

Article

“I Beg You Take Me from Here”: Spousal Abandonment and the Experience of Separation in Flight from Persecution

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Abstract: Spousal separation and abandonment was prevalent through the medieval and early modern worlds. However, women experienced the traumatic and damaging consequences of these separations far more often than their male counterparts. These instances were only multiplied by the political and social upheaval caused by the Reformation. This article explores this experience for women in the early modern era using Olympia Morata, among others, as windows through which to explore the reasons women were frequently abandoned, the lived reality of experiencing this separation, and the complex religious dynamics of early modern mobility as they related to gender.

Keywords: spousal abandonment; spousal separation; historical trauma; religious persecution; Olympia Morata

1. Introduction

A fascinating discrepancy exists in the early modern era regarding how men and women experienced the prospect, process, and ramifications of choosing to flee or to remain in response to threats such as persecution, war, and disease. Women were frequently forced to remain behind while their male counterparts were allowed to relocate, either permanently or temporarily (Reid and Holden 2010), not because women lacked the motivation to flee, but because imbalances of power in the early modern, and medieval worlds—economic, social, and religious—so often envisioned female mobility as a threat to established power (Howell 2019). Due to this, a trend existed in the early modern world of men fleeing from the threat of persecution and leaving behind their wives and children. Oftentimes this separation was envisioned as a temporary solution, but a significant number of women were abandoned for longer periods of time and many of them faced the legal ramifications of conversion that their husbands fled to avoid—making the lived experience of separation for women a far more painful experience compared to men. This ultimately created a gendered perspective regarding the prospect of flight from persecution, and, consequentially, an imbalance in the perceived religious devotion of women as flight came to be seen as emblematic of religious adherence.

This article will explore the dynamics surrounding gender and mobility in early modern Europe with special attention to spousal separation and the processes involved in navigating this difficult decision as it related to flight from religious persecution. In particular, it will use Olympia Morata as a case study. Olympia Morata was a child prodigy of Latin poetry in the court of Ferrara who later converted to Protestantism. Due to her education and literary notoriety, Morata’s case cannot be taken as typical for that of most women (though exploring the life of any individual who faced the dilemma of flight from persecution in-depth reveals that there is no “typical” experience). However, Morata’s atypicality may well prove several points beyond what a “traditional” woman’s experiences in this process might have entailed. This is because, despite her brilliance, fame, and connections, Morata was still almost entirely dependent upon her husband to secure her passage out of the Court of Ferrara when she faced intense scrutiny from the Inquisition. He even left her behind when he went to search out a physician’s posting for



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himself in Germany knowing that Morata was in danger. What is more, though she was an active and successful scholar, her flight was not viewed, even by herself, as an avenue for her to maintain and continue her academic career, which had taken a decidedly religious turn immediately prior to her flight. This is telling, as most early modern men often framed their flight as a way to continue to freely and faithfully pursue their religious callings (Leaman 2015). Rather, Morata envisioned flight from Ferrara as a desperate necessity to escape the threat of persecution and death that hung over her so long as she remained. Due to this, Morata believed her flight was worth the sacrifices it entailed regardless of outside perceptions of gendered expectations in regard to mobility. Thus, because she faced the prospect of flight in response to persecution, war, and plague, Olympia Morata represents a fascinating case study in how women's power was exceptionally limited in regard to mobility and how even a happy marriage expected a degree of spousal abandonment in instance of religious persecution, which, in this case, left Morata vulnerable in a city which she was under suspicion by the Inquisition for her Protestant views.

Morata's life also demonstrated the fragility of female power and influence as, despite her brilliance and station, when Morata wed, her husband came to be her main source of protection and his absence left her mired in an almost fatally dangerous situation. As she said in her own words in a desperate letter to her husband, 'But I, my husband, ask you over and over again not to leave me behind. Although others may feel secure, I am afraid, because I am certain that God is simply not on their side . . . Please, I pray, don't forget us, and I beg you to take me from here' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 111). Morata's lived experience of abandonment catalogues the very real terror that many women felt at the prospect and reality of spousal abandonment and illustrates the complex processes women in early modern Europe experienced when they attempted to relocate—even if they desired to go into exile (Spohnholz 2019). Alongside Morata, this article will offer an explanation for why female mobility was so curtailed in the early modern era based on medieval precedent and also include examples of comparative experiences of women throughout Europe in similar situations with the goal of exploring the gendered dynamics of mobility and the regularity with which they resulted in spousal separation and abandonment.

2. Background

Olympia Morata lived a fascinating life, and the fullest articulation of it can be found in the introduction to the translation of her collected works by Holt N. Parker (Morata and Parker 2003). Morata was born the daughter of Fulvio and Lucrezia Morata in 1526 or 1527. Fulvio, an exile of Mantua, was a scholar of both Greek and Latin in the court of Ferrara as well as an accomplished poet. At some point, Fulvio was introduced to the teachings of Huldrych Zwingli and, through them, came to be converted to Protestantism. Near the end of his life, he openly lectured on both Luther and Calvin. His open embrace of Protestantism eventually forced him to relocate back to Ferrara where he found safe harbor in the court under Duke Alfonso I. Here, Fulvio served as a tutor to the Duke's family and Morata became a companion to Anna, granddaughter of the Duke.

Olympia Morata was seen as an ideal companion to the royal Anna, not just because of her father's academic talents, but, in large part, because of her own. Morata was considered a prodigy because of her brilliant mastery of both Greek and Latin at a young age. Her first public oration occurred before she was fourteen and her tutors, along with her father, regarded her as their stylistic superior in many letters, not just to her, but also to their peers. Morata's time in the court of Ferrara produced a fair number of literary accomplishments and continued to bolster her reputation as a poet and a scholar. Her correspondence with scholars increased and they lavished her with praise, though always with a qualification. As one of her tutors, Celio Calcagnini, wrote to her, 'it is the particular custom of other young girls to pluck the flowers of spring from here and there and so weave multicolored garlands for themselves, you have gathered not those blossoms which expire within the hour and quickly die together but rather the immortal amaranths from the fertile meadows of the Muses, with which, like the finest mosaics, you adorned and interspersed your entire

oration' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 94). This is certainly complimentary, but it also clearly couched within the language of both her gender and her age. This is fair, in that she was young, as illustrated by her request that another teacher pass along her greetings to his puppy (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 89), and a woman. However, as she grew older, her male counterparts continued to emphasize her gender in their praise of her accomplishments. Despite this, her Greek and Latin are widely regarded as masterful constructions of rhetoric and her religious *Dialogues* is, unsurprisingly, exceptionally insightful.

The Court of Ferrara had served as safe haven for many Protestants due to the sympathies of Renee of France, who had established court there after marrying Ercole II, son of the Duke of Ferrara, Alfonso I. Renee was openly engaged with Protestant ideologies, even hosting John Calvin in the city in the 1530s, and it was suspected that she had converted (Woo 2015). However, things changed drastically after the death of her father-in-law and the ascension of Ercole to the Dukedom. He turned against his wife, drove many of her French supporters out of the city, and the Inquisition became increasingly active in the city—to the point that Renee was arrested by the Inquisition in 1554 and held until she recanted (Robin 2007). It was during this time of increased pressure upon Renee to give up her support of Protestantism (VanDoodewaard 2017) that the Court became an increasingly dangerous place for Morata. She noted in letters how quickly the Court turned on her and Morata, a very visible and notable Protestant in Renee's inner-circle, became a prime target of the new Duke's disfavor. It was only through the continued support of her childhood friend and Renee's daughter, Anna, that Morata was able to be supplied with the necessities of court, namely clothing. The increased pressure upon Protestants in Ferrara through the late 1540s and 1550s culminated in the execution of the Protestant humanist, Fanino (Blaisdell 1975). In response to this execution and the growing awareness that even the Duchess was not safe from the Inquisition, Morata recognized the only way to safely continue to openly express Protestant sentiments was to depart from Italy entirely. However, Morata's mobility as a woman was almost entirely dependent upon the decisions made by men in her life—a fact she would experience to her detriment.

In 1550, Morata married a young German medical student named Andreas Grunthler. Their relationship seemed, based on Morata and others' letters, to be a genuinely happy one. It was also fortuitously, or perhaps deliberately, timed as it coincided with the increasing pressure on Morata at the Court of Ferrara. Soon after their marriage, Grunthler returned to Germany seeking employment and left Morata behind in Ferrara. Morata, who was a famously openly Protestant icon in a city in which the Inquisition was growing increasingly active and whose social connections had been significantly damaged by the recent death of her father, was still abandoned by Grunthler. This was, in many ways, unsurprising, as it was common practice in the early modern era, which was still very much connected to the medieval mindset that viewed female mobility as a threat to the established political, societal, and spiritual order, as will be demonstrated.

3. Medieval Precedents

Scholarship is increasingly aware of the gendered facets of mobility and theoretical and historical examination of these trends, even outside of the medieval and early modern worlds, is of great value for understanding how gender and mobility interact (Uteng and Cresswell 2008). The practice of the male half of a spousal unit traveling or fleeing while the female figure remained behind has a long precedent in European and global history but was the norm in the medieval world (Webb 2003). Frequently, this was the common practice for both merchant and military endeavors, among a host of other reasons. Interestingly though, this was also commonly the case in religious matters—particularly the practice of pilgrimage (Craig 2009). While there was a long tradition of female pilgrims in the medieval world, there was also the commonly accepted practice of women remaining behind while their husbands went on pilgrimage alone, especially in the English-speaking world (Barr 2014). Nowhere is this more evident than in John Mirk's *Festial* (Mirk 1905). The *Festial* was one of the most popular works of pastoral sermons in Mirk's lifetime and beyond, a fact

clearly demonstrated by Barr and Miller (2018). The *Festial* promoted orthodox Catholic teachings in England through its compelling sermons, most of which drew upon the *Golden Legend* and which illustrate the constraints around female pilgrimage. This emphasis on safety for women left behind is ironic, given that it was common practice through most of the medieval era for men to flee an impending siege but for women to be left behind in order to continue the operations of the city (Tallett 1992; Hacker 1981).

Scholarship on female mobility in the medieval era has borne out these conclusions. Women were mobile, but that mobility was limited in comparison with male mobility (Morrison 2000; Clement 2009). The movement of women was much more carefully monitored and controlled than that of men (Gibbons 2014). Due to limitations on how women were incorporated into the civic structures of medieval and early modern Italy, relocation was an especially dangerous process with serious legal and financial ramifications (Feci et al. 2016). Thus, while there is a long history of women's mobility in Europe and the varying degrees of liberty they possessed over the course of the medieval world, the dominant trend regarding perceptions of women's mobility was one of fear—fear for their health if they should be forced to travel, especially if they were pregnant, and fear for what female mobility meant in a male hegemonic society (Binczewski 2020). It is not an accident that one of the earliest cited proofs of witchcraft in the *Malleus Maleficarum* is the ability of witches to travel abroad in the night with Diana and Herodias. These figures are not accidental choices. Diana in the medieval world came to be associated with the Scottish witch queen, Nicnevin, who, on Samhain, rode at the head of an army of female faeries to 'levit upon Christian men's flesh' (Mackay and Institoris 2009). Similarly, Herodias was a particular danger to men, as she uses her daughter's sexuality to demand the head of John the Baptist. Mobile women were dangerous (Broedel 2003). They were dangerous to themselves, to their children, and, most importantly, to men. These attitudes would be carried into the early modern era and be transposed onto the increasingly common issue of exile and flight in response to religious persecution with the consequence that men, who were mobile, would be able to relocate to escape the consequences of conversion but women, particularly spouses, were left behind.

4. Morata's Abandonment

As has been demonstrated, women's mobility medieval and early modern Europe was far more complex and difficult than their masculine counterpart's. Consequentially, when flight came to be necessary for the maintenance of newfound religious identities with the onset of the Protestant Reformation, women were far more disadvantaged in their ability to safely express religious identities than man. (Fehler et al. 2014; Spohnholz 2011; and Terpstra 2015). Women were not given the option to flee when their male counterparts were, and yet they still faced the consequences of their and their male counterpart's religious adherence. This was the situation in which Morata found herself in the court of Ferrara, abandoned by her husband not out of spite or marital disagreement, but simply by the accepted norms of mobility in the early modern era. Olympia Morata proves to be an excellent demonstration of this.

Morata was well aware of the danger in she was in at the Court of Ferrara and wrote multiple times to Grunthler begging for him to send for her. This is evidence that though Grunthler probably did not conceive of his travels without Morata to be abandonment, she most certainly did. She wrote in her first letter to Grunthler after his departure, 'I am so sad that you've left me and will be away for so long. Nothing more painful or serious could ever have happened to me' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 98). Less than a month after the previous letter, Morata wrote again, and I have included the entirety of this section as it conveys well the urgency with which she conveyed her desires to Grunthler,

'I want, my husband, to be with you. Then you would know clearly how great is my love for you. You cannot believe how madly I love you. There's nothing so bitter, so difficult, that I would not do it eagerly, if I could please you. So it is no surprise if this delay worries me, since true love hates and cannot stand

delay. I could put up with anything for your sake more easily than this. So I beg you, I beseech you by your faith, that you do everything in your power to make sure that we are together in your country this summer, just as you promised. If you love me as much as I love you, you will do it, I know'. Morata ([Morata and Parker 2003](#), p. 99)

Morata's letter is coded in the language of romantic love, a not uncommon tactic in this era ([Zagorin 1990](#)), and that is likely a motivating factor in her writing to Grunthler, but she is also writing to save her life. Thus, she wrote not only to Grunthler, but also to the master of the household in which he was staying as he searched for a permanent position to intercede on her behalf and convince Grunthler to send for her. This is much more explicit in her letters not to her husband. After her flight, Morata wrote to Curio, 'For if I had remained any longer in that court, it would have been all over for me and my salvation' ([Morata and Parker 2003](#), p. 107). Morata did this because she was aware that, while her gender apparently was reason enough to render her mobility entirely dependent upon her husband, it was not sufficient to shield her from the consequences of her Protestantism in the court of Ferrara. Thus, Morata was, despite her station, education, and connections, still subject to an abandonment that was not of her choosing.

5. Other Early Modern Examples

As previously stated, Morata was not alone in suffering from the consequences of spousal abandonment as it related to the threat of religious persecution. Women were only infrequently included in their male counterparts' plans to flee, and they were often even required to remain at home in order to facilitate the flight of their husbands, fathers, and brothers. This has been recognized in scholarship connected with modern experiences of exile, but it can be applied, as has been shown, to the medieval and early modern worlds as well ([Diaz 2020](#)). This was the case with Joan Helwys, the wife of Thomas Helwys, an early English Baptist, who left behind Joan and their seven children ([Estep 1996](#)). Both Joan and Thomas were converts to the Baptist faith through their friendship with John Smyth and had officially rejected the Anglican Church. With the Ascension of James I to the throne of England in 1603, the persecution of separatist churches in England increased; and, in 1606, that persecution reached the Helwyses.

The Helwyses and Smyth initially attempted to remain in England and worship in secret, but the authorities were intent on upholding Elizabeth's 1593 Due Obedience Act and it became clear to them that they had no choice but to flee if they wished to remain free and active worshippers in the manner they desired. So, in 1607, Thomas Helwys, Smyth, and about 40 followers fled to the Low Countries in order to be able to worship freely. It seems that that Helwys was the benefactor behind this trip. John Robinson, one of the followers who fled with Helwys, wrote, 'The truth is, it was Mr. Helwisse, who above all, either guides or others, furthered this passage into strange countries: and if any brought oars, he brought sails, as I could show in many particulars, and as all were acquainted with the manner of our coming over, can witness with me' ([Helwys and Early 2009](#)). Yet, even though it seems Thomas Helwys was the primary means by which this flight was possible, he left behind Joan.

Thomas and Joan's situation makes it clear that religious adherence was not the primary factor in deciding whether or not an individual chose to flee from persecution. Thomas fled to the Low Countries to avoid arrest so he could continue to openly practice his dissenting faith. However, Joan was also as equally committed to the early Baptist cause, as demonstrated by Thomas's documentation of their early conversations with another early English Baptist living with them, John Smyth. However, Joan was left behind to take care of their children while Thomas fled to Amsterdam. Thomas wrote on several occasions about the cost of leaving behind his family and how painful the experience of being separate from his wife and children was ([Helwys and Early 2009](#)). Most interestingly though, Helwys's flight did not spare his family the damages of his dissent as Joan, shortly after Helwys's flight, was arrested for her refusal to swear an oath in court because of her

Baptist faith (Powicke 1920). She was imprisoned for three months before being released to return to the care of her children. Even after her imprisonment and release, Joan and the children never made any attempt to join Helwys in Amsterdam, nor did he attempt to send for them, just as there is no evidence that Joan ever left the Baptist fold. Joan's story is remarkably similar to Morata's and further demonstrates the pain of separation that women were forced to experience, as they had since at least the medieval era, but also the added complications of religious persecution brought about by the Protestant Reformation.

There certainly were instances where those with the financial means did manage to travel as a familial unit to escape persecution (Christensen and Slights 2019). Several of the Marian exiles, including John Foxe, managed to accomplish this and the family units functioned with relative cohesion on the continent, though it was noted by some that the increased cost of having to pay for the entire family to return to England rather than just the husband and father delayed their homecoming once Elizabeth took the throne (Norwood 1944). Interestingly, political exiles seemed to more frequently flee with their entire families rather than just having the male figure escape, such as was the case with Walter Raleigh and Elizabeth Throckmorton who managed to flee with both their children and baggage (Wallace 1959). However, there were still cases, such as with Thomas and Joan, where even when the male figure possessed the financial means to bring along his family, as is demonstrated by Helwys's funding of almost all the other early English Baptists, they still chose not to do so (Wright 2001).

Another interesting example is that of Conrad Grebel, the Swiss Anabaptist, who left behind his wife and daughter when he fled Zurich. Grebel, after he officially broke with Huldrych Zwingli over the issue of Baptism, attempted to sneak out of the city of Zurich (Bender 1971). He and Felix Mantz had been hiding out at his home and had at last decided it was only safe that they flee. Mantz had left the night before and was hiding just outside the city walls. Grebel told his wife, Barbara, to cover for his absence and then set out. Or, at least, he attempted to. Grebel himself wrote,

‘I was going along with Felix Mantz, preparing to leave by night on Sunday. Then my wife (how Satan never rests) said she would betray Felix, who on the previous night had left my house again and gone to his own to await me there. I disregarded the great insolence of Eve and went out. She went through another door to father's house, where she stirred up no small tragedy over my departure’. Grebel (Bender 1971, p. 357)

Barbara was, as far as we know, not invited to flee. She thus understandably objected to the departure of her husband, which left her very vulnerable in his absence, both financially and because of her husband's dissidence. When she attempted to protect herself and her family, she became the archvillain of Grebel's narrative. For the rest of his life, Grebel resented his wife for her perceived betrayal and wrote in increasingly negative language regarding how she hindered his devotion to the true faith. Barbara's inability to flee became the only example her husband needed as evidence of her religious shortcomings, even as her husband made no attempts to facilitate that flight and actively put her in danger by his own. This demonstrates the impossible situation which women in the early modern era experienced of not being able to choose flight as an option to maintain their religious identities while simultaneously suffering the consequences of their husbands' decisions to do just that (Tarantino and Zika 2019). Their experience of separation was therefore amplified when compared to their husbands because it highlighted not only their dependency on men to choose where to go, but also their extreme limitations in their ability to safely express their religious convictions if they differed from the enforced faith of the region in which they lived.

6. Morata's Reunion

Though these cases are geographically distant from Morata's, they illustrate the commonality of the experience in which she found herself. Spousal abandonment became, with the onset of the Reformation, a mechanism by which women were made unequal partners in

the expression of their religious faith. Even when the husband's departure did not appear to be malicious and was done out of the residual norms of gendered mobility, the consequences were incredibly dire. Ultimately, however, Morata, unlike so many other women of the early modern era, was able to maintain her religious convictions publicly and gain passage away from the threat of persecution. Grunthler did send for her after several months when he had acquired a position in his hometown of Schweinfurt. Morata responded to the realities of her exilic life with a sense of both peace and wonder at the freedom that had now been afforded to her. She wrote, 'After being tossed about by many huge waves, I have arrived in Germany, as though in a harbor' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 106). In another letter, to a different recipient, she echoed this thought more fully, 'I am completely at liberty here. I spend the whole day taking pleasure with the Muses and no other business takes me away from them. Very often I devote myself to divine studies, deriving more profit and pleasure from the latter than the former' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 105).

It is also worth noting that it was not just gendered roles in regard to religion that Morata was able to defy via her exile; by leaving her native Italy, Morata was able to find a place in the world that fit neither of the twinned expectations of noble women in Italy—domesticity or court (Richards and Munns 2014). Almost immediately after her marriage to Grunthler, her colleague and former mentor wrote asking if she had yet born any children (appending the surname Grunthler to her in his letters, which she herself never did in her signature). Morata responded 'But I'll add just one more thing and stop. I think I have to give the answer to one question you asked me, whether I had given birth to anything. The children I bore on the very day and hour I received your letter, I am sending to you: these poems appended here' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 115). She continued, 'I have borne no other children, and so far I have no expectation of bearing any. But I ask you, most learned Caelius, to write to me diligently how your wife is doing, how many children you have there, what they are learning' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 115). Morata explicitly states that her identity is based on her scholarship, not her marital status. The most important thing she is creating is her poetry, not children. Morata is equally as vocal that her primary calling is not loyalty to her husband, but to God. She wrote to another Italian noblewoman about being faithful to the Protestant cause, 'Perhaps you will say, 'If I do that, I may make the king or my husband angry with me and make many new enemies.' Think that is better to be hated by men than by God, Who is able to torture not just the body but also the soul in perpetual fire' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 170).

Morata's exile enabled her to redefine her place in the world—especially as it pertained to gender. However, it must be noted that this was enabled primarily because of her husband, and she seemed aware of this. She was appreciative of Grunthler and the mobility he provided her, writing, 'Now that God has joined me in steadfast marriage to the man I hold dearer than anything else in this life and after I followed him 'over the Alps,' I would follow him 'with a brave heart even to the desolate Caucasus or the uttermost corners of the West' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 128). However, the next line reads, 'Since he longs to go there, it pleases me too, for it is right for me to comfort myself to his will, and I am unable to honorably disagree with him.' Unfortunately, Morata and Grunthler's lives would not be safe for long. In 1554, Schweinfurt was sacked by the forces of Albert of Brandenburg, and Morata and her husband were forced to flee for their lives. It is of interest to note the language Morata utilizes when, on multiple occasions, she wrote about two events where she thought she would be separated from Grunthler. In one instance she said, 'Then my husband was captured twice by the enemy, and I swear to you, if I ever felt pain I felt it then and if I ever prayed ardently, I prayed then' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 148). At another point she wrote, 'Then when we had escaped the city, my husband was captured by the enemy. I was unable to ransom him even at the lowest price, and when I saw him being led away from my sight, I prayed with tears and 'unutterable groans to God,' Who immediately set him free and returned him to me' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 148).

Morata's obvious despondency at the potential loss of Grunthler can be interpreted as the fear of one spouse losing another, and that probably is true, but it can also be seen

as her recognition that the loss of Grunthler equals the loss of her own freedom. Morata's experience of abandonment in Ferrara was traumatic and demonstrated the fragility of her freedom and, indeed, potentially even her survival. This may also then be an explanation for the potency of the language that Morata employed when discussing the potential re-separation from Grunthler. That without him, her world reverts, and she would be forced to relive her helplessness in the court of Ferrara.

This might also account for the fervency with which she attempted the evangelization of her native Ferrara. In Schweinfurt, and later in Heidelberg, Morata wrote both to individuals back in Italy, exhorting them to fearlessly proclaim the faith. However, she also recognized that they could not do so safely and so tried to convince them, especially her mother and sisters, to follow her example and to flee from Italy and join her in Germany (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 168). Knowing though the limitations of female mobility far too well, she took steps to try and change the religious climate for those women unable to flee. To this end, she wrote to other scholars to convince them to translate some of Luther's works into Italian so that more Italians might be convinced of the Protestant cause. She wrote to Matthias Flacius, 'If you were to translate into Italian any of Luther's German books in which he argues against the general errors (for I do not yet understand German, although I have worked hard at it) or if you would write something in Italian on the same subject (you could do better than I, since you have unrolled the books of Sacred Scripture, which I have barely touched with my lips) I am sure you would save many pious men from the errors by which they are misled' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 133).

7. Conclusions

Olympia Morata's life is just one example of the many ways in which early modern women experienced the trauma of abandonment through their separation from their spouses due to the threat of religious persecution. Medieval norms remained in place, prohibiting women from traveling, even though they were ill-suited for the new religious and political landscapes of the sixteenth century. Women were forced to not only experience the pain of spousal separation, but to also face the consequences of their religious convictions without the safety valve of flight. Even women of means were subject to this new reality, as Morata demonstrates. Despite her own fame, Morata's dependence on her husband for mobility, and therefore safety, illuminates the imbalance of power between spouses and how that power, even in loving marriages, created suffering when exercised. Due to this, it is difficult not to wonder at how perceptions of women's adherence to a confessional identity were complicated by their extremely limited mobility (Hardwick 1998). Where scholars such as David Luebke (Luebke 2016) have pointed out that women seemed to cement their confessional attachment to Catholicism while their Protestant husbands fled, recognizing that these women were aware of their limited options should they convert and the reality that their spouses would likely still leave them behind, complicates our understand of female religious adherence in the early modern era.

Morata sadly died in Heidelberg after her flight from Schweinfurt from Tuberculosis at the age of 29. Her legacy was celebrated and memorialized by scholars throughout Europe. In many ways, her exile won her the identity that she so greatly longed for and deserved. However, she could never fully escape her historical context, a fact that she seemed painfully aware of and which, heartbreakingly, is reflected in the gendered memorialization of her after her death, most devastatingly reflected in the poetic epitaph dedicated to her by Jerome Angenoust, 'Nature denied you nothing of all her gifts—with one exception: that you were a woman' (Morata and Parker 2003, p. 180).

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