CHAPTER 20

LONDON AND THE BOOK TRADE

Isabella Whitney, Jane Anger, and the 'Maydens of London'

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Printed books were a urban phenomenon. When Isabella Whitney famously sends her readers to St Paul's churchyard to buy books from 'my Printer', Richard Jones, her familiarity with the book trade and her own engagement with its economic, transactional practices makes up the matter of her poem:[1]

> To all the Bookebinders by Paulles
> because I lyke their Arte:
> They e[ver]y weeke shal mony have,
> when they from Bookes departe.
> Amongst them all, my Printer must,
> have somwhat to his share:
> I wyll my Friends there Bookes to bye
> of him, with other ware.[2]

Bookbinders are also drawn into the ambit of this description, resulting in a fleshed out scene of book production that maps the experience of those sixteenth-century readers who bought *A Sweet Nosgay* from Jones' bookstall and had it bound in one of the nearby

[1] On Whitney and Jones, see Kirk Melnikoff, 'Isabella Whitney Amongst the Stalls of Richard Jones', in Valerie Wayne (ed.), *Women's Labour and the History of the Book in Early Modern England* (London, 2020), 145–61; and Michelle O'Callaghan, '"My Printer Must, Haue Somwhat to his Share": Isabella Whitney, Richard Jones, and Crafting Books', *Women's Writing*, 26 (2019), 15–34.

[2] Isabella Whitney, 'Wyll and Testament', in Danielle Clarke (ed.), *Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanyer: Renaissance Women Poets* (London, 2000), 24–5. All references to Whitney's poems are taken from this edition.

shops within the precinct of St Paul's. The passage of the book from production to consumption is woven by Whitney into the lived texture of the early modern city.

Once neglected, Whitney is now regarded as one of the most significant authors of the London literary imaginary.[3] Whitney fashioned herself as a print author, who addressed not only her own sex, but a wider urban non-elite readership, often new to book buying, and who provided a ready market for the type of recreational vernacular literature sold on Jones' stalls. His own ballad before Whitney's *The Copy of a Letter* opens with the cry of the bookseller before his shop, 'What lack you Maister mine?', and ends with a sales pitch:

> Therfore, bye this same Booke,
> of him that heere doth dwell:
> And you (I know) wyll say you haue
> bestowed your mony well.[4] (Sig. A1v)

The bookseller's appeal to potential buyers speaks to the tangible experiential urban world of the London book trade. Book shops and their wares were open to those passing by, physically, visually, and audibly. Title pages of books hung on posts outside stalls and were advertised through the type of sales pitch set out by Jones. His ballad describes a scenario in which his text is performed to passersby much like ballads sung by ballad sellers to encourage sales. Here, the bookseller's cry is also that of other traders who sold an array of goods on the London streets and it acts to incorporate the work of this woman author into the transactional and acoustic worlds of early modern London.

Whitney is distinct among other early modern women writers—and many contemporary male writers—in terms of how firmly she embeds her authorial identity within the book trade and weaves it into the social fabric of early modern London.[5] The personas fashioned in *The Copy of a Letter* and *A Sweet Nosgay* and in the various signatures she adopts are themselves an urban phenomenon that tells of the social and economic provisionality characterising the lives of those who worked in London, from the lower orders to the middling sort. While *Copy of a Letter* is marketed as the work of 'a Yonge Gentilwoman', the authorial identities deployed in *A Sweet Nosgay* are more multivalent and unsettled. Alongside the gentlewoman author is the former maidservant who addresses an advice poem 'to two of her yonger Sisters servinge in London' and bemoans her own loss of service to 'a virtuous Ladye' in her verse epistle to her brother, and the 'Auctor' who places herself among the dispossessed urban poor of early modern London. The literary communities fashioned through her works are not those

[3] See Andrew Gordon's *Writing Early Modern London: Memory, Text and Community* (Basingstoke, 2013), 84–109; Whitney is notably absent from Lawrence Manley's *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge, 1995).

[4] *The Copy of a Letter* (London, *c* 1567), sig. A1v.

[5] See Laurie Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567–1667* (Aldershot, 2008), 8–35.

of elite women authors and readers but are instead instructively socially diverse in ways that ask us to recalibrate our models of early modern cultural production, especially in relation to women. The way Whitney embraces the identity of a working woman allows us to consider how women's participation in book production involved different types of labour, as writers, as readers, and as makers and sellers of books and ballads; work that engaged women from a range of social classes, from the urban poor to the aristocracy.[6]

Whitney is not only a distinctive, but also a seemingly singular figure in the history of early modern women's writing. Even if we consider the ephemerality and anonymity of cheap print, the non-elite woman author certainly was not a widespread phenomenon (see this volume, Chapter 38, Susan Wiseman, 'Non-Elite Networks and Women'). Nonetheless, other texts attributed to variants of this urban author function were available on the London bookstalls alongside those of Whitney. The same year Jones published Whitney's *The Copy of a Letter*, Thomas Hacket put out *A Letter Sent by the Maydens of London, to the Virtuous Matrones & Mistresses* (1567). Much like Jones, Hacket was a 'speculator in the burgeoning market for printed texts'.[7] This pamphlet, a response to Edward Hake's now lost satire, *A Mery Metynge of Maydes in London*, is written in defence of London maidservants and speaks in their interests.[8] Another pamphlet presented under a non-elite female signature, *Jane Anger Her Protection for Women* (1589), would appear on Jones' stall later in the sixteenth century (see this volume, Chapter 9, Christina Luckyj, 'The *Querelle des Femmes*'). Anger's pamphlet, like that of the London maidservants, responds to books that have newly come into her hands from the London bookstalls, specifically the now lost pamphlet, 'His Surfeyt in love. with a farewel to the folies of his own phantasie', and evokes a wider cityscape in which the woman question is being hotly debated. These lost pamphlets are reminders of the ephemerality of this type of literature, printed cheaply and quickly, often in response to other recently published works. For Rosa Salzburg, writing of Renaissance Venice, these forms of cheap print, like the ballad and small pamphlet, 'offer a uniquely privileged way into the transient, quotidian, as well as the extraordinary, life of the city that is challenging to access by other means'.[9] Of all the ballads printed in the sixteenth century, estimated at around 4,000, only 260 survive, including duplicate copies.[10] Only one copy survives of Whitney's *The Copy of a Letter* and *A Sweet Nosgay*, which is itself a fragment, missing the first few leaves, and of *A Letter Sent by the Maydens of London* and *Jane Anger Her Protection for Women*. *The Copy of a Letter* and *A Letter Sent by the*

[6] See Helen Smith, *'Grossly Material Things': Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2012) and the essays in Wayne (ed.), *Women's Labour*.

[7] Kirk Melnikoff, 'Thomas Hacket and the Ventures of an Elizabethan Publisher', *The Library*, 10 (2009), 257–71, 257.

[8] R. J. Fehrenbach, '*A Letter Sent by the Maydens of London* (1567)', *English Literary Renaissance*, 14 (1984), 285–304, 285–6.

[9] Rosa Salzburg, *Ephemeral City: Cheap Print and Urban Culture in Renaissance Venice* (Manchester, 2014), 3–4.

[10] Carole Rose Livingston, *British Broadside Ballads of the Sixteenth Century: A Catalogue of the Extant Sheets and an Essay* (New York, 1991), 32.

Maydens of London are small octavo pamphlets, printed on two sheets. *A Sweet Nosgay* and *Jane Anger* are more substantial productions—the former is an octavo volume made up of five sheets, and the latter a quarto of four sheets. There is also something more to all these works that is belied by the concept of ephemerality. While ephemerality helpfully conceptualises the flow of printed material around the early modern city, it also diverts attention away from the literary ambitions of many of these texts. Instead, what is needed is a more expansive modelling of non-elite literature that can account for its responsiveness to more conventional 'Renaissance' concerns.

These texts are part of the wider 'democratisation' of humanism that operated through the printing press and bookshops of London and its artisanal and mercantile communities.[11] To these communities, we can add London servants and apprentices who were 'extraordinarily literate'.[12] Whitney digested George Turberville's just published translation, *The Heroycall Epistles of the Learned Poet Publius Ovidius Naso* (1567), in her *Copy of a Letter* for these urban readerships. She then turned her attention in *A Sweet Nosgay* to Hugh Plat's *The Floures of Philosophy* (1572), also new, repurposing his commonplace book into a more accessible form.[13] A similar process of acculturation is at work in *A Letter Sent by the Maydens of London* and *Jane Anger Her Protection for Women*, which take the humanist mode of the *querelle des femmes* to the streets of London. Whitney digests humanist books, out of the reach of many non-elite readers, partly through cost, partly because of content, into more accessible forms by translating their matter into idioms more familiar from cheap print. Also sold from Jones' shop alongside *The Copy of a Letter* was *A Handefull of Pleasant Delites*, an anthology of ballads on the topic of love and courtship, similarly marketed to readers browsing the stalls of St Paul's churchyard: 'Here may you have such pretie thinges, / as women much desire' (sig. A1v). The language of love animating these ballads, as we shall see in the case of 'Faine would I have a pretie thing', is not courtly or Petrarchan, but more prosaic, often dealing with the business of courtship and contracting marriages.[14]

When humanism is translated into the idioms of cheap print, the boundaries between learned and unlearned cultures become instructively blurred, bringing into focus the part played by non-elite urban cultures in shaping the literary landscape and other locales for humanist practice outside the more conventional domains of the all-male schoolroom, the court, and elite households. Whitney in *A Sweet Nosgay* puts forward a seemingly paradoxical non-elite, unlearned, yet thoroughly humanist author function. In the verse epistle, 'The Auctor to the Reader', this woman author takes advantage of

[11] Mary Ellen Lamb, 'Isabella Whitney and Reading Humanism', in Leah Knight, Micheline White, and Elizabeth Sauer (eds), *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain: Reading, Ownership, and Circulation* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2018), 43–58, 44; Angus Vine, *Miscellaneous Order: Manuscript Culture and the Early Modern Organization of Knowledge* (Oxford, 2019), 126–33.

[12] David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 2006), 129.

[13] Vine, *Miscellaneous Order*, 170; Lamb, 'Isabella Whitney', 58–61.

[14] On these ballads see Michelle O'Callaghan, *Crafting Poetry Anthologies in Renaissance England: Early Modern Cultures of Recreation* (Cambridge, 2020), 82–8.

'leasure good, (though learning lackt) some study to apply: / To reade such Bookes, whereby I thought my selfe to edify' (3–4). By 'learning lackt', Whitney does not mean that this woman author is illiterate or unread; rather 'learning' refers to instruction within formal education institutions, such as the grammar schools and universities, which indeed were largely closed to women. Instead, this non-elite author is self-taught and her schoolroom is the bookshops of early modern London, especially those of her printer, Jones.[15]

Whitney instructs fellow women readers in edifying humanist reading practices that are attuned to the scope of action designated to them within gender relations. In 'The Admonition', the author presents herself to fellow 'yong Gentilwomen: And to al other Maids being in Love' as a critical reader of Ovid, dismissing his 'Arte of Love' (*Copy of a Letter*, 21) for teaching men tricks to deceive women, 'To wet their hand and touch their eies: / so oft as teares they lacke' (23–4). Instead, she asks young women to look to other classical female exemplars, citing Scilla, Oenone, Phillis, and Hero, and to learn from their stories of male perfidy. Whitney's mode of imitation is pragmatic and prosaic, selecting apt figures that can serve as examples for determining actions. Hence, the 'unconstant lover' is advised by the speaker to 'Example take by many a one / whose falsehood now is playne' (31–2), and she proceeds to list Aeneas, Theseus, Jason, and Paris, before offering faithful Troilus as an alternative exemplar. Classical texts are excerpted, turned into matter that is to be 'studied for action'; a prosaic 'goal-directed reading' that differs markedly from our conventional sense of this humanist enterprise, in which these practices belong to male professional domains and pursue civic goals to do with holding public office.[16] Here, the scope of action is the everyday matter of courtship, including those cases of broken promises that came before the Elizabethan church courts.[17] The speaker opens with an accusation that, while familiar from the vocative openings of *The Heroides*, is located in the here and now of early modern London:

> As close as you your weding kept
> yet now the trueth I here:
> Which you (yer now) might me have told
> What need you nay to swere? (1–4)

[15] See also Melnikoff on Jones' bookshop as Whitney's library, 'Isabella Whitney', 145–6. On autodidacticism, see this volume, Chapter 3, Jennifer Richards, 'How Lady Jane Grey May Have Used Her Education' and on non-elite learning, see this volume, Chapter 39, Susan Wiseman, 'Non-Elite Networks and Women'.

[16] Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, '"Studied for Action": How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy', *Past & Present*, 129 (1990), 30–78. On an elite woman's goal-directed reading habits, see also Julie Crawford, 'How Margaret Hoby Read her De Mornay', *Mediatrix: Women, Politics, and Literary Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2014), 86–120.

[17] Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570–1640* (Cambridge, 1990), 131–3.

When Jones advertises that the 'matter' of *Copy of a Letter* 'is true as many know' (sig. A1v), he is alluding both to the familiarity of the story and its applicability to its readership, how this text might be 'studied for action' as well as read for leisure.

Through these reading practices, Whitney is turning classical exemplars to everyday proverbial uses. At the heart of 'The Admonition' is the popular proverb, 'try before you trust', which acts as the heading under which classical examples are gathered. Whereas Scilla trusted 'to much / before that she dyd trye' (41–2), 'Hero did trie Leanders truth, / Before that she did trust' (73–4) concluding 'alwayes trie before ye trust, / so shall you better speede' (87–8). Proverbs are mobile and highly portable, straddling humanism and the realms of cheap print. These were common cultural codes that punctuated ballads and moralising poetry and were part of the shared cultural matter of urban life. Humanist collections of proverbs, such as Erasmus' *Proverbs or Adages* (1552) and the many proverbs gathered in John Heywood's *Woorkes* (1562), were a staple of early print trade. Proverbs were used in the schoolroom to train students in rhetorical composition. Whitney is following humanist educational practice when she uses proverbs as 'proofs' to comprehend and impose a moralising reading on classical texts. Categorised as the common idiom of the people, these common sayings were conceptualised as 'speech acts' and could be deployed to signify the oral, spoken, and lived properties of texts.[18] In John Heywood's 'A Dialogue Containing the Number of the Effectual Proverbs in the English Tongue', an older man advises a younger acquaintance on choosing a wife. The stories he tells are set in the houses of the middling sort, where they eat, drink, and converse. The second chapter begins:

> Friend, (quoth I), welcome! And with right good will,
> I will, as I can, your will herein fulfil.
> And two things I see in you, that show you wise.
> First, in wedding, ere ye wed to ask advice.[19]

This plain-speaking vocative style is shared with Whitney's *Copy of a Letter*, and it works to actualise ancient, proverbial lore in the present moment, demonstrating how these common sayings can be acted upon through everyday social exchanges.

A Sweet Nosgay is an overtly urban collection. The author fashioned across the collection identifies herself as a writer in and of the city. The dedication to George Mainwaring, a family friend from Chester, is signed 'From Abchurch Lane, the 20. of October, 1573. / By your welwillyng Countrywoman Is. W.' and tells an early modern story of migration from the country to the city for employment. Abchurch Lane was in Candlewick Street ward, bounded by Eastcheap, which housed the butchers' market, one of the first stops in 'Wyll and Testament'—'First for their foode, I Butchers lea[v]e' (34), and near to the Thames, where 'you shal have Brewers store' (36). An urban life is

[18] Manley, *Literature and Culture*, 411–13.

[19] John Heywood, *A Dialogue*, Chapter II, in John S. Farmer (ed.), *The Proverbs, Epigrams, and Miscellanies* (London, 1906), 5.

narrativised as it is lived and practised on the streets.[20] The author takes the air to refresh herself, weary from reading, and 'walked out: but sodenly a friend of mind mee met: / And sayd, yf you regard your health: out of this Lane you get' (15–16); the author returns home and reads Hugh Plat's *Floures of Philosophy*, but, since 'businesse bad mee hye' (33), returns to the streets, taking with her 'A slip' from this nosegay 'to smell unto, which might be my defence' (36) on the 'stynking streetes, or lothsome Lanes which els might mee infect' (37). The narrative, in which author ventures out onto the streets of London at a time of sickness, presumably plague, with the book-as-nosegay pressed against her nostrils to ward off infection, materialises the florilegium idiom of the healthful, prophylactic effects of the proverbs and adages gathered in printed commonplace books like Plat's and, by derivation, Whitney's *Sweet Nosegay*.

'Wyll and Testament' in *A Sweet Nosgay* completes the path of travel through the London streets begun at the start of the collection. In the closing complaint in the 'Certain familier Epistles', 'Is. W. beyng wery of writyng, sendeth this for Answere', the author, beset by misfortune, explains that 'For now I wyll my writting cleane forsake / till of my griefes, my stomack I discharg' (10–11). The following headnote to 'Wyll and Testament', takes this a step further:

> The Aucthour (though loth to leave the Citie) upon her friendes procurement, is constrained to departe: wherefore (she fayneth as she would die) and maketh her WYLL and Testament, as foloweth: With large Legacies of such Goods and riches which she most aboundantly hath left behind her: and therof maketh London sole executor to se her Legacies performed.

Whitney is experimenting with literary forms, from the mock testament to her signature style of the female-voiced complaint, which she uses to personify London; except this faithless lover's 'great cruelnes' is to do with the economics of city living, rather than love, since London fails to extend credit 'to boord me for a yeare' ('Wyll and Testament', 22) and 'with Apparell me releve / except thou payed weare' (23–4). Whitney is describing the nature of early modern economy: because there were few coins in circulation, buying and selling relied on credit, which the author has been refused; instead, if she wants goods she must pay.[21]

'Wyll and Testament' gives a contemporary inflection to a medieval complaint tradition that held the city to account for its lack of charity and, by association, its failure to maintain its citizens, especially the poor. Whitney's ballad shares its peripatetic structure and perspective on the bustling city streets with other London complaints,

[20] See Jean Howard, 'Textualizing an Urban Life: The Case of Isabella Whitney', in Ronald Bedford, Lloyd Davis, and Philippa Kelly (eds), *Early Modern Autobiography: Theories, Genres, Practices* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2006), 217–33.

[21] Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit* (London, 1998), 4; for a detailed analysis of the mock testament and a credit economy in relation to *A Sweet Nosgay*, see Jill Ingram, *Idioms of Self-Interest: Credit, Identity, and Property in English Renaissance Literature* (New York, 2006), 73–90.

including John Lydgate's early fifteenth-century ballad, 'London Lickpenny', which is voiced by a countryman who travels to London to present his complaint about the city's lack of charity to the poor:

> To Westminster-ward I forthwith went,
> To a man of law to make complaint.
> I said, 'For Mary's love, that holy saint,
> Pity the poor that would proceed'.
> But for lack of money I could not speed.[22]

This last line provides the refrain and, like the author of 'Wyll and Testament', the countryman is forced to leave London because he cannot thrive and suffers economic hardship. The forms of spatiality set in motion by these departing and migrant figures provide the groundwork for counter narratives of the city. In these complaints, the city is represented as it is experienced by the urban poor on the streets. Since the city is experienced from below, the body of the speaker is subject to the deprivations of the poorest inhabitants, hence the identification of the 'Aucthor' of 'Wyll and Testament' with the inmates of prisons and the urban poor. Whitney takes over the medieval 'Auctor' of complaint not in order to claim a commanding view of the city, but rather to take up the paradoxical position of an inhabitant who is also an outsider, on the point of departure, and so can clearly see both London's bounty and inequities.[23] This view from the streets and on the margins comes with its own tactical satiric privileges.

The soundscape of 'London Lickpenny', with its cries of costermongers and other street sellers, was part of the cultural memory of London. John Stow's *Survey of London* used Lydgate's ballad to describe the goods and activity marking out certain streets in West Cheap:

> In westcheape (saith the song) he was called on to buy fine lawne, Paris thread, cotton Umple, and other linnen clothes and such like … In Cornehill to buy olde apparel, and houshold stuffe, where he was forced to buy his owne hoode, which hee had lost in Westminster hall: in Candlewright street Drapers profered him cheap cloth, in Eastcheape the cookes cryed hotte ribbes of beefe rosted, pyes well baked, and other victuailes: there was clattering of pots, harpe, pipe, and sawtry, yea by cocke, nay by cocke, for other greater oathes were spared: some sang of Jenken and Julian &c. all which melodie liked well the passenger, but he wanted money to abide by it, and therefore gat him into Gravesend barge and home into Kent.[24]

[22] John Lydgate, 'London Lickpenny', in Lawrence Manley (ed.), *London in the Age of Shakespeare: An Anthology* (University Park, 1986), 3–7.

[23] For an alternative Ovidian reading of this phenomenon, see Lindsay Ann Reid, 'The Brief Ovidian Career of Isabella Whitney: From Heroidean to Tristian Complaint', in Sarah C. E. Ross and Rosalind Smith (eds), *Early Modern Women's Complaint: Gender, Form, and Politics* (Cham; Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 89–113.

[24] John Stow, *A Survay of London*, (London, 1598), 171.

It is striking that a complaint about lack is remembered as a song of a city full of stuff, of clothes, goods, food, smells, and sounds. This very material accumulation of things, places, and people makes the city tangible as a dynamic lived space. 'Wyll and Testament' similarly fashions a rhetoric of the city based on this principle of street-based urban mercantile *copia*, in which 'fayre streats there bee, / and people goodly store' (29–30). An accumulative structure characterises other London ballads, including the very popular, 'Faine would I have a pretie thing / to give unto my Ladie', which circulated widely and was printed by Jones in *A Handefull of Pleasant Delites*. To find 'a pretie thing' the speaker goes shopping, 'I walke the towne, and tread the streete, / in every corner seeking' an action that takes him by mercers, silk wives, down Cheap Street, and past engravers.[25] Like 'Wyll and Testament', the mode of writing the city is peripatetic and embodied, a 'pedestrian speech act' creating an urban topography made up of shops that act synecdochically for the whole city.[26] Whitney's topography is more multifarious. The rhetoric of walking in 'Wyll and Testament' sets in motion a series of narrative turns and counterturns, which construct paths between places that carry satiric meaning. The narrator moves from places of sustenance, trade, and commerce, to the margins of the city and its prisons, finally disposing of herself as she departs not only London, but 'out of this vale so vile' (274), repudiating worldly vanity. This is the well-trodden path of the complaint. As Danielle Clarke first noted, this woman author's rhetorical command over place, as she scripts the city through the modes of complaint, balances material dispossession with poetic self-possession.[27]

The woman author Whitney puts into circulation in poems gathered in the 'Certain familier Epistles' and 'Wyll and Testament' is economically distressed, luckless, a 'poore Kinsewoman', and 'unfortunate' (*Sweet Nosgay*, 13, 16). Although she is enfolded within kinship networks and exchanges verse letters with friends, familial relations are also compromised and attenuated. Her brother, G. W., who 'must be chiefest staffe that I shal stay on heare' ('To her Brother. G. W.', 8) does not reply to her letters, and she also has no news of her brother B. W.—'none can tell, if you be well, nor where you doo sojourne' ('To her Brother. B. W.', 2). The author of 'Wyll and Testament' declares herself 'so weake / that none mee credit dare' (189–90), hence even imprisonment for debt in Ludgate is not available to her. Her poverty is so extreme that in death, as Andrew Gordon points out, 'she is unable to dispose of herself', requesting only a 'shrowding Sheete' (266), and refusing all other ceremonies 'for cost' (270); instead 'in oblivion bury mee / and never more mee name' (267–8).[28] Acts of dispossession are, of course, a feature of the mock testament and take on a jesting tone within its frame through their very extremity. Even so, the local detail of London's credit economy provided by Whitney grounds the

[25] 'Faine would I have', in Clement Robinson (ed.), *A Handefull of Pleasant Delites* (London, 1584), sig. D5v; O'Callaghan, *Crafting Poetry Anthologies*, 92–4.

[26] On 'pedestrian speech acts' and a 'rhetoric of walking', see Michel de Certeau, in Steven Rendall (trans.), *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA, 1984), 97–100.

[27] Danielle Clarke, *The Politics of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Harlow, 2001), 212–13.

[28] Gordon, *Writing Early Modern London*, 106.

genre within a lived city. 'Wyll and Testament' gives voice to the experience of being a Londoner in the Elizabethan period, when many had migrated to the city, and so were without kin, and haphazard communication systems meant it was difficult to hear news or to maintain ties with relatives. As Patricia Fumerton concludes, 'there is a sense in which displacement, transience, and instability were inherent or native to early modern London'.[29]

In Whitney's advice poem, 'A Modest Meane for Maides in Order Prescribed, by Is. W. to Two of Her Yonger Sisters Servinge in London', a domestic civic modelling of a working woman's moderate, temperate self goes hand-in-hand with the risk attendant upon women's work within gentry households and outside kinship networks.[30] According to the order prescribed by Whitney, a well-governed household is not simply achieved through masters and mistresses but relies on the self-governance and labours of domestic servants. The ability of maidservants to maintain this domestic and godly order is constantly hedged round by dangers, from unspecified others in the household who are vectors of corruption and especially from ungoverned words and behaviour. The sisters will be especially vulnerable when their sister 'shal further from you dwell' (1), which necessitates this advice poem. Maidservants are instructed to 'listen to no lyes: / Nor credit every fayned tale, that many wyll devise', with proof provided through the proverb: 'For words are but winde, yet words may hurt you so' (17–19). Whitney's defence of maidservants is shared with *A Letter sent by the Maydens of London, to the virtuous Matrones & Mistresses* (1567). This pamphlet accuses 'those fonde and malicious Dialogues of *The Mery meting of Maydens in London*' of so maligning maidservants that their mistresses will set 'about immediately to abridge us of our lawful libertie'.[31] This defence does not operate in jesting fashion to confirm by rhetorical sleight of hand the licentiousness attributed to maidservants in Hake's pamphlet, but instead procedurally addresses his accusations to claim for these young working women a type of domestic civic subjectivity in which they are necessary to the functioning of the household as a microcosm of the commonwealth. Using a body–household analogy, only cooperation between mistress and maidservant can ensure the healthy functioning of the household, for as 'we alone doe stande you in, as diverse membres of the body altogether do stande the body in' (294). The right to a holiday is defended through the concept of healthful recreation being necessary in a working life: maidservants 'being with honeste exercises and pastimes refreshed, may the better fal to their labor again' (295). Liberty is therefore not a synonym for licentiousness but employed in a civic humanist sense of the liberty of the citizen, the freeman, as opposed to the slave, to argue for certain rights attendant upon service. In a similar move to Whitney's later 'Order Prescribed' for maidservants, the civic humanist idiom attributed to these maidservants of London promotes a

[29] Patricia Fumerton, *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago, IL, 2006), 12–13.

[30] See also Lamb, 'Isabella Whitney', 52–3.

[31] Fehrenbach, '*A Letter*', 294.

feminised model of citizenship that establishes the female domestic servant as necessary to the healthy working of the household and, by association, the commonwealth.

Much of the discussion of this pamphlet has focused on the question of authorship.[32] We can usefully view this pamphlet as an example of prosopopoeia, without disenfranchising these maidservants, if we understand this rhetorical strategy in terms of fashioning a female subject position that is then available to be inhabited and performed by others. The pamphlet draws attention to the question of authorship specifically in relation to fashioning a collective identity for the maidservants of London. Hake's pamphlet had seemingly cited six maidservants by name, each embodying different vices. *A Letter* takes over these names on its title page—'Answering the / Mery Meeting by us / Rose, Jane, Rachell, / Sara, Philumias, and / Dorothie—but points out that 'when he recited six of us by name, … under those sixe names [are] above sixe thousand of us' (297). Here, the generic status of these 'named' authors is acknowledged and turned into a figure for a wider collective of London maids in whose interests this pamphlet speaks. By this means, maidservants are voiced and identified as a distinct subclass within the London citizenry. This 'collective' points out Hake's lack of knowledge of the everyday working lives of maidservants. Rather than 'overmuche libertie', maidservants only have one holiday in the week, on Sunday, when the 'forenoone' is either spent at church or finishing 'necessarie businesse at home', meaning there is very little time 'after noone' to 'stray abroade', given that 'they ring the first peale to Eve[n]songe before that we have washed up halfe our dishes' (295–6). This defence of maidservants is grounded in the reality of women's working lives within the household. Alongside Whitney's texts, it contributes to a body of urban literature fashioning female working subjectivities and readerships.

A Letter Sent by the Maydens of London is a version of the *querelle des femmes*. The way it mobilises the defence of women formula in the interests of maidservants illustrates the flexibility of this genre. Another *querelle* pamphlet, *Jane Anger her Protection for Women*, shares many features with both *A Letter* and Whitney's 'Admonition' in her *A Copy of a Letter*—it also shares its printer, Jones, with Whitney. When placed alongside Whitney's work, it suggests a broader interest in fashioning a space for the woman author in print. The *querelle des femmes* is a highly formalised humanist genre, with its origins in a scholastic exercise of *pro et contra* debate, hence its close affiliation with the all-male institutions of the universities and Inns of Court.[33] That said, the *querelle* is also an exemplary case of the 'democratisation' of humanism through the printing press, which brings these domains into conversation with other environs. Many *querelle* texts fabricate pamphlet wars, responding to or predicting other entries in the battle of the sexes. This publishing strategy locates these pamphlets among the London printing houses and bookshops and gives the genre an urban complexion. The defence of women pamphlets devoted considerable energy to fashioning female author functions

[32] Fehrenbach, '*A Letter*', 286–8.
[33] Clarke, *Politics*, 50.

and readers. *A Letter Sent by the Maydens of London* interpellates an urban audience of fellow maidservants and their mistresses. *Jane Anger Her Protection for Women* distinguishes between two female readerships along the lines of social class. The first, 'the Gentlewomen of England', are learned women conversant with the humanist formula of this genre: 'Gentlewomen, though it is to be feared that your settled wits will advisedly condemn that which my choleric vein hath rashly set down … yet … I hope you will rather show yourselves defendents of the defender's title than complainants of the plaintiff's wrong' (31). The second, general woman reader is more well versed in the idiom of cheap print as it circulates through London:

> Fie on the falsehood of men, whose minds go oft a-madding and whose tongues cannot so soon be wagging, but straight they fall a-tattling! … O Paul's steeple and Charing Cross! A halter hold all such persons. Let the streams of the channels in London streets run so swiftly as they may be able alone to carry them from that sanctuary. (32)

Characterised as slander, 'male' entries in the *querelle des femmes* are figured through a scatological rhetoric of the city as the sewage that flows through the London streets.

The different registers, tropes, and other rhetorical formulae employed across these epistles to signify different classes of women authors and readers points to the diversification of the early modern print marketplace. An array of female reader and author functions were fashioned and circulated across the social spectrum, from elite to non-elite, through different print genres. Whitney provided a precedent for the woman author at home in the London book trade. 'The Lamentacion of a Gentilwoman', which closes the anthology *A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578), is now thought to be the work of Whitney, partly because it was published by her printer, Jones.[34] Also part of the reason why this gentlewoman author sounds like Whitney is that she too frames her authorship through the bookstalls of St Paul's churchyard, setting up a rival poet whose ballad 'hanges at Pawles as every man goes by' (41). The gentlewoman of 'The Lamentacion' may take us to a particular author—Isabella Whitney—but she also designates a type of woman author who is identified with certain genres—the complaint, the admonition, and the *querelle des femmes*—that, in turn, take on a distinctive orientation in response to an urban environment.

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EARLY MODERN WOMEN'S WRITING IN ENGLISH, 1540–1700

Edited by

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