in this representation a merely feminist agenda - or downplay the significance of this female community altogether - we miss the gendered allegory of the poem and the religio-political doctrine it likely conveyed to Lanyer's contemporaries.

### **Anne Gill, "Bridewell and beyond: Women's Alliances in the early modern sex trade"**

The close relationship between the bawd and her whore is highlighted in many plays at the start of the seventeenth century – Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *Honest Whore I*, John Marston's *Dutch Courtesan*, Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters*, Thomas Dekker and John Webster's *Westward Ho*, to mention only a few. In this paper, however, I intend to examine some historically documented early modern sex workers whose records appear in the *Bridewell Court Books* in an attempt to assess the accuracy of these dramatic representations and also to determine whether these women relied on alliances and relationships beyond their purely commercial connections. The Bridewell records provide one of the most extensive sources of material about these women and some authors have suggested that the public scandal caused by the discovery of a brothel operating within the London Bridewell in 1602 may have led to the number of plays in which whores appeared at the start of the century. The records provide an invaluable resource for the modern researcher seeking to hear, however faintly, the voice of the non-literate women of the early modern period.

### **Ann Christensen "'Thou has no calling': Women and the Labor Crisis in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614)"**

My essay approaches "women's alliances" obliquely in part because this famously diffuse city comedy is organized not around alliances--women's or otherwise--but through *mésalliance* and division. In tracking clusters of characters who separate from their groupings and reconfigure themselves over the course of a day in Smithfield, *Bartholomew Fair* is as widely appreciated for its center-lessness as for its satire (Gossett 3). Additionally, my essay honors the topic of *women's* alliances only in its breach in that I present an affinity between the hyper-masculine Jonson and his highly feminized character, Ursula the pig-woman, cook, tapster, bawd, "body o' the fair" and "mother o' pigs." This large, grotesque, creative woman profits most from the Fair and is thereby a figure for Jonson himself, despite his "testosterone-ridden image" (Schafer 154).

My title quotes the judgment against puppet actors, who have "no calling . . . no present lawful calling," according to Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, the play's risible Puritan preacher (5.5.49). The play is in fact full of what we could call "labor crises" as men across the strata of class, occupation, and education fail to fulfill their lawful callings. Male workers sidestep or sideline their occupations, or lack vocation altogether. They change jobs, quit jobs, or go mad from being fired. In this context, Jonson's presentation of a woman not only as the ideal worker, but also as a job creator, market analyst, and capitalist profiteer invites us to rethink gender and occupation in Jonson's other city comedies. In the essay I show that men fail in their vocations, while city wives as well as underworld (or carnival) women succeed through vocational diversification achieved by the very openness and leakiness that Jonson (and critics) attribute to them.

### **Katharine Cleland, "'This woman's of my counsel:' Clandestine Marriage and Female Alliance in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*"**

Scholars have long commented on the intimacy between the titular duchess and her lady-in-waiting in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, but none have dwelled on their relationship at length. Wendy Wall observes that "all four of the primary conjugal husband-wife scenes . . . include Cariola as an active participant" (164). When commenting on the pervasive presence of relatives and servants in the early modern household, Frances E. Dolan suggests that Cariola's participation in these scenes is unremarkable (120-121). By dismissing Cariola's presence as a matter of course, however, we neglect the complexity of her relationship with the Duchess. Despite previous scholarly claims to the contrary, Natalie Mears demonstrates that Queen Elizabeth's own privy chamber served as a forum in which her ladies-in-waiting played active political roles. I will argue that the Duchess forms an alliance with Cariola to validate the highly political act of marriage when she exchanges clandestine vows with Antonio. Webster thus confirms that female alliances formed within a privy chamber can influence politics in the public sphere. In doing so, he reveals the tensions that can arise between women who are not just friends, but are also mistress and servant. What happens when these different forms of "alliance" become blurred? Does friendship constitute an "alliance"? I'm also interested in how we define these different forms of bonds.

### **Emily Isaacson, "Writing Female Alliance: Isabella Whitney and Imagined Alliances"**

Because we know very little about Isabella Whitney's actual biography, we tend to piece together her life from her seemingly autobiographical poetry. In this poetry, she presents herself as a serving woman from a middling class family who seems to have fallen on hard time -- and perhaps is suffering from lovesickness or simply sickness. Much of her work -- *A Sweet Nosegay* and *The Copy of a Letter* in particular -- addresses people in a way that seeks connection through advice. It is through this advice that Whitney seems to attempt to form alliances. Whitney's expressed desire for community -- and kinship in particular -- suggests the difficulty of making connections in sixteenth century London, especially for women of the serving classes. This paper will focus particularly on the addendum of *The Copy of a Letter, The admonition by the Auctor, to all yong Gentilwomen: And to al other Maids being in Love*. In this piece -- as in many of her verse epistles to her family -- Whitney provides her own life as a negative example of the misfortunes that befall young unallied women in London. Even if she does (or did) not achieve a literal alliance, Whitney's persona reaches out and achieves a metaphorical alliance with its audience, telling the reader how to operate in the vicious city.

### **Melissa Welshans, "'I please Myself:' Gender and Female Friendship in Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl*"**

Scholarship of Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* (1611) has largely focused on the play's central figure, Moll Cutpurse, and the many ways in which her cross-dressing can be read in terms of early modern gender and sexuality. Yet for the purposes of this seminar, I wish to consider the nature of "women's alliances" in this play by exploring Moll's relationship with the other women of the narrative—Mrs. Tiltyard, Mrs. Openwork, Mrs. Gallipot, and Mary Fitzallard—examining, in particular, the way in which Moll's unstable alliances with these women contributes to her ambiguous gender representation. As Adrienne Eastwood observes, "While the play outwardly celebrates the character of Moll Cutpurse, it also depicts her as completely cut off from all social connection" (19). Moll critiques patriarchy and misogyny within *The Roaring Girl*, yet ultimately cannot be incorporated into the social world of early modern London. A similar argument is made by Mary Beth Rose who claims that the play presents "an image of Jacobean society [that is] unable to absorb one of its most vital and complex creations into the existing social and sexual hierarchies" (250). Jacobean society created the *haec-vir* yet could not accommodate it. It seems important, in particular, that Moll's failed integration into society is depicted not only in her own words but precisely through her exclusion from the social circles of the female characters of the play. In *The Roaring Girl*, Moll is defined as much by what she wears as by who she befriends.

### **Kathryn Swanton, "Female sexuality and the absence of forgiveness between women in Shakespeare's plays"**

My seminar paper will focus on *Measure for Measure* to investigate the conspicuous absence of forgiveness between women in Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare's forgivers are most prominently women who forgive fathers or lovers. Rarely are the gender roles reversed, where a man forgives a woman. There are instances of forgiveness between men, but I cannot think of an example in Shakespeare's works where one woman forgives another.

We might expect to find forgiveness in relationships between mother and daughter, sisters, or female friends. The convent community could approximate all these relationships, but Isabella is taken away from it, and we never get to see inside the walls. It is tempting to envision the convent as a site for women to engage in rich relationships that develop more fully in the

absence of men, but Janet Adelman sees in Isabella's decision to join the convent a desire to distance herself from women by escaping her female body's sexuality and perceived frailty.

There seems to be a model of sexuality underlying forgiveness that is not intuitive, and that insists on the expression of female sexuality in marriage.

In keeping with the seminar's focus on traversing national boundaries, this paper will ultimately be part of a larger project that also draws on Tirso de Molina's *El vergonzoso en palacio*. In both plays dukes thwart women's homosocial desires with unwelcome marriages, which contribute to the official pardon and social reintegration of a condemned man. The sexual overtones of Tirso's play suggest the best spouse for one woman would be another woman.

### **Evelyn Gajowski, "Chloe Liked Olivia: Female Friendship in *Love's Victory*"**

'Chloe liked Olivia. . . .' Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women.

--Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

The stories Mary Wroth tells are at once hers, and not hers. Of primary significance when considering the accomplishments of early modern English women writers are questions of gender, authority, and authorship. To what extent does a female author follow the male-authored literary traditions that she inherits? To what extent does she revise them? As in her prose romance, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, and her related sonnet cycle, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, Wroth's innovations in her pastoral tragicomedy, *Love's Victory*, are striking. Female friendship, female autonomy and agency, and enforced marriage as a central plot device count among the innovations that Wroth makes to her literary inheritance. My seminar paper aims to scrutinize Wroth's representation of the female friendship between her two female protagonists, Silvesta and Musella; to analyze two interrelated innovations, Wroth's representations of female chastity and female power; and to interrogate the crucial role of Silvesta in embodying and enacting all three -- friendship, chastity, and power.

Wroth's representation of female friendship is especially apparent when we consider *Love's Victory* in juxtaposition to canonical dramatic texts such as Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In Shakespeare, an overriding concern with heterosexual relationships (with Lysander and Demetrius, respectively) puts pressure on the Hermia/Helena relationship, threatening to destroy it. Nothing of the kind, however, characterizes the relationship between Silvesta and Musella in *Love's Victory*. Rather, their relationship transcends heterosexual imperatives. Indeed, even as they voice desire for the same male protagonist (Philisses), Silvesta and Musella unabashedly declare their love for each other: "Betray Musella? Sooner will I die! / No, I do love you!" (3.1.49). In so doing, they parallel Wroth's representations of female relationships in the *Urania*.

Silvesta's decision to opt out of the marriage market, or the "the traffic in women," exemplifies Wroth's innovation of female autonomy: "I with Dian stand -- / Against Love's changing and blind foolery" (1.2.88). Silvesta's vow of chastity constitutes a remarkable exception to the multiple marriages that conventionally symbolize social harmony at the conclusions of Shakespearean romantic comedy. Instead, she equates chastity with freedom and heterosexual desire with enslavement. Wroth thereby suggests that chastity is significant as a means to independence rather than as a traditional female prerequisite for marriage.

Even as Wroth endows Silvesta with the ability to subvert the heteronormative patriarchal system by taking vows of chastity, so too does she grant Musella the ability to subvert the dramatic device and the social practice of enforced marriage -- by marrying a man of her own choosing. It is Silvesta who is endowed with the ability to bring about the union of Musella and Philisses, the central heterosexual pair. To liberate her beloved Musella from the prison of enforced marriage, Silvesta is willing to sacrifice her life, suggesting that loyalty between females involves a love as strong as any heterosexual desire.

**Susan O'Malley, "Teach me how to curse': A Women's Alliance of Mourners in *Richard III*, 4.4"**

In 4.4. of Shakespeare's *Richard III* an alliance of three women lament their fate and grieve for the murder of their children and deaths of their husbands: Queen Margaret for the death of her husband Henry and son Edward; the Duchess of York, the mother of Richard III, for her sons Clarence and Edward; and Queen Elizabeth, for the murder of her two sons. (This scene has been called the scene of the mothers.) After Queen Margaret vows revenge and charges Queen Elizabeth "thou didst usurp my place" (112), Queen Elizabeth asks Queen Margaret to "teach me how to curse mine enemies" (120). Together the Duchess of York and Queen Elizabeth curse Richard, interrupt his expedition to battle, and taunt him with the names of the people he has murdered. In 5.3. the ghosts of Richard's victims appear and charge him to "Despair and die."

What I propose to do in this paper is to reread *Richard III* in terms of the women's alliance of lamentation. I'm interested in defining this alliance using Susan Frye's and Karen Robinson's edited volume, *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens Women's Alliances in Early Modern England*, seeing how the alliance is formed in 4.4., and how it affects Richard's downfall. I also want to speculate why Queen Margaret is often deleted, including in the recent productions of Mark Rylance/Tim Carroll's *Richard III*. The Kevin Spacey/ Sam Mendes *Richard III* restores Queen Margaret and provides a powerful rendering of the alliance scene. Interestingly, the recent Arab version of *Richard III* by Sulayman Al-Bassam gives Margaret and the grieving women greater prominence.

**Sara Morrison, "I shall endeavor for her aims': Women's Alliances and Relational Figurations of Freedom"**

In "Imagining Oneself Otherwise," Catriona Mackenzie explores "the connection between autonomy and the imagination by investigating the role played by imaginative thought in self-understanding, self-reflection, and practical deliberation about the self" (124). Focusing on "imagistic or representational thinking," Mackenzie considers the role of the imagination in establishing an integrated sense of self (124). In an oppressive culture that marginalizes various identity positions, a woman might find it difficult to imagine herself as autonomous or capable of self-definition. My essay suggests that forging alliances with other women offers opportunities for self-discovery, transformation, and autonomous agency. Considering Queen Elizabeth's correspondence with Safiye Sultana and Phillip Massinger's *The Renegado*, my essay argues that tropes of seeing, achieved either through material images or through vivid discursive descriptions, foster imaginative renderings of the possibilities of self-expression and agency. Both cases, one diplomatic and the other dramatic, demonstrate successful—even though temporary and politically motivated—alliances mediated through both patriarchal constraints and material markers of identity. Drawing on these epistolary and dramatic texts, my paper explores tropes of imaginative seeing, the materiality of identity, and physical spaces that enact women's alliances invested in questions of women's freedom across tributaries both political and religious.

## Jessica McCall, "Bad Girls and Gendered Alliances"

I propose to examine the gendering of "alliances" by considering how the alliance of Goneril and Regan in *King Lear* operates as a twisted reflection of a more positive understanding of "women's alliances." Much ink has been spilled over Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia; taking a presentist approach I would like to explore how alliances between "bad girls" in both Shakespeare and modern texts like *Mean Girls* (2004) play on reader expectations of female alliances and critique, question, or naturalize femininity through female companionship. The text is rife with critique of Lear's daughters for their failure to perform femininity appropriately as Cristina Leon Alfar explores in her book *Fantasies of Female Evil* and summarized by a servant saying of Regan, "If she live long/ And in the end meet the old course of death,/ Women will all turn to monsters" (4.1.99-101). But what role does the alliance against their father and Regan's eventual betrayal of her alliance with Goneril reveal about the performance of women's alliances in *Lear*?

*Mean Girls* is a 2004 movie directed by Mark Waters and adapted for screen by Tina Fey. In the decade since its release it has become a popular cult film among adolescent girls and young women. A movie that satirizes "girl cliques" as they are so often portrayed in popular media, it is a text where the "good girl" faces off against the "bad girls" similar to *Lear* (and every Hallmark Christmas movie). This requirement in both texts that the acceptable female protagonist abandon twisted women's alliances with the villainous monstrous women presents an intriguing opportunity to consider how alliances are naturalized and policed by heteronormativity and patriarchal feminine performance in text. Along with Alfar's book I will plan to consult Phillipa Kelly's "*King Lear: Kinder Casts for Goneril and Regan*" (2003).