

Divorce in Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam*

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Introduction

Elizabeth Cary has been sometimes identified with Mariam, the heroine of her first drama, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, by those critics who have pointed out autobiographical reflections in her work. In those critical traditions, the heroine Mariam is said to be as dutiful as the Virtue in the morality plays which flourished in earlier times. '*The Tragedy of Mariam, the Faire Queene of Jewry*,' Catharine Belsey writes in her book, *The Subject of Tragedy*, 'centres on the marital relations between Mariam and Herod, and explores the limits of a dutiful wife's right to resist a tyrannical husband' (Belsey 171). In the same chapter, she describes Salome, the sister-in-law of Mariam, as 'a wicked woman, spiritual sister of Vittoria and Lady Macbeth' (Belsey 174). In this book, Mariam is defined as a silent, depressed, virtuous woman; on the other hand, Salome, who is willing to divorce, is defined as a wicked villainess. One of the crimes committed by Salome is her adultery and betrayal of her husband in order to remarry her new lover against the Mosaic Law. In Act I, Salome openly complains about the difficulty of obtaining divorce and declares her resistance against patriarchy:

. . . . Permitted first by our law-giver's head:
Who hates his wife, though for no just abuse,
May with a bill divorce her from his bed.
But in this custom women are not free, (1.5.10-14)

In *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* the first usage of the word, 'divorce', recorded in 1377, defines it as 'Legal dissolution of marriage by a court or other competent body, or according to forms recognized in the country, nation, or tribe'. This definition declares that divorce is not only an issue among married couples, but also a legal problem which influences each person who manages to give up his or her marital relation to some extent. The case of Elizabeth Cary and her husband Henry Cary, Viscount of Falkland, reveals the serious problem of the influences of divorce on the husband's status in the court. In his letter to Sir John Coke, Viscount Falkland complained. '. . . for a laste Refudge I must Resorte to a separacion a mensa et thoro'; which I entend vppon the despayre of his Recouery to pursiew' (*Letter* 12). This letter shows this marital problem was a very legal problem as defined in *OED*, thus the husband's complaint about the chaste lady in the Caroline age as if she were a villainess in dramas, because she is not willing to divorce. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that Mariam's attitudes and remarks seem to be resistant to her husband and consequently she is suspected of being willing to divorce. In this

essay I will consider the 'divorce' of three women, Mariam, Salome, and the author Elizabeth Cary herself.

1. The Spiritual Divorce of Mariam

In the beginning of *The Tragedy of Mariam* the heroine Mariam appears and makes her anticipate against her husband and tyrant, Herod in her long lines. In this soliloquy she insists that she had decided not to welcome her husband, Herod against her own will, even if he would return:

Yet had I rather much a milkmaid be,
Than be the monarch of Judea's Queen.
It was for nought but love he wished his end
Might to my death but the vaunt-courier prove. (1.1.57- 60)

When she makes this claim, Mariam has already refused to obey her husband's request and so defied her wifely duty; consequently she is accused of adultery. In this sense she is not innocent owing to her disobedience. On the other hand some critics have valued Mariam as an innocent heroine; Frances Dolan explains that, 'The messenger so subordinates the suffering and death of Mariam's body to the triumphant escape of her soul that Herod attempts to challenge the physical fact until the messenger at last bluntly announces [the event]' (Dolan 164) in her essay, "'Gentlemen, I have one thing more to say": Women on Scaffolds in England, 1563-1680'. According to how the degree of guilt of Mariam has been assessed, the author herself has been both valued and criticized.

In the case of the female protagonist, she is no longer innocent when she appears and makes her long soliloquy. One of her mistakes is arrogance. Cary's Mariam is more innocent and nobler than Josephus² original character in terms of her sexuality; however, the reverse is true with regard to her lineage, which she thinks is superior to that of Herod and Salome, the Edomites. Her lines show no respect for the Edomites; moreover she usually looks down on them in her own mind. The second mistake is her disobedience. Her attitude which is shown when she refuses to welcome Herod with pleasure makes him angry because it shows her disdain for him, and consequently it has been interpreted as the sign of adultery. It was a common idea in ancient Judea, the stage of this drama and also in early modern England where the author lived, that women who are disobedient to their husbands might betray them. The third mistake is her eloquence. Mariam declares her complaint before Sohemus, a man not her husband:

I know I could enchain him with a smile:
And lead him captive with a gentle word.
I scorn my look should ever man beguile,
Or other speech, then meaning to afford. (3.3.45-48)

In these lines, she commits two crimes; first she openly disobeys her husband. Second, she

loudly speaks her mind in front of another man. In early modern England, women were prohibited from making public speeches, because talkative women had been thought to be silly and unprincipled. Consequently, Cary's protagonist, Mariam is not perfectly innocent especially about her duty and virtue as an obedient wife.

In this play the author adopts the style of Senecan closet-drama, which takes unity of place, time and demands the voice of the chorus which shows the arguments and the conventional view or contemporary common sense. Similarly, in *The Tragedy of Mariam* the argument of the Chorus criticizes the conduct and attitudes of the characters. The Chorus in the end of Act III blames the heroine's opinion and attitude, in comparison with the norm of the Stuart age:

'Tis not enough for one that is a wife
To keep her spotless from an act of ill,
But from suspicion she should free her life,
And bare herself of power as well as will.
 'Tis not so glorious for her to be free,
 As by her proper self restrained to be. (3.Chorus.1-6)

Moreover the voice of the Chorus states from the conventional and conservative view of wifely duty:

When to their husbands they themselves do bind,
Do they not wholly give themselves away?
Or give they but their body not their mind,
Reserving that, though best, for others, pray?
 No sure, their thoughts no more can be their own,
 And therefore should to none but one be known. (3.Chorus.19-24)

These voices of the Chorus are not only the view in the context of the imaginative ancient Judas, but also the view in the early modern England which could be shown in contemporary works such as this drama.

The demand for women to prove their chastity by keeping silent in early modern England is well known and pointed out by critics. For example, Catherine Belsey explains in her book:

The subject of liberal humanism claims to be the unified, autonomous author or his or her own choices (moral, electoral and consumer), and the source and origin of speech. Women in Britain for most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were not fully any of these things. Able to speak, to take up a subject-position in discourse, to identify with the 'I' of utterance and the uttering 'I' which always exceeds it, they were none the less enjoined to silence, discouraged from any form of speech which was not an act of submission to the authority of their fathers or husbands. (Belsey 149)

In early modern England, as Belsey explained, talkative women or women who insisted on what

they thought were judged to be disobedient.

As Elaine Beilin wrote, not only the issue of female silence but the subject of her obedience to her husband proved her chastity:

. . . in *Basilikon Doron*, James I instructed his son in the authority of a husband as in the authority of a king. In the early seventeenth century, the two famous divines, Dr. William Gouge and William Whately, preached and later published their advice on marriage which centered on the wife's duty to obey. St. Paul was everywhere quoted as the authority for domestic arrangement: 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord' (Beilin 159).

This analogy which was employed by King James I also implied another analogy between family and nation. Before he claimed paternal authority in *Basilikon Doron*, James I compared king and country to head and body. He also declared 'I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawful Wife; I am the Head, and it is my Body' (Goldberg 3). In these metaphors, James mystified and politicized the body, and by means of these phrases, James legitimized the idea of a male successor.

The metaphor of head and body was also used in conduct books in Anglican Church. Especially John Flavell presented in *Shorter Catechism* in 1692, the Fifth Commandment in which all superiours and inferiours are concerned:

- (1) Political Fathers and their Children; that is Kings and Subjects.
- (2) Spiritual Fathers and their Children; that is Ministers and their People.
- (3) Natural Parents and their Children.
- (4) All Civil Superiors and Inferiors, as Husbands and Wives, Masters and Servants. (Schochet 81)

This doctrine depends on *Ephesians* 5:22-23, which says 'Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord./ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body'. This precept was one of the common ideas which influenced the conventional idea of marital life in which women were prohibited from speaking out.

In Cary's drama, the heroine Mariam is blamed for her eloquence by her husband Herod in these misogynistic lines:

. . . . She's unchaste!
Her mouth will ope to ev'ry stranger's ear.
Then let the executioner make haste,
Lest she enchant him, if her words he hear. (4.7.77-80)

This delusion is sustained by the sexual image of a woman's opening mouth and by the accepted opinion that a woman who speaks out openly is such a woman dangerously transgressive; women who speak their mind openly were regarded as women whose bodies were opened to

everyone. The fault is attributed to Mariam by the Chorus in Act III says, 'No sure, their thoughts no more can be their own. / And therefore should to none but one be known' (3.Chorus.23-4). This 'one' has indeed equivocal meaning; in the contemporary view, this 'one' should indicate the husband, in Mariam's case, Herod. Thus, she is accused because she openly speaks her mind; it can be said that she might be blamed by not only her husband but also by all husbands in Jacobean England.

There are two more interesting interpretations of this 'one', which may show Mariam to be a 'wavering mind' (I Chorus 5). First judging from the religious life of the author Cary, this word indicates Lord. In the paradoxical doctrine of St Paul, wives should submit themselves not only to husbands but also to the Lord. A second view is less religious and more compatible with contemporary feminism: this 'one' indicates the wife herself, namely Mariam. According to Belsey, Mariam is endangered for speaking her mind openly to her husband; in contrast to Salome, the villainess, the sister-in-law of Mariam. As the next chapter explains Salome makes a stark contrast to Mariam in her verbal power, and in the way which she protects herself and her will by keeping her mind secret to everyone, because she knows her plot is criminal. On the other hand, like Salome, Mariam also complains about the patriarchy and the reign of Herod not only because of her wifely dissatisfaction and her desire for autonomy, but also because of the problem of her maternal line. At the end of Act I the Chorus talks about Mariam as the one having a 'wavering mind' (I.Chorus.5). Her mind is 'wavering' between not only her wifely obedient view and her autonomous feminist view, but also between the law of the kingdom, Mosaic Law and rule of her family. This dilemma is the same as that of Antigone, the heroine of Sophocles' play: whether to obey the law of the state or familial law.

In *Antigone's Claim*, Judith Butler gives a different interpretation of Antigone who was discussed in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. According to Butler's opinion, Hegel refers to Antigone as the principle of kinship (Butler 1). Butler comments thus on Hegel's identification of Antigone with the principle of kinship:

Opposing Antigone to Creon as the encounter between the forces of kinship and those of state power fails to take into account the ways in which Antigone has already departed from kinship [. . .] her actions compel others to regard her 'manly' and thus cast doubt on the way that kinship might underwrite gender, how her language, paradoxically, most closely approximates Creon's, the language of sovereign authority and action, and how Creon himself assumes his sovereignty only by virtue of the kinship line that enables that succession, how he becomes, as it were, unmanned by Antigone's defiance, and finally by his own actions, at once abrogating the norms that secure his place in kinship and in sovereignty. (Butler 5-6)

According to Butler, in the case of Antigone, she insists on the law of the state; on the other hand, Creon insists on the law of kinship. However, in Hegel's work Antigone "represent[s] kinship and its dissolution, and Creon comes to represent an emergent ethical order and state authority based on principles of universality" (Butler 3). The case of Mariam, the heroine of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, might adapt the case of Hegelian Antigone, who represents "the law of

household God” (Butler 4). In Mariam’s case, she never insists on the law of the state, but instead on her own conscience which is based of her maternal familial law, which her mother Alexandra insists on. Thus the law of her conscience is identified with the law of the Lord. In this sense this ‘Lord’ is not God in Mosaic Law, but household God or the God of the author’s devotion. So it can be said that Mariam is similar to Hegelian Antigone, who represents maternal power allowing the heroine to resist patriarchal power which insists on the law of nation-state.

In the plot of Mariam, although her execution is sometimes regarded as martyrdom by critics, the Chorus regards her action as a fault. Her execution has been also interpreted as a symbolic and metaphorical scene. First, her death does not appear on stage but it is reported to Herod by Nuncio. Some critics compare Mariam’s death to that of Jesus, interpreting the suicide of Butler as a metaphor for Judas, who kills himself for his sin of betrayal of his master. Her prophecy of resurrection recalls the Resurrection of Jesus. Thus, her death is represented as martyrdom. Dolan also refers to the execution as something that ‘deny[s] the women’s claims to mortality, sensation, and embodiment — which is in effect to unsex them, given the association of all three of these properties with femininity’ (Dolan 165). Second, beheading, the method of her execution, is regarded as a metaphor for divorce as the wife or bodies separated from the head or husband. As a good wife should obey her husband in the same way she obeys God, this execution means metaphysical separation of the wife from the husband. Third, paradoxically her execution means the freedom of her soul from her body and from submission to her husband and his sovereignty, which compels her to keep silent and restrains her freedom. In this sense the death of Mariam, although the punishment for her resistance against her sovereign, also brings about her freedom from her husband. This execution finally grants her divorce metaphorically and metaphysically. These allegorical representations of the death of the female protagonist make the execution not the punishment but a more subjective action of the female protagonist; sometimes she is made into a martyr, sometimes she is interpreted as finally succeeding in gaining her freedom through symbolic divorce.

2. Salome’s physical divorce

Although Belsey describes Salome as a wicked woman, she has also been revalued as a feminist leader in the last 10 years³. Beilin, in *Redeeming Eve*, writes: ‘Marriage is the battlefield of the play. Virtue and vice collide through Mariam’s and Salome’s opposing views on marriage’ (Beilin 167). Salome also exists as a mirror image of Mariam. If Mariam might be compared to the Virgin Mary, to whom Elizabeth Cary was devoted, Salome can be compared to the biblical Eve, the female embodiment of Original Sin that misogynistic attacks on Eve had long been sustained by. Lyn Bennett mentions that Eve embodies the misogynistic type of women that has long been sustained by the biblical account of human creation and fall (Bennett 2). Although Mariam’s death seems to be martyrdom of a saint who has had her original sin washed away, Salome’s survival is owing to her tactics which make the most of female power. Her second husband Constabarus, who is betrayed by her, insults women’s sex in the following misogynistic view:

She merely is a painted sepulchre,
That is both fair and vilely foul at once:
Though on her outside graces garnish her,
Her mind is filled with worse than rotten bones,
And ever ready lifted is her hand,
To aim destruction at a husband's throat. (2.4.41-46)

On the other hand, he praises Mariam especially for her chastity and fairness:

But Mariam had the way of peril gone,
Though by the tyrant most beloved of all.
The sweet faced Mariam as free from guilt
As heaven from spots! Yet had her lord come back
Her purest blood had been unjustly spilt, (1.6.111-115)

These lines of Constabarus show the typical contemporary misogynic view in early modern England. As transgressive contemporary women are revalued as prototype feminists, it might be said that Salome also can be redeemed as a radical feminist.

Salome is indubitably a villainess who puts the heroine to death and has her husband murdered in order to accomplish her ends. However, she is also oppressed by male authority, and she strives to obtain her freedom from repression. In this way she differs from Mariam, who has usually been regarded as a chaste, innocent and obedient wife. As Salome is conscious of the double standard in marriage and divorce, she indicts the patriarchal system in which this double standard is created. In Act II, after she argues with Constabarus, she declares to be a 'custom breaker' (1.4.49). This announcement also indicates that she is not silent, but eloquent. In the quarrel with Constabarus, she attacks him openly and uses the word 'divorcing':

Thou shalt no hour longer call me wife.
Thy jealousy procures my hate so deep
That I from thee do mean to free my life,
By a divorcing bill before I sleep (1.6.43-46)

In these lines Salome announces her intention to divorce, which might be interpreted as a transgressive act; however, it might also be her desperate effort to free herself from the restraint of male power.

In this way, Salome complains about gender inequality both before her hateful husband and in front of her new lover, saying: 'in this custom women are not free' (2.5.13). In her first soliloquy, she declares her will to act as a 'custom-breaker' and she points out the inequality in Mosaic Law:

Why should such privilege to men be given?
Or given to them, why barred from women then?

Are men than we in greater grace with heaven?
Or cannot women hate as well as men?
I'll be the custom-breaker and begin
To show my sex the way to freedom's door. (1.4.45-50)

Lyn Bennett comments on her claims that she reveals the hopelessness of women in a world where they are repeatedly told that they are the evil cause of all human misery. She insists that she can never attempt to regain her lost honour (Bennett 8). Unlike Mariam, who claims merely verbal license, Salome, who has already achieved that, pursues equal rights to men which allow her freedom of action.

When Salome appeals for what she desires, her husband reviles her in misogynistic lines in return; he accuses her of being too manly, which can make him womanly:

Are Hebrew women now transformed to men?
Why do you not as well out battles fight
And wear our armour? (1.6.47-49)

According to these lines, Salome's eloquence and desire to act as freely as a man, transforms herself into a man who can act as he desires, and transforms Constabarus into a woman. The same problem occurs in Creon's case, as Butler explains, owing to Antigone's manly speech:

In speaking to him, she becomes manly; in being spoken to, he is unmanned, and so neither maintains their position within gender and the disturbance of kinship appears to destabilize gender throughout the play. [. . .]. Antigone comes, then, to act in ways that are called manly not only because she acts in defiance of the law but also because she assumes the voice of the law in committing the act against the law (Butler 10-11).

Whereas Antigone only denies Creon's dignity as sovereign, Salome's words refuse Constabarus' status as husband, and so unman him more completely than those of Antigone. Salome follows neither familial nor divine law, but her voice imitates the words of the sovereign, which might follow national law as Butler suggests.

Salome's desire to divorce her husband and remarry her Arabian lover makes her character much wickeder and she is regarded as a vicious character. Though indeed, she commits adultery, her claim for equality to men might nevertheless appear a very feministic assertion. Except for eloquence and disobedience to her husband, her evil is exhibited in tactics to entrap Constabarus and Mariam, distinguishing Salome from Mariam definitively. She plots to skillfully manipulate Herod's jealousy and suspicion, and moreover she controls her husband's anger and drives him to divorce her, and finally has him murdered. When she achieves her plot, she skillfully uses her verbal ability, which makes her a strong-willed woman who gains independence of male authority.

After she succeeds in divorcing her husband, Salome intends to go to a foreign country to remarry Silleus but this sequel is never shown by the author. Unlike Mariam, Salome recreates a

marital bond between herself and new husband. Mariam finally achieves freedom from her husband in exchange for her life. Mariam pursues autonomy as a person against the patriarchal model of the normative obedient and silent woman. On the other hand, Salome pursues freedom not as a person but as a woman who makes the most of her power of female sexuality. As a result, Salome can achieve freedom from her husband, Constabarus and from the law of her country but can never escape from her gendered position as a woman, and so not an equal to a man. Although she can divorce and remarry, her remarriage makes her an ordinary wife, never gaining equality to men. Her new marriage may make her once again her husband's possession, not an autonomous subject who is independent of men. She must rely on her new husband and she never denies male authority in marital life. In this sense, she cannot be seen as a feminist role-model, but must be seen as 'wavering' between compromise with patriarchy and assertion of an alternative worldview.

3. The Case of the Author, Elizabeth Cary

'On Tuesday morning, 14 November 1626,' only four months after Catholic Queen, Henrietta Maria married the King Charles, Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland converted to Roman Catholicism' (Wolfe 1). While historically she has been grouped with other 'fashionable' court converts to Roman Catholicism, Lady Falkland herself vehemently denied that her conversion was an attempt to ingratiate herself with the Queen's courtiers, as she explained in a letter to the King. In the introduction to *Life and Letters*, the editor, Heather Wolfe attributes her conversion to her interest in Roman Catholicism and her intelligence, for she was known to be fond of controversies as some records show she sometimes argued with casuists before her conversion. According to her famous biography which was written by one of her Catholic daughters who eventually became a nun; its hyperbolic praise of proto-saint make closer to hagiography. The authenticity of this work has been doubted recently; as a result the true motives for her conversion are unclear. Consequently we can only speculate on her motives or religious passion that led to her conversion.

Critics have remained undecided about the degree to which her writings especially her drama should be read in a religious context. Her conversion was a sensational happening in the Jacobean court, for wives, who kept such conversions secret from their husbands, were said to injure the honour of the husbands; 'mental unfaithfulness made the husband a far greater cuckold than if his wife were physically unchaste' (Wolfe 18). Thus, 'Lady Falkland's conversion reflected poorly on Lord Falkland's ability to control her; and his inability to do so compromised his authority as Lord Deputy of Ireland' (Wolfe 19). While the conflict among the Carys was shown in the some of the letters between them, Lady Falkland could not have inscribed that conflict into her work, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, for it was written a few years after their marriage and more than ten years before her conversion. However, in the critical tradition, her style of thinking and her subjectivity are thought to be included in her work. For example, Tina Krontiris indicates that Cary's inner conflict as a wife and the difficulty which she experienced in subordinating herself to her husband are shown in her drama (Krontiris 82). In the same book, Krontiris also explains that in the relation between Cary and her characters reveals the tension

between internalized cultural restrictions and individual desire (Krontiris 84). In this chapter, I will consider the religious idea which she included in the work, and the relationship between herself and her characters; especially I will examine her real-life divorce, as suggested in her biography and letters, and the degree to which this appears to have been prefigured in her female protagonists.

While the real cause of her conversion is not clear the doctrines of chastity and obedience of women, which forced women to keep silent or forbade them to have public voice are repeatedly emphasized in the conduct books of puritan missionaries. In her book *Subjects to King's Divorce*, Olga L. Valbuena explains the relationship between Catholicism, Protestantism, and divorce with using the example of the divorce of King Henry VIII. In his divorcing Catharine of Aragon, Henry interpreted *Leviticus* as a personal judgment, for, in *Lev. 18:16* and *20:21*, it is prohibited for a widow to marry her husband's brother. It asserted 'that it is so unlawful for a man to marry his brother's wife that the pope hath no power to dispense therewith'. However there was a double standard; the king had previously taken Anne Boleyn's sister Mary as his mistress. The Deuteronomic law should have sufficed to release Henry of his covenant. Valbuena quoted *Deut. 24:1-2*:

When a man hath taken a Wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleannes in her, then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.
(Valbuena 3)

According to Valbuena, it can be said that the protestant dogma never tolerates the independence and insistence of women.

Valbuena also mentions the analogy of Henry VIII to James I about the doctrine of king's state-body metaphor and wife-body metaphor in marriage which supported patriarchal in familial and marital life in early modern England. In the reigns of these two monarchs, it seemed that the union between king and subject resembled that between Adam and Eve. Men are designated as head and mind; on the other hand women are conceived of as the body which cannot regulate itself. In this sense, the wives and children were not considered as autonomous subjects but as objects or dependent property of husbands and fathers.

Considering the view of Valbuena, there are two points that connect the opinion of the author, Cary and her work. First, many critics indicate that patriarchy in ancient Jewry is not so different from that in Jacobean England, in view of the status and authority of husbands and the monarchs. Second, her Catholic faith is not contradictory to the claim for divorce in her work. According to the research of Valbuena, in the case of Henry VIII, his divorce from Catharine was not permitted but his marriage itself was denied in Protestant doctrine. It can be said that divorce itself seemed not to be permitted in Protestant dogma. Moreover, in this famous divorce, the king utilized the interpretation of Deuteronomic law and *Leviticus*, which were the divine laws in ancient Judas, the stage of Cary's work. It can be said that familial laws in early modern England and the back ground of the drama permitted strong analogies to be drawn between them; accordingly, so were the marital ideas. On this point, not only the divorce of King Henry but also

the divorces of Salome and Mariam are part of the same marital systems based on *Old Testament* or Mosaic Law, especially the double standard between men and women seen in Salome's lines.

Margaret Ferguson's essay 'Renaissance Concepts of the "Woman Writer"' points out that wives were defined by Common Law as "femes couvertes", a phrase that denotes their status as the property of their husbands; "covered" by the husband's legal being. Thus, wives could not own property in their own right, and hence were unlikely to sign a legal document unless they were widowed or were exempted from the law of coverture' (Ferguson 147-8). In *The Tragedy of Mariam*, at the end of every Act, the Chorus' voice seems to criticize the characters. It is only a form of classic drama, such as Senecan tragedies, but in this case, the Chorus has a more interesting meaning. In every Act, the Chorus gives a precept, and especially in Act III, the voice of the Chorus reproaches the attitude of Mariam toward Herod:

'Tis not enough for one that is a wife
To keep her spotless from an act of ill,
But from suspicion she should free her life,
And bare herself of power as well as will.

'Tis not so glorious for her to be free,
As by her proper self restrained be.

[.....]

And every mind though free from thought of ill,
That out of glory seeks a worth to show,
When any's ears but one therewith they fill,
Doth in a sort her pureness overthrow.

Now Mariam had, but that to this she bent,
Been free from fear, as well as innocent. (3.Chorus.1-6, 31-36)

In this verse, it is difficult to fathom the real intension of either Chorus or author. Some critics insist that the Chorus shows Cary's conscience and others explain it in terms of a social criterion which cannot necessarily be identified with the view of the author. For example Karen Raber appreciates the implication of the verse, 'Either women have selves to colonize, and so are able either to judge where to "give" themselves, or to resist "usurpation" by preserving what is their "own", their thoughts; or they do not, and so cannot fully participate in this legal state by the kinds of voluntary acts the chorus wishes to depict' (Raber 329). Thus, in the voice of the Chorus we cannot find any explicit commitment by the author; whether she denies the autonomous idea of the protagonists and female independence against patriarchy or she projects herself into her characters as a compensation for the constraints of her own situation.

The well known motto of Lady Falkland which she engraved in her eldest daughter's marriage ring is 'Be and Seem'. This motto has been interpreted in two ways in the critical tradition. On the one hand, when this phrase is connected with the interpretation of the voice of the Chorus, this verse condemns the ambiguity of Mariam's attitude as a sign of infidelity. On the other hand, the content manifested in the Chorus appears to conform to the conventional view of marriage in the seventeenth century. It can be said these antithetical interpretations of the voice

of the Chorus might transform the author's intention in this drama. As the genre of closet drama is mentioned as 'useful for submerged protest against women's oppression as well as for depicting a heroine who copes with oppressions by moving within a fluid subjectivity which escapes easy categorization' (McGrath 186), it is questionable whether it represents the author's insight that ultimately determines her inner voice or it reveals the principle in Jacobean society beyond author's inner voice. For example, Ferguson pointed out that in this Chorus the potential referents for 'one' include not only the husband but also the owner of the voice, the wife herself, or God (Ferguson 157). It has been difficult to interpret the reflection of the voice of the author Cary herself into the lines of the Chorus, indeed.

Recently it has been said that Cary shows her own thought not only in the innocence of Mariam but also in the ambition of Salome, who used to be thought of as merely a villainess. In today's view her claim for freedom and autonomy is not wicked, but can be interpreted as the stout claim of a radical feminist. In Cary's case, according to the famous biography, her behavior was condemned by her husband, her mother, and finally by her own son as a transgression. When considering this fact, her attitude is stronger than Mariam's challenge, which resides only in her capacity to make free remarks that represent her independent mind. Here her attitude is like that of Salome's rather than Mariam's in the extent of the vehemence. On the other hand, unlike Salome, Cary never betrayed her husband: finally she nursed him at his deathbed in spite of his severe economic treatment of her. Like Mariam, who is 'wavering' between her love and her rage against her husband, or between her faith to her husband and independence of her husband, or between her body and her mind, Cary is also a 'wavering' subject between her religion, her autonomy and her wifely obedience. More than that, she is a slandered wife who keeps herself chaste and obedient like her heroine: but like Salome, the author, Cary tried to liberate herself especially in terms of religion. She showed an uncompromising attitude which made her husband and relatives angry; finally she kidnapped her children to force them to convert to her own faith. These incidents of disobedience to male others are as mighty as that of Salome. So it can be said that both Mariam and Salome are the author's double, and that she herself is an equivocal subject.

Elizabeth Cary, the author of the one of the famous examples of closet drama, has been known as a pious devotee of Roman Catholicism. According to the famous biography which was written by one of her Catholic daughters, she was only a chaste, good wife; however, some records showed her disobedience to her husband. So it can be said that she was an equivocator especially in her marital and religious life. In her one existing drama, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, there are two protagonists; one is an orthodox heroine who is suppressed and the other is a villainess. Critical tradition emphasizes that the author is reflected in the heroine Mariam, who is a chaste and good wife. On the other hand, the villainess Salome may also be the reflection of the author, because of her mighty resistance which is not written in her biography, but remains in other records. Consequently, not only the heroine Mariam but also the villainess Salome may be regarded as the double of the author.

4. Conclusion

In Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*, not only the heroine Mariam but also the vicious character Salome represents an imperfect feminist view. Especially in their divorces the two female protagonists have the will to be independent of their husbands and autonomous subjects. Mariam does not mention her desire for divorce, however, her attitude shows in her decision to be an autonomous subject. Finally she is executed by decapitation, which indicates her spiritual divorce and autonomy metaphysically in view of the wife-body metaphor. Salome's desire for divorce and to be a 'custom-breaker' seems to make her an autonomous subject. However, she never escapes from the oppression of male authority, for she wants to remarry and enters into another marital bond. Thus, neither of voices of these two protagonists is perfectly feminist because both waver between autonomy and the social conventions of patriarchal society.

Not only her two protagonists but also the author Cary herself seems to show feminist tendencies to some degree, however she also wavers between her religion, which differs from that of her husband and father, and her wifely duty to obey her husband. Her biography describes her as a chaste and normative wife. However, other evidence shows that she was an independent woman who was sometimes thought of as transgressive. There are the words indicating 'divorce' in some records, which give persuasive grounds for believing that the author Cary herself took the same attitude toward divorce as her protagonists.

In critical history, Elizabeth Cary has been confused with her heroine Mariam, because both of them suffer from the oppression of male authority. Though judging from the date, it can be said that Cary's conflict in her marital life is not included in her work she tries to reveal her claim for autonomy in the voices of the female protagonists. However, she makes the voice of the Chorus dissimulate her real intention. Although in this drama the author makes her protagonist reveal her claim for autonomy and her complaints about patriarchy, not only her protagonists but also the author herself is never completely free from the demands of patriarchy.

Notes

¹ 'Separation from bed and board, without permission to remarry, as opposed to *divortium a vinculo*, full legal severance, granted in cases of adultery or life-threatening cruelty' (Wolfe 271).

² *The Tragedy of Mariam* is based upon the story of Herod and Mariam told by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus in *The Antiquities* and *The Wars of Jews*. These works first appeared in English in *The Famous and Most Memorable works of Josephus*, translated by Thomas Lodge in 1602 (The introduction by Hodgson-Wright. 16-20).

³ For example, Sandra K. Fisher wrote 'Mariam's primary foil is Salome, who may have some feminist principles [. . .]' (Fisher 232).

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