

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



‘Hide, and be Hidden, Ride and be Ridden’: the Coach as Transgressive Space in the Literature of Early Modern London

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The introduction of the coach to London in the late sixteenth century transformed people’s relationship with the early modern city. Originally intended as a status symbol for the nobility, the coach quickly became associated with the carriage of aristocratic ladies. As Gervase Markham noted, in his *A health to the gentlemanly profession of seruingmen* (1598), this ‘new invention’ was particularly suited for the transport of noblewomen, since it not only provided a private space for the preservation of modesty, but also served to reduce the cost of maintaining a large retinue of servants:

Now to deminish and cut of this charge, aswell of Horse as Men, there is now a new inuention, and that is, she must haue a Coach, wherein she, with her Gentlewomen, Mayde, and Chyldren, and what necessaries as they or any of them are to vse, may be caryed and conueyed with smaller charge.¹

According to John Stowe, the first coach introduced to England was made in 1555 for the Earl of Rutland by Walter Rippon. In 1564, Stowe reports, Rippon went on to make for Queen Mary ‘the first hollow turning Coach, with pillars and arches’, a royal precursor to the design we now recognise as a hackney coach.² In its sixteenth- and seventeenth-century form, it was said to have originated in Hungary, in the town of Kotzee, from which the vehicle derived its name.³ The coach’s arrival in London

¹ Gervase Markham, *A health to the gentlemanly profession of seruingmen* (London, 1598), pp. 30-31.

² John Stowe, *The Abridgement of the English Chronicle* (London, 1618), p. 272. According to Henry Peacham, the first coach ‘that was seene in England was presented to Queene Elizabeth, by the Earle of Arundell’. Peacham, *Coach and Sedan* (London, 1636), pp. 28-29. John Taylor writes that ‘in the yeare 1564 one William Boonen a Dutchman brought first the vse of Coaches hither, and the said Boonen was Queene Elizabeths Coachman’. Taylor, *The World Runnes on Wheelles* (London, 1623), p. 18.

³ Peacham, p. 28. Ralph Strauss, *Carriages and Coaches: Their History and Evolution* (London: Martin Secker, 1912), p. 62.

coincided with a substantial demographic shift from country to city, during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. David Harris Sacks notes that London's population 'stood at perhaps 40,000-50,000 in 1500, 200,000 in 1600, and 500,000-575,000 in 1700'.⁴ These figures represent a '1,000 to 1,500 percent increase in two hundred years'.⁵ This condition of expansion, both in terms of population and territory, inexorably created a climate of uninterrupted physical mobility, of circulation driven by economics. As more hackney-coaches increased traffic within the city and stage and private coaches carried greater numbers from the country, they contributed to London's ascendancy as the economic, political and cultural centre of the nation.⁶ But, in spite of its obvious utility, the coach was met with an extraordinary level of opposition, suspicion and resentment throughout this early period of its history.

The problems first presented by coaches were spatial – they disturbed those physical places that were unprepared for an increase in wheeled traffic. When John Donne, in a sermon of 1626, lamented external distractions from prayer, he invoked the environmental disruptions of coaches, saying 'I neglect God and his angels, for the noise of a fly, for the rattling of a coach'.⁷ By 1716, the coach's demands on the city had remained just as topical, featuring in John Gay's poetic perambulation through urban space, 'O happy Streets to rumbling wheels unknown'.⁸ The first major backlash against the coach came in 1636 when Charles I issued a proclamation 'for the restraint of the multitude, and promiscuous use of coaches about London and Westminster', which stated that,

Not only a greate disturbance growes to his Majestie, his dearest Consort the Queene, the Nobilitie, and others of place and degree, in their passage through the streets of the said Cities; but the streets themselves so pestered, and the pavements thereof so broken up, as the common passage is thereby hindred and made dangerous.⁹

⁴ David Harris Sacks, 'London's Dominion: the Metropolis, the Market Economy, and the State', in *Material London, ca. 1600*, ed. by Lena Cowen Orlin (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 20-54 (p. 22).

⁵ Sacks, p. 22.

⁶ On the conditions of travel in early modern England, see Joan Parkes, *Travel in England in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), pp. 19-20. For further details of early coach travel, see Walter Besant, *London in the Time of the Tudors* (London: A. & C. Black, 1904), pp. 338-343; Norman G. Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1935), pp. 429-432; and Julie Sanders, *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620-1650*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 133-178.

⁷ John Donne, *The Major Works*, ed. by John Carey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 373.

⁸ *Walking the Streets of Eighteenth-Century London: John Gay's Trivia (1716)*, ed. by Clare Brant & Susan E. Whyman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 99.

⁹ Charles I, *By the King. A proclamation for the restraint of the multitude, and promiscuous vse of coaches, about London and Westminster* (London, 1636).

Charles' declaration is revealing in a number of respects. It is couched in language that suggests freedom of movement for the common sort, as well as for King, Queen and nobility, and draws attention to the environmental impact of coaches on London's streets. The King intimates that the coach inhibits mobility rather than aiding urban circulation. By the early seventeenth century one of the most common charges levelled at the coach trade was that of environmental damage. The poorly maintained and underdeveloped English roads, which were mostly composed of dirt and gravel, suffered under the coach's substantial weight and wooden wheels. At the same time, the noise and congestion, which had disturbed Donne, and which were the inevitable by-products of this new invention, regularly provoked calls for its suppression.¹⁰ But the proclamation also betrays Charles' anxiety at the prospect of a new 'multitude' and 'promiscuous' use of coaches; in other words, at the extension of coach travel to passengers of lower birth.

Originally conceived as a means of transport for the nobility, shielding them from the public gaze as well as from the elements, the number of coaches for common use had swollen by the time of Charles' objections. Commoners who travelled by coach were, therefore, met with charges of vanity and pride. As John Taylor, the water poet, cynically professed following his own experience as a passenger:

It was but my chance once to be brought from *Whitehall* to the Tower in my Maister Sir *William Waades* Coach, and before I had beene drawne twentie yards, such a Timpany of pride puft me vp, that I was ready to burst with the winde Chollick of vaine glory. In what state I would leane ouer the Boote ... and then I would stand vp, vaying my Bonnet, kissing my right clawe, extending my armes as I had beene swimming, with God saue your Lordship, Worship, or how doest thou honest neighbour or good-fellow?¹¹

Taylor, perhaps the most vocal critic of their growing popularity, had more reasons than most to resent coaches, as a result of his profession as a Thames waterman. His humorous yet scathing pamphlet, *The World Runs on Wheelles* (1623), addresses not only the economic damage wrought upon his own trade, but also a catalogue of social concerns, which chimed with the fears of the Crown and City.¹² For contemporary

¹⁰ For condition of the roads see William T. Jackman & W. H. Chaloner, *The Development of Transportation in Modern England* (New York: Routledge [1917] 1962), p. 119. McRae, pp. 67-90.

¹¹ Taylor, pp. 15-6.

¹² Included in this list of grievances was the high price of wool and leather, a circumstance attributed to 'the multitude of Coaches, and Carroaches, who consume and take vp the best Hides that can be gotten in our Kingdome' (p. 9). According to Taylor, this seizure of leather had consequences for a variety of

observers, the coach was more than just an inconvenience or a nuisance. Its structure, function and, perhaps most significantly, its mobility and relationship with time and space, distinguished it from every mode of land transport that had come before, and called into question the morality of spatial practices. As coaches multiplied and became accessible to commoners, they threatened to overturn orthodox modes of movement, as well as values of placement. It is, therefore, no surprise that we find petitions against coaches recurring throughout the remainder of the century, inherited by successive governments. Henry Peacham's pamphlet *Coach and Sedan pleasantly disputing for place and precedence* (1636) illustrates the problems of excess traffic brought by coaches to the city's streets and the condemnations levelled against them by those in power:

You live not in love and charitie one with another, but give one another (if you are crossed in the streete, or in a narrow lane) the worst words you can; and another great fault you are guilty of (in the judgement of that late reverent Iustice, Sir Edward Cooke) you will in no place give way to the Carre and Cart.¹³

Following the example of Sir Edward Coke and Charles I, Oliver Cromwell reinforced the King's proclamation with an ordinance 'for regulation of hackney coachmen' in 1654, and Charles II repeated the declaration in the year of his Restoration.¹⁴ Moreover, in 1662, the King and Parliament, in a renewed attempt to bring the unlicensed use of hackneys under the control of the city, licensed four hundred coaches to operate within London.¹⁵ But again this seems to have proved ineffective, with the number of rogue coachmen, operating without licenses, rising to the extent that James II felt compelled to issue yet another proclamation in 1687 for 'restraining the abuses of hackney coaches'.¹⁶ It would not be until the eighteenth century that some semblance of regulation brought coaches under the control of the city.¹⁷

trades including saddle and shoe-making. See also *The Grand Concern of England explained, in several Proposals offered to the Consideration of Parliament* (London 1673): 'these coaches and caravans... have impoverished and ruined many thousands of families, whose subsistence depended upon the manufacturing of wool and leather, two of the staple commodities of the Kingdom' (p. 27).

¹³ Peacham, p. 32.

¹⁴ City of London Corporation, *Rules, directions and by-laws, devised, and made by the Court of Aldermen of the City of London, by vertue of the late ordinance of His Highnesse the Lord Protector, with consent of his Councill; for regulation of hackney coachmen, within the said City, and places adjacent* (London, 1654); Charles II, *By the King. A proclamation to restrain the abuses of hackney coaches in the cities of London, and Westminster, and the suburbs thereof* (London, 1660).

¹⁵ *A list of the 400 hackney-coaches licensed in July and August, 1662. by the commissioners appointed by the Kings Majesties commission* (London, 1664).

¹⁶ James II, *By the King, a proclamation for restraining the number and abuses of hackney coaches in and about the cities of London and Westminster, and the suburbs thereof, and parishes comprised within the Bills of Mortality* (London, 1687). See also *The Case of many coachmen in London and Westminster*

Beginning with Charles I, then, a prolonged struggle over city space was played out between those in authority, who sought to retain social/spatial order, and those who practiced the expansive unregulated coach trade, which continued to grow according to demand. This contest was marked by an ideological desire to preserve aristocratic privilege at the expense of middle class circulation, just as much as it was about reducing congestion. The coach, as an emblem of status, thus signified not only an inconvenient physical mobility, but also a social mobility, which challenged the gentry's and aristocracy's presumptions of spatial control. Worse than this, contrary to the coach's early purpose as a conveyance for noble ladies, it was becoming increasingly popular, not only with aristocratic women, but with women of a lower status. By 1599, according to the Swiss diarist, Thomas Platter, sightings of women travellers had become commonplace. Women in England, Platter observed, 'have far more liberty than in other lands and know just how to make good use of it for they often stroll out or drive by coach in very gorgeous clothes and the men must put up with such ways and may not punish them for it'.¹⁸ Here Platter hits upon the qualities that make coaches and women the objects of popular scorn throughout the seventeenth century: visibility and 'liberty'. But, as we have seen, the coach was also designed to conceal. It was, therefore, not just its ability to demonstrate social and physical mobility, which marked the coach out as potentially dangerous. In what follows, I examine negative responses to female travel by coach during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. More specifically, I analyse these responses as they appear in the works of the urban poets and playwrights, who took the social spaces of contemporary London as their artistic and moral subject – in particular, the works of Ben Jonson and John Marston. When extended to the transport of women, the coach's paradoxical relationship with the visible and the elusive, I suggest, generated a number of stock responses from masculine observers. But did this new development in domestic transport change the way early modern women engaged with public space in any meaningful sense?

and within the weekly bills of mortality, licensed according to the Act for Licensing Hackney-Coaches, but yet turn'd out by the present commissioners (London, 1670).

¹⁷ Not until the end of the seventeenth century did anything like ordered state networks of transport emerge. Samuel Pepys was the first architect of a functioning state navy, see N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: a Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), pp. 95-112. The postal system was in the early stages of development and stage coaches and hackneys remained disordered; see Jackman & Chaloner, pp. 93-139.

¹⁸ Quoted in Guido Ruggiero, *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), p. 193.

I

Platter's expression of surprise at the seeming 'liberty' of English women occurred in the midst of London's demographic and geographic expansion, a process that necessarily involved a variety of social/spatial movements. Laura Gowing has written of how London, at this time, provided spaces for a moveable population of women, noting that 'it was a commonplace that the city's social and working conditions ran counter to many of the restrictions that hedged or safeguarded women in more tightly-knit, less mobile communities'.¹⁹ The coach's contribution to this condition of female mobility, rather than being free from censure, as Platter seems to suggest, was received with a great deal of hostility. For example, in Stephen Gosson's collection of misogynistic satires, *Pleasant quippes for vpstart newfangled gentle-women* (1595), women's degraded bodies become the reason for which they must travel in a coach:

To carrie all this pelfe and trash,
because their bodies are vnfit,
Our wantons now in coaches dash,
From house to house, from street to street,
Were they of state, or were they lame,
To ride in coach they need not shame.

But being base, and sound in health,
they teach for what they coaches make:
Some thinks perhaps to shew their wealth,
Nay, nay, in them they pennance take,
As poorer truls, must ride in cartes,
So coaches are for prouder hearts.²⁰

Sharing the concerns of the Royal and City proclamations, Gosson identifies the passenger of the poem as being neither 'of state' nor 'lame', neither noble nor infirm. 'Unfit' to occupy the street, the 'wantons' at whom he directs his venom are of a class with aspirations or pretensions to wealth or nobility. Enamoured of that symbol of status, the coach, the 'upstart new-fangled gentlewoman' exhibits a pride and ambition, which threatens her designated societal and spatial role.

¹⁹ Laura Gowing, "'The Freedom of the Streets': Women and Social Space, 1560-1640", in *Londinopolis, C.1500 - C.1750: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London*, ed. by Mark S. R. Jenner & Paul Griffiths (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 130-54.

²⁰ Stephen Gosson, *Pleasant quippes for vpstart newfangled gentle-women* (London 1595), B2.

This relationship between female spatial/social mobility and the coach as an emblem of improved status similarly informs the plot of George Chapman, Ben Jonson and John Marston's *Eastward Ho* (1605), in the character of Gertrude. The daughter of a Goldsmith, Gertrude is tricked into a disingenuous marriage to the 'thirty-pound knight' Sir Petronel Flash with the promise of becoming a Lady, and attaining both a castle and coach.²¹ Her naive hopes are, however, dashed as it transpires that Sir Petronel has neither land nor a castle, and has married her for her dowry, with which he intends to furnish his voyage to Virginia. In her desire for a coach, Gertrude becomes exactly the same type as Gosson's 'newfangled gentlewoman', vainly drawn towards an ideal of social betterment by the trappings of wealth. Assuming the postures of a Lady 'taking coach' in 3.2, her over-determined exhortations of 'My coach for the love of heaven, my coach! In good truth I shall swoon else', and 'I long for a coach so', recall Gosson's lines on the deceitful and proud nature of the travelling woman (3.2.30-35). Being 'base and sound in health' rather than 'lame', Gertrude feigns a bodily, and hence moral, weakness that requires immediate refuge in a coach. The occasion of Gertrude's social and moral transgressions, enacted through coach travel, synchronises with the play's wider thematic concerns about the social spaces of London. James D. Mardock argues that, '*Eastward Ho* places city comedy's characteristic concern with the morality of class interaction within a framework that highlights the role of the spatial practice of dramatic art; it implicitly claims that drama is the medium through which early modern London is to be most effectively interpreted and created'.²² The tensions of class together with a heightened sense of location and space combine throughout the play, establishing a pattern of opposites between east and west, and the city and the country, as well as framing the characters as 'opposing moral exemplars'.²³ Although critics have pointed to *Eastward Ho*'s moral ambivalence, being neither a straightforward satire on aristocratic intemperance nor middle class prudence and thrift, the site of London remains, unquestionably, the play's moral centre.²⁴ In this respect, the city represents a site of negotiation between social groups. Because they reject the city, the ill-fated journeys of Sir Petronel and Quicksilver - eastward by water and then westward

²¹ The term 'Thirty-pound knight' refers to James I's 'traffic' in Knighthoods. See John Marston, Ben Jonson & George Chapman, *Eastward Ho*, ed. by R. W. Van Fossen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), p. 157. Further references to the play are taken from this edition.

²² James D. Mardock, *Our Scene is London: Ben Jonson's City and the Space of the Author* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 59.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ For critical interpretations see Mihoku Suzuki, *Subordinate Subjects: Gender, the Political Nation, and Literary Form in England, 1588-1688* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), pp. 56-58; Alexander Leggat, *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 47-51; Jill Phillips Ingram, *Idioms of Self-Interest: Credit, Identity and Property in English Renaissance Literature*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 17- 43; Jean Elizabeth Howard, *Theatre of a City the Places of London Comedy, 1596-1642* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), pp. 99-105.

towards Virginia - and Gertrude and her retinue - eastward in search of an imaginary castle - are met with shipwreck, imprisonment and bankruptcy.

London is the place that at the end of the play re-unites the wandering characters in a spirit of reconciliation, as they are re-instated into the social institutions of matrimony and family. Conversely, the coach, being in-between spaces, a structure physically displaced from a fixed location, signifies Gertrude's rejection of social and familial bonds. Her distaste for the city and its middle class citizenry is explicitly expounded in act 1 – 'Body o' truth, chitizens, chitizens! Sweet knight, as soon as ever we are married, take me to thy mercy out of this miserable chity' (1.2.138-142) – whilst her willing renunciation of family is similarly unambiguous: 'Thou ride in my coach? Or come down to my castle? Fie upon thee! I charge thee in my ladyship's name, call me sister no more' (2.2.99-101). As the ultimate symbol of displacement, Gertrude is reduced to living in her coach, outside of the noble society to which she aspired and the city she forsook. As her father sardonically observes: 'My daughter, his lady, was sent eastward, by land, to a castle of his i' the air (in what region I know not) and, as I hear, was glad to take up lodging in her coach, she and her two waiting women (her maid and her mother), like three snails in a shell' (4.2.19-24). Where the social satire of *Eastward Ho* may appear even-handed, the play's misogyny is without question. Gertrude, as a loud and domineering woman, oversteps the boundaries of class and the home in which she is expected to remain, and is punished accordingly.

The play's comical rendering of Gertrude's attraction to the coach was very much in tune with the period's widespread belief in the vehicle's desirability for young women. As an incentive towards marriage, the notion of owning a coach, as an insurmountably attractive prospect for new brides, became an entrenched feature of late seventeenth-century writings on matrimony.²⁵ In *Eastward Ho*, the gallant, Francis Quicksilver, expresses this assumption in his response to Sir Petronel's fleeting pangs of conscience – 'What will they think of me?' 'Think what they list', Quicksilver retorts,

They longed for a vagary
Into the country, and now they are fitted. So a
Woman marry to ride in a coach, she cares not if
She ride to her ruin. 'Tis the great end of many of
Their marriages; this is not the first time a lady has
Rid a false journey in her coach, I hope.
(3.2.208-13)

²⁵ See, for example, Samuel Bufford, *A discourse against unequal marriages* (London 1696), p. 26; A. Marsh, *The Ten Pleasures of Marriage* (London 1682), p. 62.

Marriage, it seems, provided women with the necessary cover for social interaction beyond the domestic sphere. Once women were married, the coach facilitated a public mobility, which appeared not to conflict with the period's moral conventions. However, Gertrude's quest for spatial and social mobility through marriage was repaid with banishment to empty space, to a social and geographical nowhere. For the play's satirists, the coach symbolises a violation of knowable places, and in effect becomes a no-place, a 'region' of the air, uprooted and snail-like in its mobility. In spite of the social cloak of matrimony, the spatial ambiguity of coaches, and their carriage of women, remains disconcerting.

John Taylor's attentions were similarly attracted to this particular attribute of the coach. Seizing upon the dubious morality of female travel, he sought to tarnish the coach trade's reputation. Of all his complaints in *The World Runs on Wheelles*, accusations of promiscuity and prostitution appear with the most frequency. The coach is thus described as a 'running Bawdy-house of abhominaton' and 'vices infection', and given the collective terms 'Hackney carrie-Knaues and Hurrie-Whores'.²⁶ According to Taylor, coaches were popular with prostitutes, not just as a means of transportation but as spaces in which to ply their trade, going so far as to lament their abandonment of the watermen to this end: 'A Whores money is as good as a Ladies, and a Bawdes as current as a Midwiues: Tush those times are past, and our Hackney *Coaches* haue hurried all our Hackney customers quite out of our reach towards the North parts of the Citie, where they are daily practised in the Coach'.²⁷ To conclude the pamphlet, he offers an extended comparison of the prostitute with the coach: 'A *Coach* hath loose Curtaines, a Whore hath a loose Gowne, a *Coach* is lac'd and fring'd, so is a Whore: A *Coach* may be turn'd any way, so may a Whore... A *Coach* breakes mens neckes: a Whore breakes mens backs'.²⁸ Appropriating the former clientele of the watermen, the coach capitalises on the economic possibilities of urban circulation. Reaching the northern parts of the city, it follows paths that Taylor cannot replicate on the limited waterways. As it is unrestricted in its mobility, Taylor paints it as loose, without spatial or moral boundaries.

It is also the structure of the coach that makes it so predisposed towards immorality: 'the Coach is a close hipocrite, for it hath a couer for any Knauery, and Curtaines to vaile or shadow any wickednesse'.²⁹ The 'Curtaines' and 'shop windows of leather',

²⁶ Taylor, pp. 5-18.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 11.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 29.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 19.

which worked to obscure and ‘shadow’ passengers within an already enclosed space, allowed for the public fulfilment of acts of debauchery, ‘in the midst of the street, as it were in the Stewes, or a Nunnery of *Venus Votaries*’.³⁰ It is precisely this physical attribute of the coach, its capacity for concealment, along with its freedom of movement, which aroused the apprehensions of male moralists, presenting an entirely new problem of propriety that, for the first time, centred on a method of transport. In the urban literature of the period we therefore find the coach routinely imagined existing in a kind of sexual carnivalesque, an alternative landscape within London, revelling in dark and permissive allusions which evoke Bahktin’s ‘lower bodily stratum’.³¹ The fear that wives, equipped with a new coach, might commit adultery or make cuckolds of their husbands is a common motif. In Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair* (printed 1640), the horse-courser, Knockem, points both to the stereotype that informed *Eastward Ho*, the new wife’s lust for a coach, as well as to the coach’s sheltered, vice-enabling design:

O, they are as common as wheelbarrows where there are great dunghills. Every pettifoggers wife has ’em, for first he buys a coach that he may marry, and then he marries that he may be made cuckold in’t – for if their wives ride not to their cuckolding, they do ’em no credit. Hide, and be hidden, ride, and be ridden, says the vapour of experience.³²

Knockem’s remark is symptomatic of the play’s obsession with city space, the mobile geography of the fair, which presents a multitude of dramatic possibilities for deception and roguery. Jonson’s animosity towards the coach is here felt on several registers, as the earthy language of the marketplace aligns the vehicle with dung, as well as sexual transgression. John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623), although not a city play, still betrays a similar anxiety, as a madman reflects upon an image which would not be out of place in Webster’s London: ‘Woe to the Caroach, that brought home my wife from the Masque, at three a clocke in the morning, it had a large Feather-bed in it’.³³ Not only are the parameters of space subverted here, but so are the strictures of time. Webster’s ‘Caroach’ thus allows for a woman to travel undetected during the unseemly and dangerous hours of night.

³⁰ Taylor, p. 21.

³¹ Mikhail Bahktin, *Rabelais and his World* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 368-457.

³² Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair* in *The Alchemist and Other Plays*, ed. by Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 4.5.89-94. Subsequent quotations from Jonson’s plays are taken from this edition.

³³ John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. by Trevor Griffiths (London: Nick Hern Books, 1996) 4.2.104-106.

For John Marston, it is the coach itself that becomes the object of female desire, a sexual implement, which along with the dildo, threatens to eliminate the husband's marital utility: 'Shall *Lucea* scorne her husbands luke-warme bed? | (Because her pleasure being hurried | In Ioultling Coach, with glassie instrument | Doth farre exceede the *Paphian* blandishment)'.³⁴ In Marston's poem, the coach is a palpable threat to masculinity, as he envisions the role of the husband reduced to insignificance. His comic impression hints at the possibility of the vehicle becoming a site of exclusive femininity, a society of women. That the coach appeared as a legitimating device, not just for female public movement, but for decadent assignations, drew the ire of the misogynist, Gondarino, in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *The Woman Hater* (1607). In 3.2, like Taylor, he derides the coach for its similarity to a brothel: 'a bare-headed Coachman, that sits like a signe, where great Ladies are to bee sold within.'³⁵ But he also pinpoints the coach's seeming acceptability, being a disguise for impropriety, as the reason for his disgust: 'mai'st thou be bar'd the lawfull lechery of thy Coach for want of Instruments.'³⁶ Female transgression of the domestic sphere again accounted for such anxieties, with coaches mediating a form of public mobility that was not easily subject to male surveillance. As a consequence, it seems only fitting that the coach, so spatially unstable in the real world, should be transposed to a carnivalesque space in the male literary imagination.

In spite of such negative representations, the mass of invective directed against women and coaches, in fact, stands as evidence of growing female autonomy within the public sphere, a new physical mobility enabled, in great measure, by the coach. This, in turn, would suggest that such stereotypes as a woman's insatiable desire to travel by coach might not be entirely unfounded, given the opportunities for spatial or even sexual freedom it could afford. Gertrude would, therefore, have been fully aware, in the same way as 'the newfangled gentlewoman', of the potential of coach travel for exploiting new spaces or evading watchful husbands. Quicksilver's bawdy pun – 'this is not the first time a lady has Rid a false journey in her coach, I hope' – attests to a growing belief in this new female practice.

³⁴ John Marston, *The Scourge of Villainie* (London, 1598) 3.121. Michel de Montaigne had similarly hinted at the stimulating sensations a journey by coach could elicit in the female sex. Considering the work of Greek women weavers, he wrote that the 'stirring which their labour so sitting doth give them, doth rouze and sollicite them, as the jogging and shaking of their coach doth our ladies'. Montaigne, 'Of the Lame or Cripple' in John Florio, *Essays written in French by Michael Lord of Montaigne* (London, 1613), p. 583.

³⁵ Francis Beaumont & John Fletcher, *The Woman Hater* (London, 1607), 3.2, sig. E3v.

³⁶ Beaumont & Fletcher, 5.4, sig. K3r.

II

The abundant catalogue of literary slights upon the female traveller in this period drew inspiration from popular spatial understandings of morality, from the separation of public and private spheres. In the conduct literature and advice manuals of the period, one of the most repeated aphorisms appeals to women for the need to remain in domestic, enclosed spaces. Peter Stallybrass has written of how the ‘surveillance of women concentrated upon three specific areas: the mouth, chastity, the threshold of the house’, and that these ‘areas were frequently collapsed into each other’.³⁷ Sermons and conduct books were, therefore, careful to point out the differences between the chaste, silent and hidden woman, and her loud, visible and lustful counterpart. For William Gouge, in *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622), the Fall provided proof that women should be kept under male surveillance: ‘she who first drew man into sin should now be subject to him lest by the like womanish weakness she fall again’.³⁸ In the *Godlie forme of householde government* (1612), the wayward wife was the ‘woman that gaddeth from house to house to prate’, whilst Barnabe Rich, in *My ladies looking glasse* (1616), equated the mobile woman with promiscuity: ‘The harlot is mooveable... *now she is in the house, now in the streetes, now she lieth in waite in everie corner*, she is still gadding from place to place, from company to company’.³⁹

When it came to the practicalities of everyday life, however, the theoretical gendered division of public and private could not be maintained. Women of necessity had to go outdoors, and even in the most vehement of conduct books, concessions were made for ‘Mutual visits’, which ‘may often be necessary, and so (in some degree may be several harmless and healthful recreations)’.⁴⁰ From the late sixteenth century the coach appeared to fulfil this function and, as we have seen, was largely considered an invention for the transportation of aristocratic ladies and their closest attendants. But for travelling women, the introduction of the coach further complicated the issue of public and private spheres. As Henry Peacham observed, coaches were considered

³⁷ Peter Stallybrass, ‘Patriarchal Territories: the Body Enclosed’ in *Re-Writing the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan & Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 123-42 (p. 126).

³⁸ William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), pp. 268-9.

³⁹ J. Dod & R. Cleaver, *A Godlie forme of household government* (London, 1612), p. 222. Barnabe Rich, *My ladies looking glasse; wherein may be discerned a wise man from a fool, a goode woman from a bad* (London, 1616), p. 43.

⁴⁰ Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling* (London, 1673), p. 167.

seates of Honour for the sound, beds of ease for the lame, sick and impotent, the moving closets of brave Ladies, and beautifull virgins, who in common sence, are unfit to walke the streets, to be justled to the kennell, by a sturdie Porter, or breathed upon by every base *Bisogno*.⁴¹

As ‘moving closets’, coaches appeared to confirm the accepted paradigm of female enclosure expounded by such figures as Gouge and Rich. Its domestic associations aligned it, theoretically, with the morally acceptable space of the home. But as a structure that was neither outdoors, nor indoors, public nor private, and which inhabited the liminal domain of transportation, it managed to subvert the theoretical and actual confines of enclosure, exposing women to the very streets upon which they were deemed ‘unfit to walke’ by Peacham.

Michel Foucault’s conception of the heterotopia provides a useful model for thinking about the space of the early modern coach, inasmuch as its mobility distinguished it from the static sites it traversed.⁴² Heterotopias, according to Foucault, are ‘real places that contest and reverse sites within a given society’.⁴³ ‘Absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about’, these heterotopias, or ‘counter-sites’, include gardens, cemeteries, libraries and museums’, and are places which can simultaneously allude to and undermine the greater space from which they derive.⁴⁴ Writing of that paragon of early modern mobility, the ship, Foucault noted that it was the ‘heterotopia par excellence’, a ‘floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself’; a definition equally applicable to the coach.⁴⁵ For Foucault, the ship was, historically, the ‘greatest reserve of the imagination’, and a necessary instrument for the development of an inverted experience of space and society.⁴⁶ But the coach too, in its transgression of spatial norms, became a site which stirred the literary imagination and cast a different light on urban space, through its disparate and unorthodox social practices. Just as the ship opened up a new world of spatial experience beyond the shores of Europe, the coach performed a similar ‘opening up’ of the domestic space of the city.

Foucault’s lecture, ‘Of Other Spaces’, was published posthumously in 1986 and, as a consequence, the ideas of this text are often regarded as fragments of thoughts that were

⁴¹ Peacham, p. 18.

⁴² Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (Spring, 1986), 22-27.

⁴³ Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: a Philosophical History* (California: University of California Press, 1997), p. 300.

⁴⁴ Foucault, p. 27.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

left undeveloped. The notion of the heterotopia – and particularly the ship as heterotopia – however, remains compelling in the way it accounts for the impact new technologies of transport had on social space and the imagination. In this respect, it is instructive to consider the coach in light of Foucault’s conception of heterotopia, given the transformative effects of the coach on spatial and moral practices. For early modern men and women, the coach could at once exist as domestic space and brothel, as a moving home, or a site of corruption.

In Jonson’s city comedy, *Epicene* (1616), the heterotopia of the coach enables the literary realisation of just such an alternative, inverted society – in this case, a society of women. Of all Jonson’s city comedies, which include the coach as a dramatic device, *Epicene* represents most fully its transformative possibilities in urban space. The Lady Collegiates, a group of aristocratic ladies, endowed with an intellectual and spatial freedom that reflects the new mobile trends of the early modern city, form the object of his satire. But this satirical portrayal betrays Jonson’s conception of coach travel as one of the central elements in the advancement of a suspect female independence. If women can move freely in their own spaces, it follows that they can develop their own ideas and a distinct sense of self, independently of their husbands. As Truewit notes at the beginning of the play, it is not only their spatial freedoms, but also the exercise of their wits, which make the Collegiates so threatening: ‘A new foundation, sir, here i’ the town, of ladies that call themselves the Collegiates, an order between courtiers and country madams, that live from their husbands and give entertainment to all the Wits and Braveries o’ the time...’⁴⁷

Jonson’s city comedies, which served as a model for Restoration comedy, facilitated the transferral of the image of coach dwelling ‘town woman’ into the popular consciousness of the seventeenth century, with such promiscuous characters later becoming stalwarts of the Restoration stage.⁴⁸ For these plays, which thrived upon topical, satirical

⁴⁷ Jonson, *Epicene in The Alchemist and Other Plays*, ed. by Gordon Campbell, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 1.1.67-71.

⁴⁸ Robert Shoemaker notes that in the late seventeenth century ‘social distinctions between the west end and the City of London crystallized in gentry discourse into that between the polite “Town” and the commercial “City”, a distinction which had important gender dimensions in that the mercantile “City” was seen as...masculine’, while the polite, refined and sociable ‘Town’ was seen as feminine. See Shoemaker, ‘Gendered Spaces: Patterns of Mobility and Perceptions of London’s Geography, 1660-1750’, in *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598-1720*, ed. by J. F. Merritt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 144-65 (p. 162). In an episode that reverses the punitive housing of Gertrude in her coach in *Eastward Ho*, William Wycherley’s Lady Flippant chooses her coach above all other forms of accommodation in Act 1. See Wycherley, *Love in a Wood, or St James’ Park* (London, 1672). In Thomas D’Urfey’s *A fool’s preferment* the wife of Sir Jasper Lost-all, reacts with disbelief to the news that her debt addled husband has lost her coach, and with it her sense of self. ‘Was there ever such a brute seen’, she exclaims ‘could have the Barbarity to lose my dear Coach and Horses, without which, alas! What is a Lady? How can a

allusions, however, the ‘town woman’ was not a mere fiction, but had some grounding in reality.⁴⁹ Like *Eastward Ho* and *Bartholomew Fair*, the urban geography of London is essential to the action of the play, which investigates the dramatic possibilities of domestic, private space pitted against the outdoors.⁵⁰ Adam Zucker posits the notion that the power struggles enacted by the characters of *Epicene* are organised by way of their ‘relationship to urban spaces’.⁵¹ The tensions between male and female, public and private and noise and silence are the driving forces behind the action of the play, as the private and silent world of the irritable, noise deploring Morose becomes eroded by loud, visible women, his new wife Epicene (who it transpires is a boy in drag) and the schemes of the heroic male characters, which ultimately result in his emasculation. It is for the Collegiates, however, that Jonson reserves his most moralising satire.

As the antithesis of the feminised Morose, whose self-imposed domestic confinement finds him in the role traditionally reserved for women, the Collegiates possess their own coaches and frequent the fashionable areas of urban London. The private world of Morose, in which he has barricaded and fortified himself, stands in stark contrast to the bustle of the city: ‘Why, sir, he has chosen a street to lie in so narrow at both ends that it will receive no coaches, nor carts, nor any of these common noises’ (1.1. 152-154). For the Collegiates, however, coaches signify their control of the public sphere, a ready access to urban destinations, which can be called upon at short notice:

CENTAURE But when will you come, Morose?

EPICENE Three or four days hence, madam, when I have got me a coach and horses.

HAUGHTY No, tomorrow, good Morose, Centaure shall send you her coach.

MAVIS Yes faith, do, and bring Sir Dauphine with you.

(4.6.14-19)

Lady subsist without her Coach and Horses? A Husband! A Clown.’ See D’Urfey, *A fool’s preferment* (London, 1688) 2.1. See also Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (London, 1674), 2.1, and Charles Sedley’s *The Mulberry Garden* (London, 1668), 1.1.

⁴⁹ Notable women who frequently travelled by coach include Nell Gwyn, who was set upon by an angry mob in Oxford, whilst in her coach. See James Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 253. Andrew Marvell, in *Last Instructions to a Painter*, imagines Anne Hyde with so ‘wide a rump’, that she is mistaken by her pages for her own coach. See Turner, p. 187. Lady Castlemaine was routinely spotted in Hyde Park, travelling in her coach and engaging in assignations. See Will Pritchard, *Outward Appearances: the Female Exterior in Restoration London* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 2008), pp. 138-40.

⁵⁰ On Jonson’s attention to the dramatic exposition of the domestic sphere see Ann C. Christensen, “‘The Doors are Made against You’”: Domestic Thresholds in Jonson’s Plays’ *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association*, 18 (1997), 153-78. Mardock, pp. 67-68.

⁵¹ Adam Zucker, ‘The Social Logic of Ben Jonson’s *Epicene*’, *Renaissance Drama*, 33 (2004), 37-62 (pp. 46-48).

Epicene's assured expectation of a coach and horses alludes to an earlier conversation in 4.3, in which the Collegiates extol the pleasures of their libertinism and boast of 'managing' and 'taming' their 'wild males', in language that reverses the common trope of a husband mastering his wife (4.3.17-26):

CENTAURE Let him allow you your coach and four horses, your woman,
your chambermaid, your page, your gentleman-usher, your French cook,
and four grooms.

HAUGHTY And go with us to Bedlam, the china houses, and to the
Exchange.

CENTAURE It will open the gate to your fame.

HAUGHTY Here's Centaure has immortalized herself with the taming of her
wild male.

(4.3.19-26)

Here, Jonson points to the scandalous female appropriation of the outdoors and urban space, the access to a coach, visits to 'china houses' and the commercial locale of the 'Exchange'. But also the evocative image of a gate, opening to the public 'fame' of Epicene as a Lady Collegiate, the very antithesis of silence and enclosure.

The scene ends with a bawdy discourse on the Ladies' 'plurality of servants', on whom they confer sexual favours, the uncontrolled promiscuity of the Collegiates, being allied to the public spaces of coach and theatre: 'and who will wait on us to coach then? Or write or tell us the news then? Make anagrams of our names, and invite us to the Cockpit, and kiss our hands all the playtime, and draw their weapons for our honours?' (4.3.41-44). In a play so concerned with role reversal, the heterotopic coach acts as a catalyst for an inverted experience of London society. Because of their mobility in masculine public spaces, the Collegiates assume the male privileges of speech, space and sexual license, forming a disorderly mirror of patriarchal society. But, as Truewit reminds us, such gendered spatial transgressions were figured in terms of an irregular sexuality: 'cry down or up what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion with most masculine or rather hermaphroditical authority' (1.1. 71-73).

Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones argue that, 'in most social contexts the "hermaphrodite" woman was seen as a monster' who was 'identified by the wearing of men's clothes and the usurpation of men's privileges'.⁵² In its movements throughout

⁵² Peter Stallybrass & Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Fetishizing Gender: Constructing the Hermaphrodite in Renaissance Europe', in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. by Julia Epstein & Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 80-111 (p. 100).

the city, appearing as both place and no place, the coach, inexorably, added to this sense of moral confusion. By transgressing the ‘privileged’ male worlds of mobility and the outdoors, women were considered monstrous and sexually dangerous. In the early seventeenth century, there existed a particular anxiety regarding the volatile nature of gender, which was typified in the 1620 pamphlet, *Hic Mulier*. As an attack upon the ‘Man Woman’, the pamphlet begins by defining the qualities of the virtuous female, all of which conform to the idea of security, concealment and immobility: ‘You, that armed with the infinite power of Vertue, are Castles impregnable, Riuers unsaileble, Seas immoueable, infinit treasures, and inuincible armies.’⁵³ On the other hand, the revulsion inspired by the ‘man woman’ springs from her appropriation of male public spaces: ‘You that are the gilt durt, which imbroders Play-houses, the painted Statues which adorne Caroches, and the perfumed Carrion, that bad men feede on in brothels: ‘tis of you, I entreat, and of your monstrous deformitie’.⁵⁴ The coach, in its carriage of such ‘dead’ objects, ‘painted statues’ and ‘perfumed Carrion’, is condemned alongside the foremost public locations of immorality, the playhouses and brothels.

Thomas Adams, similarly lamenting hermaphroditical trends in fashion, in his contemporaneous *Mysticall Bedlam or The World of Mad Men* (1615), wrote of the indeterminate gender of those who passed by in coaches:

The Proud Is the next *Mad-man*, I would haue you take view of in this *Bedlam*.
The *proud man*? or rather the *proud woman*: or rather *hac aquila*, both he and
shee. For if they had no more euident distinction of sexe, then they haue of
shape, they would be all man, or rather all woman: for the *Amazons* beare away
the Bell: as one wittily, *Hic mulier* will shortly bee good latine, if this
transmigration hold: For whether on horsebacke, or on foot, there is no great
difference: but not discernable out of a Coach.⁵⁵

A year later, in 1616, William Goddard published the following satirical verse, which shares the concerns of Adams and *Hic Mulier*, invoking the hermaphrodite in explicit terms:

To see Morilla in hir Coatch to ride,
With hir long locke of haire upon one side,
With hatt and feather worne ith’ swaggring’st guise,
With butt’ned bodies skirted dublett-wise

⁵³ *Hic Mulier, or the Man Woman* (London, 1620), p. 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Thomas Adams, *Mysticall Bedlam or The World of Mad Men* (London, 1615), p. 50.

Unmask't and sitt ith'boote without a fann,
 Speake: could you judge her lesse then bee some man?
 If lesse? Then this I'm sure you'd Iudge at least,
 Shee was part man, parte woman; part a beast.⁵⁶

Stallybrass and Jones acknowledge the absence of a definitive gender, or 'absolute categorical fixity' of sex in the Renaissance, arguing instead that gender was constructed by cultural signifiers, such as clothing, language and space.⁵⁷ It is through her accoutrements, dress and occupation of masculine space, that Morilla is deemed part man, part woman and part beast. With the female passenger sitting exposed, 'unmask't' and in the boot (a seat at the rear of the vehicle), the coach is that enabling instrument, which allows for the public demonstration of masculine/feminine lascivious dress: the hat and feather of the gallant and the loose French doublet similarly reviled in *Hic Mulier*.⁵⁸ The coach was, therefore, particularly evocative of the 'negative' female hermaphrodite – as an accoutrement that was generally associated with women, but employed in masculine space.

John Marston's satirical *Scourge of Villanie* (1598), had earlier drawn attention to the double-character of the woman enclosed within a coach, its hidden nature together with its public function providing the basis of the poem's satirical questioning:

Yon effeminate sanguine *Ganimede*,
 Is but a Beuer, hunted for the bed.
 Peace *Cynick*, see what yonder doth approach,
 A cart? a tumbrell? *no a Badged coach*.
 What's in't? some man. *No, nor yet woman kinde*,
 But a celestiall Angell, faire refinde.
 The deuill as soone. Her maske so hinders mee
 I cannot see her beauties deitie. (158-65)

Marston identifies the passenger as an 'effeminate Ganimede', the mythological androgynous object of Jove's affections. As the 'Badged coach' (adorned with heraldic arms) approaches, it is confused for both a cart and a 'tumbrell', a type of backwards tilting cart, but also an instrument of punishment, which according to John Cowell's

⁵⁶ William Goddard, 'Dogges from the Antippedes' in *A Mastif vvhelp and other ruff-island-lik currs* (London, 1616), ll. 1-8.

⁵⁷ Stallybrass & Jones, pp. 105-6.

⁵⁸ See *Hic Mulier*, p. 4.

dictionary was reserved for ‘scolds and unquiet women’.⁵⁹ In her disavowal of the domestic sphere, the travelling woman also threatens to break her enforced silence, a circumstance that leads to Marston’s misogynistic fantasy of the coach as a form of public castigation. But the poem’s sense of confused urgency, as the poet struggles to identify the passenger, also suggests an absence of time and the presence of motion, as the vehicle passes beyond the viewer’s gaze. It continues:

Now that is off, shee is so vizarded,
So steep’d in Lemons-iuyce, so surphuled
I cannot see her face, vnder one hood
Too faces, but I neuer vnderstood
Or saw, one face vnder two hoods till now,
Tis the right semblance of old *Ianus* brow
Her mask, her vizard, her loose-hanging gowne
For her loose lying body, her bright spangled crown
Her long slit sleeue, stiffe busk, puffe verdingall,
Is all that makes her thus angelicall. (166-75)

In its fetishistic attention to the woman’s clothing, the poem is simultaneously lusting and reviling. Concealed behind a mask, a vizard, cosmetics, beneath a hood and within a coach, Marston appears to be concerned with seeing rather than concealing this indecipherable figure, with his repeated pronouncement: ‘I cannot see her’. ‘Steep’d in Lemons-iuyce’ and ‘surphuled’, she has become physically distorted to the point of comparison with the Roman god, Janus, popularly depicted with two faces. But by the closing lines of the poem, Marston is in no doubt as to the angelic state of the female addressee. Her mobility, clothing and the accoutrements of concealment are dangerous, a facade, which simultaneously serves to blur the lines of gender (for example the phallic ‘stiffe busk’), whilst masquerading as suitable accessories for female public exposure. For Marston, the female body remains a site of condemnation, unfit for the public domain. A sentiment evinced by his apparent incredulity in seeing this hooded figure, ‘hooded’ by a coach: ‘I never understood, | Or saw, one face under two hoods till now’.

In the literature of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, particularly in writings concerning urban London, the travelling woman is thus portrayed as a ‘type’, who possesses common features and denotes a dangerous instability of gender. She is a

⁵⁹ For tumbrel as cart see Gervase Markham, *Markhams farwell to husbandry* (London, 1620), p. 11. As a form of punishment see John Cowell, *The interpreter: or booke containing the signification of words* (London, 1607), V3.

collection of parts, made from cosmetics and appurtenances which confuse her gender, instead of remaining hidden she is exposed, rather than keep silent she generates noise, she is both visible and audible within public spaces and is thus understood as sexually depraved.⁶⁰ The coach, rather than just another accessory of the gentlewoman, was invested with much greater meaning. It enabled women's passage into the public sphere, whilst appearing to confirm the patriarchal line on enclosure. It was both visible and obscured, used by those who wished to be seen, and provided privacy for those who wished to remain hidden. But, as a relatively new structure or heterotopic space, it defied attempts at gendered classification, just as its purpose, regular motion, kept it removed from a fixed location. It is for this reason that the coach was so central to the gender controversies of the early seventeenth century, as well as to the urban comedies of Jonson, Marston, Chapman, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher. For John Taylor, the coach could appear at once as the phallic, 'libidinous and lecherous' image of 'Priapus', whilst at the same time suggesting images of prostitution: 'a *Coach* is painted, so is a Whore'.⁶¹ In spite of the popular reaction against coach travel, the continuous stream of literature, which both criticised and satirically married the image of coach and 'town' woman, hints at how far the public sphere had opened up to female mobility by the early seventeenth century.

⁶⁰ See Turner, p. 58.

⁶¹ Taylor, p. 29.