# Subject Formation in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*

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Ralph Treswell's detailed survey of London's architectural layouts reveals the ambiguity of spatial demarcations at the beginning of the seventeenth century. These layouts show that public and domestic life were not spatially distinct; most houses facing the street opened into a shop that was often connected either to a kitchen or a warehouse, while the living rooms were on the second floor. Some areas were only accessible from external stairs or doors, meaning tenants would have walked outside in order to enter other rooms.[1] Street blocks often shared a common privy, and cellars were most often accessed from the street.[2] Properties also frequently overlapped, so that one houseowner's cellar might sit under three or four other homes. Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* engages the subtle spatial dynamics of early seventeenth-century London's domestic and civic spaces and exposes the power of physical boundaries to create confusion and disorder and confound subject and object. The play enacts a version of early modern subjectivity that is embedded in and altered by its physical environment. Middleton's characters adapt to and transform these environments, thereby constructing tenable identities within London's social structure.

The term "space" in the early modern period was used to refer to "proper circumstances," "an opportunity," and "one's will or ability."[3] One usage in 1480, "yf y have lyf and space," implies that "space" is interchangeable with "time" or "opportunity." In *All's Well That Ends Well*, First Soldier says to Parolles, "thou are granted space" (IV.ii.88). Space is used here as a mark of freedom and possibility. Historically, it referred to one's position in a hierarchy, as well as to one's physical position in a given environment. It was also used to describe the body's personal space, as in "breathing-space," from Ben Jonson's *Fountaine of Selfe-love*: "Give unto the flying Hart, Space to breath, how short soever." These various conceptions of space point to a formation of social and physical identities that were connected to their environments, yet space was also understood temporally. The seventeenth-century usage, "whilst I have space,"[4] implies that space represents chance or freedom, but emphatically suggests that it does not last or that it is in a state of flux. Space was not viewed as a static construction through which one moved, but rather as a fluid envelopment that altered the way one moved, thought and acted.

Early modern conceptions of space and identity as mutable were reflected in the spatial dynamics of the emerging London economy and the public theater. Karen Newman's study of London and Paris as "cultural capitals" argues convincingly for the emergence of an early modern urban subjectivity that was shaped by the public spectacles, the smells, and the spaces of the city.[5] Newman emphasizes the city dweller's everyday life and the important role the senses played in subject formation.[6] Jean Howard's *Theater of a City* explores the intercommunication between city life and the commercial theater. She addresses the diverse spaces of London, from bawdy houses to prisons, in order to show the complex social interactions and identity formations that occur in concert with such spaces.[7] In her essay on early modern "low" subjectivity, Patricia Fumerton asserts, "the London economy and its far-reaching tentacles were characterized by mobility, diversity, alienation, freedom, and tactical (as opposed to strategic or *authorized*) craft" (207).[8] Like the London Fumerton describes, the urban spaces in *Chaste Maid* are made fluid in part because of the motley collection of characters that share and challenge the spaces they occupy. A goldsmith, an aging, oversexed aristocrat, a barren couple, a couple that must separate because they are too fertile, a country wench, a Cambridge bachelor, a couple of incontinent puritans, two promoters, a Welsh whore, and a virgin somehow find themselves belonging to a dysfunctional yet productive community.

The open spaces in *Chaste Maid* engender relationships and identities that form a community comprised of not-quite-others, outcasts, foreigners, criminals, and everyday Londoners. This community is produced by the misfits of other, arguably more sanctioned London communities, and their various behaviors constitute an excess that Elizabeth Grosz describes as one that "outstrips and finds no stable place in orderly systems, or within systematicity itself" (153).[9] Fumerton posits a relationship between the emerging economy, spatiality, and social place as a formation for subjectivity. She argues, "Traced spatially, as well as economically and socially, the largely invisible vagrant/laboring poor ... emerge as distinctive subjects but with an expansive reach" (208). It was not only vagrants, however, who exploited the new frontiers of London's economy. The "low" were not only the beggars and the homeless, but also "itinerant laborers, including servants and apprentices, as well as those poor householders from the lowest depths of the 'middling sort,' who were at any time liable to such unsettling change" (208). People whose identities were neither completely condemned nor completely accepted as valid were able to manipulate London's urban landscape. In *The Practice of Everyday Life,* Michel de Certeau explains that a subject with a "proper locus" or foundation "postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its own

and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats ... can be managed" (36). According to de Certeau, a subject lacking a proper place develops a tactic, which is "a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus.... The space of the tactic is the space of the other" (37). In *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, having no "proper locus" means the tactical refusal to properly perform roles such as husband, wife, maid, or servant. The result is a subjectivity that challenges legal and social demarcations and the lines separating property, home and person; the resulting subject is not radically other, but uses its marginal status to its advantage. The interchange between domestic and commercial spaces results in a generation of subjectivities that are distributed through and productive of new socio-spatial environments. Open urban spaces are environments that the characters exploit in order to challenge class hierarchies and gender identity. Finally, we read the body as a catalyst for spatial alteration and characters as controlling the personal spaces of other characters by gendering the spaces they inhabit. Each of these readings suggests that early modern subjectivity is spatially constituted and that a spatially constituted subjectivity challenges the subject-object dichotomy to reveal a concept of early modern identity that is distributed throughout its environment.

*Chaste Maid*'s emphasis on production and fertility pervades the language of the play, yet production and reproduction often have undesirable outcomes. For example, all the babies in the play are illegitimate. In addition, material objects, such as the ring Yellowhammer crafts for Touchstone Junior and the imagined wine and bowls of Whorehound's bastard sons, represent unions that are either unwanted by the families or socially unacceptable. According to Russell West, the early modern stage is a "place of transactions which are enacted spatially" (25). The play's attention to economy and production is inextricably related to the spatial dynamics that challenge the distinction between domestic and commercial or public and private. Much of the scholarship on the early modern household has attempted to maintain a binary between the public sphere and the private domestic sphere in order to enforce a spatial paradigm that represented the domestic sphere as feminine, private, confined, and protected from outside infiltration, while civic and commercial spaces were masculine, public, and open.[10] However, recent scholarship on early modern domestic space and city life has argued that when the period texts are closely examined the binary does not hold.[11] The household is not a haven of privacy. The architectural design of early modern homes was such that rooms were interconnected through doors, stairs, and passageways, often necessitating walking through one chamber in order to reach another (Evans 267). The physical layout of the home made impossible a consistent degree of privacy or

to intuit a social hierarchy spatially; even servants and wives had to walk through their masters' rooms to get to other parts of the house, therefore giving them access to rooms they would have otherwise had no reason to enter.

The shops in the fronts of most London homes complicated the distinction between the public and the private, the commercial and the domestic. The private shop was a threshold through which foreign elements were given access to domestic spheres. The first scene of *Chaste Maid* is semi-domestic, opening with social interactions between the Yellowhammers. The scene quickly becomes disjointed when Sir Walter Whorehound, his Welsh mistress and Davy join the action onstage. Upon his entry, Sir Walter announces, "Now, wench, thou art welcome to the heart of the city of London" (1.1.97-98). Sir Walter's declaration signifies not only the geographical location of Cheapside, which was at the center of London, but also his conception of the private consumer economy as the heart of the city. The private shop here is no longer just a part of the home; it is also a part of Cheapside. For Yellowhammer and Sir Walter the private shop is a place for economic transactions, but for Moll the shop in this scene is a space in which she is objectified as property. Sir Walter examines her to determine if she is suitable for marriage as he reflects on the economic nature of the marital arrangement: "A goldsmith's shop sets out a city maid" (1.1.105). What the shop represents shifts when the city and the domestic spaces of the Yellowhammers' property blend together, which underscores the illusory nature of the distinction between the two. When Maudlin invites Sir Walter inside, she reasserts the mutable quality of her home by altering it from a familial space into a space for economic and social transactions. She asks him, "Please you, draw near and taste the welcome of the city, sir?" (1.1.162-63). Maudlin's use of her domestic space establishes from the beginning of the play the porous delineation between city street and private home. Once Sir Walter moves from the shop to the residential rooms, the home becomes stifling. In regards to Moll, Touchwood Junior says, "Poor soul, kept in too hard" (1.1.171), and Moll herself, when her father directs her into the home, says, "That robs my joy; there I lose all I win" (1.1.229). The degrees of privacy in certain spaces and what they represent to the characters alter throughout the first scene based on the transactions made within those spaces.

The fear of the infringement of public, consumer, and city space on private space, and vice versa, was pronounced. The Allwit home, which is financially supported by Sir Walter, conflates domestic and consumer space. Allwit has willingly given Sir Walter access to his home and wife in exchange for material wealth and comfort, transforming his home into a private shop in its own right. When Allwit hears that Sir Walter is on his way, he exclaims, "The founder's come

to town" (1.2.12).[12] Spatial confusion and intrusions such as this one and the anxiety generated were seen as symptoms of the growing population of London.[13] Queen Elizabeth's 1580 proclamation suggests a fear of the unclear boundaries induced by overpopulation:

> The Queen's Majesty, perceiving the state of the city of London (being recently termed her chamber) and the suburbs and confines thereof to increase daily by excess of people to inhabit in the same in such ample sort thereby many inconveniences are seen already, but many greater of necessity like to follow ... where there are such great multitudes of people brought to inhabit in small rooms (... in a sort smothered with many families of children and servants in one house or small tenement).... Her majesty ... doth charge and straightly command all manner of person of what quality soever they be, to desist and forbear from any new building of any house or tenement within three miles from any of the grates of the said city of London, to serve for habitation or lodging for any person where no former house hath been known to have been in the memory of such as are now living.... (qtd. in Munro 15)

The proclamation imagines the Queen's "chamber" overrun by intruders. The possibility of overpopulation conjured fears of social integration and domestic spaces overflowing into surrounding areas. The Queen's proclamation marks an anxiety over using buildings that were not intended for those purposes, which affected how such spaces were defined and who could freely enter.

The increasing London population was erasing the lines that divided domestic spaces from one another. Difficulty identifying property boundaries is one possible effect of such overpopulation. Russell West points out that early modern language, such as that of the Tudor Royal Proclamations, "reflected the connections of possession, status, hierarchy, in words such as 'property', which in seventeenth century English signifies both *property* as well as *knowing one's place*. Identity was a matter of place" (16). The relationship between property, production and identity calls into question Allwit's "place" within his household. When the Allwit household is preparing for Sir Walter's arrival, Allwit's uncertain place within the home becomes clear:

> ALLWIT. Now, sirs, Sir Walter's come.
> I SERVANT. Is our master come?
> ALLWIT. Your master? What am I?
> I SERVANT. Do not you know, sire?
> ALLWIT. Pray am not I your master?
> I SERVANT. Oh, you are but our mistress's husband.
> ALLWIT. Ergo, Knave, your master. (1.2.61-67)

Property, production, and in this case, reproduction (Allwit's children are Sir Walter's illegitimate offspring), each play a part in Sir Walter's usurpation of Allwit. It is easy to hear the irony in Allwit's meanderings as he smiles and "pin[s] the door" (1.2.30), presumably securing his home after looking out among the comforts Walter has provided. Strikingly, when Allwit takes his hat off to Walter, he exposes his inferiority and submission in the household. His actions place him in the role of servant and outside of the nuclear family. Allwit's awareness of how his actions are perceived, however, suggests that he still maintains a degree of control.[14] Allwit in fact enjoys his position and admittedly takes steps to keep Walter from getting married, remarking, "I'll stop that gap / Where'er I find it open" (1.2.14-15), describing his attempts in spatial and sexual terms. Later, Allwit remarks, "it is my pleasure to walk forth / and air myself a little. I am tied / to nothing in this business; what I do / is merely recreation, not constraint" (2.2.3-6). His unique social position in his home allows him physical freedom to come in and out as he likes. The social ranks in this household are altered because the Allwits have opened their home to Walter and, therefore, to identity confusion, yet as this scene illustrates, social "places" are not static because the domestic sphere has been physically and socially penetrated by an outside influence. Allwit is sometimes master, sometimes servant. Walter is both in control of and controlled by the Allwits. This shifting of power is tactical.[15] Allwit's place is not clearly defined. Like other characters in *Chaste Maid*, he lacks a "proper locus" yet manipulates the power dynamics to his advantage. Unlike characters who are identifiably other in many contexts, the characters in *Chaste Maid* find themselves living on the margins of a "proper" identity; however, they are not completely othered. The Allwits choose to defy the laws of an appropriate household, willfully performing their roles as wife or husband imperfectly because it opens up more physical and social opportunities.[16]

Other domestic spaces are inconveniently altered by the circumstances of production. Touchwood Senior is forced to leave his home because he and his wife keep conceiving children they cannot afford. Sir Oliver Kix and his wife, who have had no luck conceiving a child, counterbalance Touchwood's uncontrollable lust and fertility. The imbalance of biological production in each of these households coincides with the play's overarching theme of production and its relationship to identity formation. Oliver feels the need to compensate for his domestic infertility by erecting "houses of correction" to improve the city, merging the domestic and the civic in his insecure attempt to produce something. He proclaims, "I mean to make good deeds my children" (2.1.147). The distinctions between households also become difficult to identify as Touchwood Senior fathers the Kix family child.

Ironically, it is Lady Kix who feels that her domestic relationship with her husband has been literally infected by foreign bodies: "But, indeed, you came not so single when / You came from shipboard" (3.3.68-69), implying Oliver is either lousy or had just been in another relationship, presumably with a sailor. His inability to "stand" and his infertility are implicitly related to his questionable sexuality, suggesting that productive acts from unclear or foreign sources are desirable over non-productive acts (such as those Kix might have done with a sailor).[17] Yellowhammer advocates production regardless of social transgressions when he accepts Whorehound as his son-in-law despite his indiscretions, thereby opening up Moll's marriage to possible delegitimization and social confusion.

The social interactions and power dynamics cultivated as a result of the fluidity of domestic spaces nurture the identity formation of not-quite-othered characters. The play even seems to advocate them. Sir Walter's inability to supply the Allwits with monetary support, as well as his moral judgment of them, creates a hierarchical shift in the household that inevitably leads to spatial changes. When one of the servants advises Walter to "lock [himself] close," Allwit responds, "Not in my house" (5.1.17-18), taking back control from Walter and revealing Walter's utter lack of a spatial foundation that he might call his own or manipulate for his purposes. When Walter asks Mrs. Allwit, "Am I denied chamber?" she tells him that she must obey her husband, a concern she has not entertained in the past. The Allwits obey the proper rules of a socially sanctioned household when it is advantageous to do so. The shift from an open domestic space to a closed and controlled one is quickly nullified when the Allwits decide to move to the Strand and turn their home into a boarding house. The Allwit home is their business as it has always been. Domestic spaces remain open to potential intruders and to public and semi-private acts of exchange.

The private shop in its various incarnations acts as a threshold between domestic and civic spaces and lawful and unsanctioned production and exchange. The nature of the exchanges taking place in the goldsmith's shop reveals the porous boundaries between the street, the market and the home.[18] The play concludes without redefining and securing the distinction between the public and presumed private spaces and the characters tactically shape their environment, reifying their subjectivity within it. Christopher R. Friedrichs, in his thorough study of early European cities, claims, "there was much want in the early modern city—but little waste" (42). The exception is the rule in *Chaste Maid*: through their unregulated production and reproduction, the altered spaces become spaces of excess, economic imbalance, and unproductive investments. The results are characters that also belong to London's excess in that they exist outside of stable places and without

stable identities (if there are any) within the regulated systems of London. The social and physical spaces are inseparable, and the characters' physical interactions with their environment, as well as their social interactions, produce unregulated, unorderly spaces that reshape the social structures and practices within them.

The city street as represented in *Chaste Maid* provides another site for social transformation because it flows into other public and private spaces and hosts unregulated interactions. De Certeau asserts that physical movements through named spaces and interactions within them generate new kinds of spaces: "Linking acts and footsteps, opening meanings and directions, [proper names] operate in the name of an emptying-out and wearing-away of their primary role. They become liberated spaces that can be occupied" (105). *Chaste Maid* uses the generic city street as well as named streets and communities to represent unsanctioned urban spatial practices, even as they are ostensibly under the jurisdiction of the city government.[19] It is interesting that a play portraying the frequent disregard of laws and rules would be set in Cheapside, which was definitively inside the walls and under the authority of the City of London, instead of a more obviously marginalized geographic space, such as the liberties.[20] Even the city itself promulgated a sense of marginality, however, in terms of jurisdiction. There were multiple parishes and the boundaries between them were not always clear. Guilds also maintained jurisdiction over some geographic areas of the city. Further, to "take up the freedom of the city" meant to become a citizen, adopting all the opportunities as well as the regulations that attend such an identity. Susan Wells claims, "To 'take up the freedom of the city' denoted, ideologically, participation in the City's independence, in that communal existence legally recognized in the Charter. But by the Jacobean period 'taking up the freedom' was a purely commercial act" (42). Like "liberty," "freedom" carried with it the contradictory meanings of constraint and openness. In *Chaste Maid*, Yellowhammer calls Moll a "daughter of the freedom" (1.1.130), invoking Yellowhammer's lawful right to trade in the city; "freedom" could refer to the city itself, or it could be invoking Moll as an object in a commercial exchange. That the word carries conflicting meanings emphasizes Moll's own tenuous identity. To be a daughter of the freedom makes her a hybrid of object and subject.[21]

Both contemporary and early modern writers have suggested that the early modern urban outdoors were places where unacceptable behavior and interactions could take place. Lena Orlin claims that illicit affairs often occurred outside of the home.[22] In *Anatomie of Abuses*, Phillip Stubbs complains that during public celebrations people disappeared into the "woods, and groues, some to the hils and mountains, some to one place, some to another, where they spende all night

in pleasant pastimes" (209).[23] Public indoor spaces also seemed to cultivate illicit behavior. In his "Plan to Discourage Pickpockets," Sir John Fielding explains how thieves operated, meeting at alehouses before the playhouse opened to strategize, and then meeting again after the play to divvy their plunder. He suggests that constables should scan the alehouses and survey the streets before the playhouse opens to catch any conspiring pickpockets. Fielding's letter shows his desire to control the flow of criminal activity not only into the playhouse, but also through the streets and other public places. He imagines the thieves openly conspiring, suggesting that the patrons of the alehouse tolerate the pickpockets' behavior.

Act 2, scene 2 presents a city street where illegal transactions are made and the lack of a spatial marker provides the characters with more "room" to manipulate social dynamics. When the promoters enter the stage, Allwit remarks on their unsuccessful attempt to hide. Allwit, who struggles with control over his domestic world, becomes one of the tricksters of this scene, controlling the interaction and making fools of the city spies when the promoters attempt to discover the locations of covert butchering:

> 2nd PROMOTER. And the butcher, belike,
> Should kill and sell close in some upper room?
> ALLWIT. Some apple-loft, as I take it, or a coal-house;
> I know not which, i'faith.
> 2nd PROMOTER. Either will serve:
> This butcher shall kiss Newgate, 'less he turn up
> The bottom of the pocket of his apron. (2.2.92-96)

Allwit exposes the promoters' underlying desire, which is the personal monetary gain they hope to achieve by taking advantage of their positions of pseudo-authority. This scene also exposes the fallibility of the public/private binary—the presumed butcher is clearly known to people living in the area, but not to the City's law enforcement; the neighborhood is a semi-public place, a space finding itself in the margins between community and interiority. Allwit's refusal to reveal the location of the alleged butcher illustrates that his loyalty lies with a community that, while not recognizing him as a typical master of a household, provides him with other freedoms that he can only achieve by not fitting into an acceptable identity, not finding a "proper locus."

The Country Wench even more radically disrupts the hierarchy and reshapes the space of the street. She enters the stage proclaiming, "Women had need of wit, if they'll shift here, and she that hath wit may shift anywhere" (2.2.137-38). The early modern definition of "shift" carried both a spatial and an economic nuance. According to the *OED*, "to shift" in the sixteenth century meant "to manage matter,

to deal, bargain," "to change ... to shift shape," and "to manage to effect one's purposes, or to make a living by one's own devices; to succeed, get on."[24] When the Country Wench enters the stage, her shifting invokes all of these meanings. Her manipulation of the scene is opportunistic. The Country Wench lacks a place that is identifiably hers, so she momentarily tactically manipulates the street to her use. Her first line in the scene emphasizes not only the necessity of manipulation, but also that this space—and any other space—may be exploited to multiple ends. She takes control of the interaction in order to survive. In the process, she emasculates the promoters and disempowers them as representatives of the city government. Kathleen McLuskie and David Bevington point out that "the Country Wench gains male comic authority, while those who lack wit are feminized by the rhetoric of the play.... The Lenten promoters, moreover, are turned into nursemaids.... Their knowledge of the city ways is reduced to sending the child to a wet nurse up the river in Brentford" (19). As the promoters stop passersby, they reveal that although they should represent the laws that shape the lives of the citizens, they are challenging the notion that such laws can be accurately represented or successfully enforced. The promoter's vacillations open the city street to possible redefinition by other characters in the scene. They also point out their own sordid relationship to the suburban counterculture:

> All veal? Pox, the worse luck! I promised faithfully to
> Send this morning a fat quarter of lamb to a kind gentlewoman
> In Turnbull Street that longs; and how I'm crossed! (2.2.122-125)

Turnbull Street was known for its brothels and masterless women. The passage above suggests the promoter is providing for a pregnant prostitute, thus erasing the boundary between law abiding and defying.[25] The promoters, spies for the city government, represent the corruption of power, but also how easily that power can be upended.

The street scene also emphasizes the play's consistent representation of women emerging into the public places of the urban landscape. Laura Gowing argues that early modern urbanites would have regarded the city in gendered terms and that men and women imagined the topography of the city differently (132-135). Women became more visible outside of the home, in family-owned shops or working in the markets, but even as they were, in many ways, physically less limited, they were forced to remain at the social margins, risking harassment or accusation of crimes such as prostitution or engrossing (Gowing 140-143).[26] The concern over women in public spaces led to common accusations of consumer offences. Women who sold in the open market were blamed for price gouging and

seen as "not onely of lewd and wicked life and behavior themselves but procurers and drawers of others also servauntes and such like to sundry wicked accions, the number of which people are of late yeres soe wonderfully increased" (Archer 23).[27] Additionally, the City attempted to limit the number of fishwives through a licensing system (Archer 23). The anxiety over women traversing non-domestic spaces appears to derive in part from the concern that women in public were no longer under the control of their master husbands, or in spite of their married status, had become unmastered.[28] In Robert Cleaver's *A Godly Forme of Household Government, For the ordering of private Families, according to the direction of God's word*, concerning wives, the author says, "First, if she be not subject to her husband, to let him rule all the household, especially *outward* affaires: if shee will make against him, and seek to have her own *wayes*, there will be doing and undoing" (emphasis added). Cleaver also describes non-familial entry into the household in subtly sexual terms, writing that "A great backe-friend to thrift is good fellowship, and company keeping: for it hath losse of time." It also "draweth home others to thy house, or draweth thee to others houses, as tavernes, alehouses." Interacting with those outside of the household is described as perverse social sodomy, and allowing others into one's home and going to other houses equates the home with public rabble-rousing establishments.

Moll's escape from her home marks her own physical freedom and her defiance of the household patriarchy, but it also marks her in other, less attractive ways. Gowing notes that women walking the streets alone could have been mistaken for prostitutes merely because they were unmastered in public (139-145). Moll's escape calls into question her chastity and could mean the undoing of a marital match**.** Alternatively, it would be incorrect to assume that keeping Moll locked in her room will keep her chaste. "Privacy," Gowing points out, was a term sometimes used to imply illicit sex behind closed doors; "Privacy was no guarantee of honesty" (134). Middleton makes good use of this idea in *A Mad World, My Masters*, when Harebrain's wife uses her private chamber and the ruse of a friend's illness to engage in an illicit affair with Penitent. Moll actually is chaste, however, but "cannot endure to be shut up."[29] When Walter asks how she could have escaped a double lock, Yellowhammer replies, "There was a little hole looked into the gutter; / But who would have dreamt of that?" (4.3.9-10). Her escape route, over the rooftops and by way of the river, emphasizes the vulnerability of the household as a safe domestic enclosure, the unclear demarcations between houses and city spaces, and the illusion of "close keeping."

That Moll uses the watermen to aid in her escape places a heavy emphasis on the freedom that the river provides. By way of the Thames, one can travel not only

to areas outside of the official City's jurisdiction, but also to the suburbs where less law-minded people might reside. When Maudlin cries, "Lay the waterside, she's gone forever, else" (4.3.272), she is remarking on the possibilities that come with traveling the river, but also the fear that Moll might fall victim to sexual deviation, for even Touchwood Junior instructs the watermen to carry Moll to Barn Elms, a place known for its sexual liaisons. Moreover, the watermen and Touchwood Junior use terms such as "lustily" and "overtake" to describe Moll's river getaway (4.3.25, 31). The freedom the water represents, however, does not necessarily negate her apparent moral virtue. The watermen act as advocates for Moll and other real and imagined characters, helping them to escape their social restraints and at the same time to reinforce their identities. Touchwood Senior recalls an oral tale of the watermen:

> I had been taken, brother, by eight sergeants,
> But for the honest watermen; I am bound to them.
> They are the most requitefull'st people living,
> For, as they get their means by gentlemen,
> They are still the forwardest to help gentlemen.
> You heard how one 'scaped out the Blackfriars,
> But a while since, from two or three varlets
> Came into the house with all their rapiers drawn,
> As if they'd dance the sword-dance on the stage,
> With candles in their hands, like chandlers' ghosts,
> Whilst the poor gentlemen so pursued and banded
> Was by an honest pair of oars safely landed. (4.3.1-12)

Touchwood Senior's story highlights an opportunistic element in the watermen's choices—they want to protect their customers—but it also suggests that the watermen disregard class rank. They do not see gentlemen as merely customers, but people who need saving from time to time. Their willingness to help Moll and Touchwood Junior also marks the watermen's sympathy for the young lovers' plight, even if they are getting paid—the play represents unsanctioned exchanges within the city as transactions of social and spatial liberty.

Architectural and outdoor urban spaces, uncontrollable transactions and social interactions, and indeed, the physical demarcations of the characters' bodies expose the fluid spatiality of *Chaste Maid*. A number of critics have commented on the spatiality of identity in the early modern period, but only a few have addressed the relationship between spatial practices and conceptions of the body.[30] In *On the Soul's Dependence on the Body*, Galen argues that the soul and the body are not mutually exclusive. Galen's humoral theory, which still pervaded popular

belief and much of the medical community, conceived of a particularly physical subjectivity that was embedded in its environment.[31] The humorally constituted body, he argues, is altered by "nature, disease, time of life, season of the year, locality, or occupation" (193). In *Chaste Maid*, Moll's movement into outside space calls into question whether her body has been sexually permeated. Tim says,

> Look on her, tutor! She hath brought her from
> the water like a mermaid; she's but half my sister now; as far as
> the flesh goes, the rest may be sold to fishwives. (4.4.36-38)

Tim explicitly calls his sister a whore and even describes her imagined moral downfall as a physical dissection. Her identity as a valid member of the family suffers.[32]

The water imagery pervading *Chaste Maid* is not surprising given the early modern conception of water as gendered female and the play's focus on gendered spatial delineations. Gail Paster's classic study of the early modern female body as a "leaky vessel" finds articulation in *Chaste Maid*.[33] She argues that the female body was associated with unstable boundaries because of its bodily excesses:

> This discourse [on the female body] inscribes women as leaky vessels by isolating one element of the female body's material expressiveness—its production of fluids—as excessive, hence either disturbing or shameful.... Representations of the female body as a leaking vessel display that body as beyond the control of the female subject, and thus threatening the acquisitive goals of the family and its maintenance of status and power. (*The Body Embarrassed* 25)

Women were inexorably connected to fluidity and Paster points out the discursive relationship between physiological control and female inferiority. Gina Bloom addresses the inconstant corporeality ascribed to women through sound and voice, arguing that women and feminine boys possessed shaky voices because of their inconstant and irrational nature. The fluidity of the female body marked a lack of definition, as Sergius Kodera points out in describing the distinction between early modern conceptions of matter and form. While form was gendered male, matter, which lacked shape, was gendered female. The less defined "matter" became a misogynistic metaphor for female subjectivity as mutable and inconstant.[34] The imagery of the uncontrollable nature of water in *Chaste Maid* extends to the characters' bodies. In Act 3 scene 2, the gossips discuss one of their daughter's "secret" faults:

> 4 Gossip. A fault? What is 't?
> 3 Gossip. I'll tell you when I have drunk.
> 4 Gossip. Wine can do that, I see, that friendship cannot.

3 Gossip. And now I'll tell you, gossip: she's too free.
4 Gossip. Too free?
3 Gossip. Oh, ay, she cannot lie dry in her bed. (3.2.101-106)

The daughter's lack of control lies with her inability to control the flow of fluids from her body, just as the gossips are freely allowing wine to flow in and secrets to flow out. Grotesque scatological imagery continues as Allwit observes the women celebrating the new baby's christening:

Now out comes all the tasseled handkerchers;
They are spread abroad between their knees already.
Now in goes the long fingers that are washed
Some thrice a day in urine; my wife uses it.
Now we shall have such pocketing!
See how they lurch at the lower end! (3.2.53-58)

The women's practice of using their urine as a cosmetic cleanser highlights the scene's emphasis on scatological functions. The lower bodily imagery is concluded with Allwit's equating the women's "lower ends" with the far end of the table or room, again highlighting the connection between body and space. In *Humoring the Body*, Paster illuminates the intimate synergy between the body and space; she describes early modern subjectivity as "a fluid form of consciousness inhabited by, even as it inhabits, a universe composed of analogous elements" (137). The body and its environment are mutually dependent upon each other for definition and meaning.

Literary descriptions of the city have also incorporated bodily imagery and corporeal fluidity to define the urban landscape. Andrew McRae, in his analysis of Jonson's "On the Famous Voyage," remarks on the cultural associations between fluidity and women's bodies. He argues, "Nature, figured in the flowing water and nurturing female form, is ... fused with the culture of the city" (6). In *A Survey of London*, John Stowe attempts to create an image of the city and its areas that seems clearly delineated from each other. He was nostalgic over an idea of a clean and stable London and its waterways, in which nothing "may hurt or stop it, but keepe it in the same estate that it was wont to be," choosing not to describe the poor or foreigner-infested areas of the city (13). In contrast, Samuel Rolle describes in positive terms the flow of water through London, as if it were giving life to the city:

As nature, by veins, and arteries, some great and some small, placed up and down all parts of the body, ministereth blood and nourishment to every part thereof, so was that wholesome water which was necessary for the good of London as blood

> is for the good and health of the body, conveyed by pipes wooden or metalline, as by veins, to every part of this famous City. If water were, as we may call it, the blood of London, then were its several conduits as it were the liver and the spleen of that City; (which are reckoned the fountains of blood in human bodies,) for that the great roots fixed in the earth, shooting out their branches in divers and sundry ways. (*Burning of London*)

Rolle's description of the waterways providing life to London is quite different from Ben Jonson's disease-ridden voyage through the city on the Fleet River. A less ostentatious description of space as a body is found in Antonio di Piero Averlino's (Filarete) fifteenth-century *Treatise on Architecture:*

> The exterior and interior appearance of the building is arranged effectively in such a way that the members and passages are suitably located, just as the exterior and interior parts and members are correct for the body of man. (12)

Although space is often described using female imagery, this passage denotes a more generalized conception of space with the body. Georgiana Ziegler argues that Filarete's architectural descriptions are particularly masculine (75). The image reveals an understanding of the relationship between space and all bodies, not just female bodies.

As space was often described in bodily terms, the body was similarly described in spatial terms, as was exemplified in contemporary scientific and medical texts. In *Microcosmographia*, Helkiah Crooke describes the process by which the womb takes the male seed:

> The womb, which is the most noble and almost divine Nurse, gathereth and contracteth it self [until] ... there is no empty or void place left therein. And this it doth as being greedy to conteyne and to cherish, we say to Conceive the seed. Moreover, least the geniture thus layd up should issue forth again; the mouth or orifice of the wombe is so exquisitely shut and locked up that it will not admit the point of a needle. The wombe rowzeth and raiseth upp the sleepy and lurking power of the seeds, and that which was before but potential, it bringeth into act. (262-263)

Crooke's description not only spatializes the womb, but also conception, as "to conteyne" is to "conceive," a reminder of the link between space and identity formation—identities are ideally bound and contained. Space is often equated with the female body, but in *Chaste Maid* male bodies also interact with their surroundings and are affected by spaces that women characters have altered. Allwit's misplaced mastery becomes emasculation as the gossips' presence onstage marks a discursive shift in power when Allwit's dialogue is supplanted by theirs. Allwit

stands aside from the main action onstage, becoming an outsider and voyeuristic intruder upon the actions within his own home. He is further emasculated by the gossips' discussion that the newborn is so much like the father that it is "as if it had been spit out of his mouth" (3.2.10), transforming Allwit into a monstrous female figure giving birth from the wrong side of his body.

Tim's control over his own environment is also threatened when he returns home from Cambridge. He enters the room in which Maudlin and the other women are gathered, says, "Oh, I'm betrayed!" and exits abruptly (3.2.124). When he returns, he demands that his tutor be invited into the room as well, revealing his discomfort with the situation. Maudlin asks, "What, is your tutor come? Have you brought him up?" Tim replies, "I ha' not brought him up; he stands at the door" (3.2.138-139). Tim's explanation possesses a bawdy innuendo; the tutor's waiting outside becomes a homoerotic description of the space between the tutor and Tim. Later, when the Welsh Gentlewoman enters the sanctity of his chamber, he says, "Methinks, I'faith, 'tis boldly done of her to come into my chamber, being but a stranger" (4.1.93-94). Tim's sexuality as well as his identity as an insider is threatened because of the Welsh Gentlewoman's infiltration of his supposedly private room.[35]

*Chaste Maid* opens with a description of women's nature in physical and spatial terms. Yellowhammer states, "As there is no woman made without a flaw, / Your purest lawns have frays, and cambrics bracks," to which Maudlin replies, "But 'tis a husband solder up all cracks" (1.1.30-32). As in other moments in the play, women's bodies are described as leaky, with husbands mending their wives' characters and with the intended sexual connotations of stopping up or mending the holes. The world of the play, however, does not attempt to close entries or stop fluid bodies and spaces from exceeding their boundaries. Instead, it is Yellowhammer who is fooled, and Maudlin is the one who traverses the streets and the river's banks to find her roaming daughter. Finally, Moll ironically confines herself to a coffin in order to free herself from her parents' household and get the match she desires.[36]

The combination of London's new economy, unclear distinctions between urban and domestic spaces, and early modern conceptions of an open corporeality contribute to *Chaste Maid*'s manipulation of socio-spatial practices. The community of characters in *Chaste Maid* refuses to stay in one place, finding tactical advantages in maintaining unbound relationships to places and people. That *Chaste Maid* is set in a specific place in the city does not confine the characters to that place. On the contrary, the characters point out Cheapside's and the city's own fluid spatial demarcations, revealing the urban as a conducive environment to generate tactical subjectivities that, lacking a "proper locus,"

find other ways to thrive. In *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, the home, the street, and the body are all spaces that are open to change. The characters exploit socially sanctioned and lawfully demarcated spaces in order to manipulate social and gender structures for their own opportunities. In doing so, they show how dependent identity is on spatial constructs, and also how vulnerable and unstable these identities are.

## Notes

[1] See Schofield, figures 29 and 50.

[2] See Schofield's introduction to Treswell: "Privies and Houses of Office" (22-24) and "Cellars" (26).

[3] *OED* n.1: "Time which is free or available for doing something; leisure; opportunity."

[4] *OED* n.1.b.

[5] Karen Newman argues that the beginning threads of "modernity" can be found in early modern London and Paris.

[6] For discussions on texts centered on generic figures walking through the city and sensually experiencing the urban environment, see chapters three, "Walking Capitals," and four, "Filth, Stench, Noise," of Newman.

[7] See Howard for a thorough and thoughtful discussion on city comedies and their representations of London life. She is particularly adroit at recognizing the relationship between economic exchange and identity formation.

[8] For more on the tactical as disruptive/other versus the strategic as representative of official power, see de Certeau (29-42).

[9] Grosz expands on Lingis' concept of a community of others through the idea of excess. She writes,

> If the world of the proper, the system, form, regulated production, constitutes and economy —a restricted economy—a world of exchange, use, and expenditure, then there is an excess, a remainder, an uncontained element, the "accursed share,"—a "general economy"—a world or order governed by immoderation, excess, and sacrifice, an economy of excremental proliferations.... (153)

[10] See Duby and Smith.

[11] See Manuela Rossini and Mary Thomas Crane as examples.

[12] In their edition of the Middleton play, McLuskie and Bevington have annotated "founder" with the note, "usually used of cities or institution, Allwit speaks of Sir Walter as the founder of his family and his prosperity" (78, note 12).

[13] See Ian Munro's "Imaginary Numbers: City, Crowd, Theater" in *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London* for a thorough discussion of lawful attempts to control the population of London and the implicit anxiety that the population increase generated.

[14] When Walter tells Allwit to put his hat back on, Allwit responds in an aside, "Now I must do it, or he'll be as angry now as if I had / put it on at first bidding. 'Tis but observing [*Putting on his hat*] /—'Tis but observing a man's humour once, and he may ha' / him by the nose all his life" (1.2.85-88).

[15] De Certeau defines tactics as the manipulation or trickery of spatial structures in order to gain opportunities that would not be available within a more controlled spatial environment (37-38).

[16] Robert Cleaver explains in detail the hierarchical structure of the home and the proper action and exchanges for each member of the household.

[17] The conflict between Sir Oliver and Lady Kix is derived from their inability to produce a child. Notice that when they are in domestic harmony, Touchstone describes them as "in" (3.3.92). When they are fighting, they are "out" (3.3.106).

[18] See Janelle Day Jenstad's essay, "'The City Cannot Hold You': Social Conversion in the Goldsmith's Shop," for a detailed reading of the shop as a place for social hierarchies to become manipulated.

[19] Middleton mentions properly named places both in and outside of the city walls, including The Strand, Westminster, Holborn Bridge, Turnbull Street, Bucklersbury Street, Queenhive, Brentford suburb, and the Pissing-Conduit at the intersection of Threadneedle Street and Cornhill, as well as a number of named and small towns.

[20] Liberties were areas controlled by the central government of London, but they were not within its official boundaries (Wells 42). Susan Wells describes the liberties of London as, "theoretically under the authority of the city, but actually they were, in a limited sense, places of literal 'liberty' opened within the city by the contradictions between its legal structure and its material life" (42).

[21] As Wells points out, in *Bartholomew Fair* Jonson uses the term "free-woman" to mean prostitute, which is another social position for women that gives them freedom from the traditional confines of their gender in early modern London, but also makes them explicit objects of commerce. For example, when Whit says, "I will make thee a free-woman and a lady; thou shalt live like a lady" (4.5.30-31), he points out that he does not mean "lady" as in a woman of upstanding moral quality, but a woman of leisure. He is making an explicit distinction between a socially sanctioned identity and liberty.

[22] Orlin states, "many extramarital liaisons were conducted in the house's most liminal spaces or, indeed, outside it" (155).

[23] Christopher R. Friedrichs points out that most early modern cities "had considerable amounts of green space, even within the walls: there was no shortage of pleasure gardens, market gardens and orchards, not to mention other open areas like cemeteries and workyards" (25).

[24] I.4.a, II.8.a, I.5.a.

[25] Fiona McNeill discusses Turnbull Street as a place notorious for its taverns and crime (207).

[26] "Engrossers" were people who bought goods with the intention of reselling them, which was a criminal offense.

[27] This quotation originates from a 1590 proclamation cited in Ian Archer's introduction to *Hugh Alley's Caveat: The Markets of London in 1598*, Folger Ms V.a. 318.

[28] Fiona McNeill thoroughly explores representations of unmarried women in Middleton, Dekker, and Jonson, among others, as masterless, but offers that married women could also be masterless.

[29] This is one of the descriptions Donald Lupton gives Cheapside women in *London and the countrey carbonadoed*.

[30] Russell West and Andrew Hiscock are particularly notable for their emphasis on early modern identity and space. An exceptional essay exploring the relationship between the construction of the body and space is Andrew McRae's "'On the Famous Voyage': Ben Jonson and Civic Space."

[31] Eve Keller argues that it was only after William Harvey's studies on the circulation of blood that an understanding of a corporeally fluid subjectivity began to wane heavily. She writes,

> Harvey's proposal that blood moves through the body in a closed circuit contravened not only Galenic anatomy but also Galenic understandings of the person.... [T]he organism was newly severed from its environment: the closing of the body, its self sustaining autonomy, parallels the emerging autonomy of the liberal self. (8)

[32] Middleton is playing on the meaning of "sister," which was also slang for a prostitute.

[33] For a seminal study of women as incontinent, see Paster (*The Body Embarrassed* 23-63).

[34] Kodera also discusses the ingestion of blood and the sinister construction of the female vampire myth in the chapter, "Lady Vampires: Marsilio Ficino on Blood."

[35] Concerning his marriage, Tim says:

> I mar'l what this gentlewoman should be that I should have in marriage. She's a stranger to me. I wonder what my parents mean, I'faith, to match me with a stranger so, a maid that's neither kiff nor kin to me. Life, do they think I have no more care of my body than to lie with one that I ne'er knew, a mere stranger, one that ne'er went to school with me neither, nor ever play-fellows together? (4.1.79-85)

When he discovers that she speaks English however, he decides that is sufficient evidence that she is not a stranger (4.1.139-140). His worries seem not to be so much that he does not know her personally, but that she is a cultural outsider.

[36] That Moll defies her parents in order to get married and therefore place herself in another potentially confining situation does not escape me. There is also nothing to suggest that Moll will not be an "unmastered" wife, so I chose to rest on this issue.

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