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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

PREFACING THE POETESS: GENDER AND TEXTUAL PRESENTATION
IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

AMY SCOTT-DOUGLASS

Norman, Oklahoma

2000

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PREFACING THE POETESS: GENDER AND TEXTUAL PRESENTATION
IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At a business lunch one June afternoon in 1996, as we were discussing how one goes about completing one's dissertation, Professor Eve Bannet remarked to me, "You know, Amy, it's not about tea parties and feeling good." At the time, I chuckled, but if I had known that her statement would turn out to be prophetic, I might have responded differently. By November 1998, I was faced with the task of having to reconstruct my dissertation committee. Given my situation, I was extremely fortunate to be able to find such excellent people to work with me. While all of my committee members provided useful suggestions, Eve Bannet and Jessica Munns engaged with my ideas in particularly rigorous and beneficial ways. June Lester and Catherine Hobbs projected a certain intelligent kindness and stability that I greatly appreciated. But my greatest debt is to my chair, Dan Cottom. And he knows why.

The "preface" to this dissertation on prefaces was a paper that I wrote on Margaret Cavendish's prefatory rhetoric in a graduate seminar taught by Susan (Green) Donahue, and it is with great pleasure and gratitude that I acknowledge her influence on my dissertation and thank her for her continued friendship and interest in my work. Along the way, and especially in the past two years, several professors at the University of Oklahoma took an interest in me and my project even though they were not on my committee and, in some cases, were unfamiliar with my subject of study. I am thankful for the kind words and useful advice I received from George Economou, Larry Frank, Susan Kates, David Mair, Ron Schleifer, Alan Velie, and James Yoch through the challenges of writing this dissertation and finding a good job in a competitive market. Thanks to the patient Dan Ransom for showing me (twice) how to cite signature pages.

I am also grateful to the Department of English for awarding me the dissertation research grant that allowed me a semester off from teaching and to the Department of International Programs, the Graduate College, and the Graduate Student Senate at the University of Oklahoma for funding my research trip to Oxford, UK. While in Oxford, Ros Ballaster graciously agreed to supervise my work. With her unique blend of humor and intelligence, she provided exactly the kind of guidance that I needed at the time, making valuable comments on early drafts of the Cavendish and Philips chapters and suggesting how I might restructure the project.

Additionally, a number of people have been important in other ways. I would be lost without the friendship of the matchless, incomparable, thrice noble, illustrious, and excellent Heather Haines. I am also grateful to my best teacher Hunter Cadzow for the many deep, provocative conversations that helped me to produce this dissertation. My friend Daniel Scott-Douglass was my extremely supportive partner through two master theses and seven years of graduate school. It is with deep affection that I thank him for helping me to write the epilogue to our play with decency and grace. To my loving parents, Norma and Gordon Schaechterle, I owe more than I could ever express. In this case, I am especially grateful to them for financial and moral support. They also read an early draft of my chapter on Margaret Cavendish (and only yawned once each). Finally, I have benefited immeasurably from my relationship with Dominic Rainsford. His encouragement and guidance was indispensable in helping me through the processes of getting a job, finishing my dissertation, and starting to publish. Most importantly, he has been a dear friend. In the company of these people, I am reminded that sometimes, fortunately, it *is* about tea parties and feeling good.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE WOMAN WRITERS, MODERN CRITICS, AND THE TRADITION OF THE PATRONYMIC PREFACE.....	1
CHAPTER TWO RESTORING ORINDA'S FACE: PREFATORY COMMENDATION AND KATHERINE PHILIPS'S POETRY.....	34
CHAPTER THREE SELF-CROWNED LAUREATESS: TOWARD A CRITICAL REVOLUTION OF THE CAVENDISH PREFACE.....	87
CHAPTER FOUR A MOVEABLE PREFACE: APHRA BEHN AND THE COVENT GARDEN DROLLERY.....	158
CONCLUSION.....	211
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES.....	219

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. The Matchless Orinda. Frontispiece to Katherine Philips's <i>Poems</i> (1667). By William Faithorne. It is also reproduced in Beals, page 176.	68
2. Margaret Cavendish. Frontispiece to <i>Philosophical and Physical Opinions</i> (1655). By Abraham van Diepenbeke Engraved by Peter van Schuppen. It is also reproduced in Grant, after page 166.	127
3. Matthew Stevenson. Frontispiece to <i>Norfolk Drollery</i> (1673).	201

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CGD* *Covent Garden Drollery*. Cited from the first edition and issue: *Covent Garden Drolery* [sic]. . . Collected by R. B. [sic] Servant to His Majesty (London: James Magnes, 1672).
- Ferguson* Moira Ferguson, ed., *First Feminists: British Women Writers 1578-1799* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985).
- Gerbert* Clara Gerbert, ed., *An Anthology of Elizabethan Dedications and Prefaces* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1933).
- Hazlitt* William C. Hazlitt, ed., *Prefaces, Dedications, and Epistles Selected from Early English Books 1540-1701* (London: privately printed, 1874).
- Poems* *Poems, By the most deservedly Admired Mrs KATHERINE PHILIPS The matchless ORINDA* (London: J. M. for H. Herringman, 1667).
- Rhys* Margaret Cavendish, *A True Relation of My Birth and Breeding*, cited from Ernest Rhys' edition, *The Cavalier in Exile being the Lives of the First Duke and Duchess of Newcastle Written by Margaret Duchess of Newcastle* (London: J. M. Dent, 1903).
- Summers* *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Montague Summers, 6 vols. (New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1915, reprinted 1967).
- Todd* *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd, 7 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1992-1997).
- Travitsky* Betty Travitsky, ed., *The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1989).
- Works* *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips, the Matchless Orinda*, ed. Patrick Thomas, Germaine Greer, and R. Little, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Stump Cross, 1993).

CHAPTER ONE

WOMEN WRITERS, MODERN SCHOLARSHIP, AND THE TRADITION OF THE PATRONYMIC PREFACE

Commenting on the “great Dryden,” Jonathan Swift wrote, “the world would have never suspected him to be so great a poet if he had not assured them so frequently in his prefaces that it was impossible they could either doubt or forget it” (*Tale of a Tub* 444). Swift’s joke is an appropriate place to begin a discussion of textual presentation, for it reveals at least two important points about prefaces in the seventeenth century. For one, Swift suggests that by the end of the seventeenth century writers were employing prefaces in order to establish their authority and as a primary vehicle for self-promotion in the growing literary market. At the same time, Swift implies that not all readers necessarily embraced the author’s sentiments or accepted his self-portrayal; interpretive resistance is a possibility given an audience that appreciates and understands the rhetorical, fictive nature of the preface.

In looking back at seventeenth-century prefaces, modern scholarship has often ignored seventeenth-century conceptions of the preface and instead characterized prefaces as evidential rather than literary, factual rather than fictive. Eckhard Auberlen suggests that scholars base their studies of Renaissance authorship upon prefatory materials instead of texts-proper because they are operating under the assumption that a preface contains more empirical proof than the constructed fiction it precedes (19). Recently, however, literary critics have begun to argue that prefaces should not be read,

in the words of Jeffrey Masten, “as a recording of biographical facts and political beliefs” but, rather, as “texts” (147). In the past decade, several books have been devoted to the study of the pretexts of Renaissance and seventeenth-century men. In particular, Masten has written convincingly on the introductory materials to the Beaumont and Fletcher folio, Kevin Dunn has produced a brilliant analysis of the prefatory rhetoric of Luther, Bacon, Descartes, and Milton, and Leah Marcus has offered important, innovative readings of the textual presentation of Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert, Herrick, and Milton.¹

Although no full-length book study of women’s prefatory rhetoric or textual presentation exists, prefaces have always been important to those who study early modern women’s writing. Fidelis Morgan’s decision to excise the original prefaces from her modern edition of the plays of Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, Catherine Trotter, Mary Pix, and Susannah Centlivre so that prologues, epilogues, dedications, and epistles “all have been omitted” (*The Female Wits* 72) is the exception to the rule. Most editors of women’s literature pay careful attention to the prefatory materials. Modern editions of writings of the three women in this study illustrate this point. Phillip Thomas, Germaine Greer, and Richard Little include the commendatory verses to Katherine Philips’s posthumously published folio as well as the epistles that she wrote to the readers amongst her manuscript coterie, Kate Lilley’s edition of Margaret Cavendish’s *New Blazing World* includes her preface “To the Reader,” and Montague Summers and Janet Todd faithfully

¹ Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997); Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontent* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988), and *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Kevin Dunn, *Pretexts of Authority: The Rhetoric of Authorship in the Renaissance Preface* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994).

reproduce the numerous epistles, dedications, commendatory poems, prologues, and epilogues that preface Aphra Behn's works. The editors of Brown University's Renaissance Women Online and Emory University's Women Writers Project, two highly esteemed databases of early modern women's literature, are also careful to include prefatory materials in their electronic editions. At least two anthologies of early modern women's writing, *The Paradise of Women* (edited by Betty Travitsky) and *Women Writers in Renaissance England* (edited by Randall Martin) include separate sections devoted to women's prefaces. In Moira Ferguson's anthology *First Feminists: British Women Writers 1578-1799*, no less than 26 of the 80 entries are taken from prefatory epistles, introductions, and dedications, and 18 of these are by seventeenth-century women writers.²

The title of Ferguson's anthology, *First Feminists*, suggests the reason scholars of early modern women's writing place so much importance on prefaces. At the present stage in the study of women's literature, we are still researching the development of feminist thought; we are still writing women's literary history. It would be restrictive to approach prefaces by women simply as "texts" in the way that Masten suggests all prefaces be read. Biographical information about seventeenth-century women writers helps us to understand their public stances and their authorial intentions, and records of their political beliefs establish their subjectivity. However, while the multiple uses and value of prefaces by women need to be understood and appreciated, at the same time, prefaces to women's texts also must be approached, as Masten says, as viable pieces of literature, rhetoric, and critical thought. The most appropriate methodological approach to women's

² In coming to these number I have counted individual poems, chapters and epistles as separate entities.

prefaces is one that offers the kind of attention to literary discourses and textual presentation that is characteristic of seventeenth-century bibliographic studies while being able to recognize and articulate the importance of texts by and about women in the ways that feminist criticism does. Indeed, scholars of women's prefaces seem to be moving toward a pluralistic approach. Margaret Ezell warns against reading women's texts as "autobiographical statements about the author's personal experiences as a woman, to evaluate her responses as if she were our contemporary" (*Writing Women's Literary History* 61), and she calls for the development of "a feminist historicism," the objective of which is "to preserve our ability to hear multiple voices of women writing in the past, not simply a universal female voice, and not to insist on continuity where diversity flourishes" (*Writing Women's Literary History* 12-13). Ezell's work on women religious and manuscript writers focuses on their prefaces. Similarly, Hilary Hinds has increased our understanding of the pretextual presentation of women's religious writing. Wendy Wall and Jeff Masten have included chapters devoted to women's use of prefatory conventions in their studies of the prefaces to sonnet collections and dramatic folios. Kate Lilley has argued that Margaret Cavendish's prefaces constitute a "poetics," Laurie Finke has approached Aphra Behn's prefaces as literary criticism, and Jessica Munns has read Behn's prefaces in the context of contemporary prefatory rhetoric.³ While these examples suggest that there is a growing body of impressive work on the subject, women's prefaces still remain under-criticized and -theorized. Most scholars continue to read

³ Hilary Hinds, *God's Englishwomen: Radical Sectarian Writing: Seventeenth-Century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996); Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993); Kate Lilley, "Introduction." *The Description of a New World Called The Blazing World and Other Writings.*, ed. Kate Lilley (Washington Square: New York UP, 1992) ix-xxxiv; Laurie Finke, "Aphra Behn and the Ideological Construction of Restoration Literary

prefaces by women writers primarily as quasi-autobiographies or as records of the writers' gender politics.

On the other hand, a limited approach to women's prefaces is certainly better than not reading them at all, as seems to have been the trend at the time when the two seminal works on theorizing prefaces were written. Neither Jacques Derrida's *Dissemination* (1972) nor Gerard Genette's *Paratexts* (1987) includes a discussion of even one preface by a woman. This oversight is unfortunate. Given Derrida's interest in playing with margins, one would think he would be drawn to the prefaces of marginal writers to test his arguments more thoroughly. But the absence of women's prefaces is even more surprising in Genette's case because in the introduction to his book, he establishes an author's sex as a "factual" paratext, or a "fact whose existence alone, if known to the public, provides some commentary on the text and influences how the text is received" (7). "Do we ever," Genette asks, "read 'a novel by a woman' exactly as we read 'a novel' plain and simple, that is, a novel by a man?" (7). Genette's characterization of women's writing as being something other than plain and simple suggests his bias against it, a bias that probably motivated his decision to ignore any prefaces that were actually written by women. However, the distinction that he makes between male paratexts and female paratexts is relevant to my study of gender and textual presentation in seventeenth-century England. Aphra Behn, one of the women in this study, made the same argument in several of her epistles to the reader. "[H]ad the Plays I have writ come forth under any Mans Name, and neer

Theory," In *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, ed. Heidi Hutner (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1993) 17-43; Jessica Munns, "Good, Sweet, Honey, Sugar-Candied Reader': Aphra Behn's Foreplay in Forewords," In *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, 44-64, and "'I by a Double Right Thy Bounties Claim': Aphra Behn and Sexual Space," In *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660-1820*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio UP, 1991) 193-210.

known to have been mine; I appeal to all unbyast Judges of Sense, if they had not said that Person had made as many good Comedies, as any one Man that has writ in our Age; but a Devil on't the Woman damns the Poet," Behn wrote in the preface to *The Lucky Chance* (Summers 3: 186-87; Todd 7: 216-17). When the reader is aware of it, the author's gender functions as a textual, material, factual paratext. Genette claims that "[n]ot all prefaces 'do' the same thing--in other words, the functions of prefaces differ depending on the type of preface. These functional types seem to me for the most part determined by considerations of place, time, and *the nature of the sender*" (196--italics mine). In seventeenth-century England, one of the "things" that prefaces to women's texts have to "do" is to negotiate the bias against women's writing. This is no small task given the degree to which the prefatory rhetoric of the period privileges men.

Those who study prefaces seem to agree that the seventeenth century marks an important shift in the prefatory discourse, namely, the decline of the panegyric preface and the rise of what Henry B. Wheatley calls the "manly epistle" (67). Jessica Munns describes the seventeenth-century preface as "a place where serious men talked to serious men" ("Foreplay in Forewords" 58), and according to Clara Gerbert, the prefatory rhetoric from the 1590s on is marked by a "revulsion against flattery" (17). The refusal to flatter the reader is especially characteristic of the prefaces of Ben Jonson. In "The Third Sounding Prologue" to *Poetaster*, for instance, Jonson rejects both "base dejection" and arrogant "ful-blowne vanitie" and attempts to find a happy "meane 'twixt both" (4: 205, lines 21-22). Similarly, in the address "To the Readers" prefixed to *Sejanus*, Jonson maintains that his "better sort" of readers would "worthily contemne, if not absolutely hate" him if he engaged in base flattery, for "saying Good or Well, &c. were a weakness" (4: 351, lines

52-55). In one of the prefaces to *Catiline*, he insists that “most commend out of affection. . . but men judge *only* out of knowledge” (5: 432--italics mine). In the preface to *The Alchemist* (1612), Jonson explains that the only trustworthy judge of his play is the reader who is also an “understander” (“To the Reader” qtd. in Gerbert 209).⁴

The terms “judgement” and “understanding” often appear in tandem in many prefaces of the period. Bacon, for example, appeals to the King’s “penetration of Judgement” as well as his “understanding admirable” when he dedicates the first part of *The Proficience and Advancement of Learning* (1605) to James (Gerbert 157-60), and Robert Tofte in his preface to *Honour’s Academy, or the Pastoral of the Fair Shepherdess Julietta* (1610) addresses his work “To the Curteous and judicious Reader, and to none other” (Hazlitt 231). In a wonderfully brazen move, John Marston dedicates *The Scourge of Villainy* (1598) to himself, and follows his self-dedication with a short preface “To those that seeme judiciall perusers,” in which he specifically evokes the reader’s “judgement” and “understanding” no less than six times (Gerbert 133-34). In a brief preface to *The Malcontent* (1604), Marston again makes frequent use of the word “understanding,” employing it four times in his effort to encourage the reader to “understand” his “plainnesse” (Gerbert 164). When it is not coupled with “understanding,” the term “judgement” is usually paired with the word “encouragement,” as it is in the preface to *The First Book of Songs or Airs* (1597), in which John Dowland recognizes, by

⁴ It has long been held that “No one could better turn an epigram or write a dedication than Ben Jonson” (Gerbert 276). Nearly a century has passed since Henry B. Wheatley, in his survey of dedications to early works, proclaimed Jonson’s pretexts to be “of the greatest interest” (67), and since that time, many modern scholars (most notably Richard Helgerson, Katherine Maus, W. H. Herendeen and Jonathan Haynes) have recognized that Jonson’s “extratextual addenda” are, in the words of John Gordon Sweeney, “important” (ix). As Maus points out, Jonson’s “authorial presence” literally “surrounds his plays, masques, and poems,” manifesting itself in “an unprecedented weight of prefaces, prologues, dedications, inductions, footnotes, epilogues, and afterwords” (*Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind* 137).

name, no less than five of his "excellent masters." Dowland reproduces a commendatory letter from one of his teachers, "not thinking it any disgrace to be proud of the *judgement* of so excellent a man," and hoping that "[he] may but find *encouragement* in [his] first assaies" (Gerbert 126-27--italics mine).

Another term that is frequently employed in the prefatory rhetoric of the period is "friend." In addition to appealing to the judgment and understanding of an encouraging reader, many writers attempt to construct an amiable relationship between themselves and their audiences. Indeed, in the pretexts written at the end of the sixteenth century, variations of the concepts of judgment, understanding, encouragement, and friendship often appear together. Stephen Gosson, in his dedication of *The School of Abuse* (1579) to the learned readers, complains of past detractors and concludes by saying, "sith there is neither authoritie in me to bridle their tongues, nor reason in them to rule their owne talke, I am contented to suffer their taunts, requesting you, which are Gentlemen, of *curtesie* to beare with me, and because you are *learned* amende the faultes *freendly* which escape the Presse" (Gerbert 49--italics mine). Robert Wilmot also appeals to his readers' judgment, understanding, and friendship in his dedication of *Tancred and Gismund* (1591) "To the Worshipfull and *learned Societie*, the Gentlemen Students of the Inner Temple, with the rest of his *singular good friends*, the Gentlemen of the middle Temple, and to all other *curteous readers*" (Gerbert 77--italics mine). The three concepts again appear in the prefatory epistle to George Wither's *The Shepheard's Hunting* (1615), written soon after the author's release from prison. Wither takes advantage of the occasion to thank his "many well-deserving friends" and to dedicate his work to them as well as "all other unknowne favourites." In his preface, he establishes his resolution to "scorne all the rabble of uncharitable detractors" whom he

portrays as “such malicious Critikes who have the repute of being judicious, by detracting from others; or at best such Guls, as never approve any thinge good, or learned, but either that which their shallow apprehensions can apply to the soothing of their owne opinions, or what, indeed rather, they understand not.” He ends his letter by requesting from his friends “the continuance of [their] first respect” that will provide for his “further encouragement” (Gerbert 231-35). Often, writers dedicated their works to their particular friends, as was the case with John Bodenham, whose *England’s Helicon* (1600) is addressed “To his very loving friends, M. Nicholas Wanton and M. George Faucet.” In regard to the unwise, Bodenham argues in his preface, “Their malice neede as little be feared, as their favour or friendship is to be desired” (Gerbert 139). Similarly, Thomas Dekker dedicated *Newes From Hell* (1606) “To my most respected, loving, and *Juditious friend* Mr. John Sturman Gentleman” (Gerbert 163--italics mine).

It should not be assumed, however, that these writers utilized the word “friend” in the same way we might today. In referring to their friends, certainly some of these writers were dedicating their works to specific people with whom they had private relationships; however, for a writer to offer his friendship in the public sphere of the prefatory epistle was for him to engage in a social alliance. This was the case with Jonson, when after his visit with William Drummond he sent the Scotsman two poems, prefacing them with this introduction:

To the honouring respect
Born
To the friendship contracted with
The right virtuous and learned

Mr William Drummond
And the perpetuating the same by all office of love
Hereafter
I, Benjamin Jonson
Whom he hath honoured with the leave to be called his
Have with my own hand, to satisfy his request
Written this imperfect song.
(qtd. in Miles 199)

Jonson also frequently engaged in the practice of writing commendatory verses to others' works.⁵ Not surprisingly, the operative word in these prefaces is usually "friend" or "beloved." Jonson, for instance, offers his approval of *Britannia's Pastorals* (1616) to his "truly-beloved friend" William Browne, of *Pharsalia* (1627) to his "chosen friend" Thomas May, and of *The Northern Lass* (1632) to his "loving friend" Richard Brome (qtd. in Miles 169, 234, 141). Indeed, in Jonson's economy of exchange, the ideal patron is the friend who possesses the same sort of humanist education. In his commendatory poem to John Selden, for example, Jonson claims that Selden is smart to dedicate his book to Edward Heyward because

. . . He will not only love,

⁵ The list of these works includes Thomas Wright's *Passions of the Mind in General* (1604), Clement Edmondes' translation of *De Bello Gallico* (1609), Raleigh's *History of the World* (1614), Selden's *Titles of Honour* (1614) and Alice Sutcliffe's *Meditation of Man's Mortality* (1634) (Miles 81, 161, 263). Jonson also wrote commendatory verses to Joshua Sylvester's translation (from the original French) of *Divine Weeks and Works* (1605). Jonson expected to receive some sort of payment for his letters of recommendation. After Jonson wrote a commendatory poem to Hugh Holland's *Pancharis* (1603), Holland responded with a dedicatory sonnet for *Sejanus* (1605) (Miles 81). Jonson also had an interest in contributing written praise of Alphonso Ferrabosco's *Airs* since it contained "the music for the songs in *Volpone* and several of Jonson's masques" (124).

Embrace, and cherish; but he can approve
And estimate thy Paines; as having wrought
In the same Mines of knowledge; and thence brought
Humanitie enough to be a friend,
And strength to be a champion, and defend
Thy gift 'gainst envie.

(8: 161, lines 73-79)

In other words, Heyward is inclined to understand Selden because of their friendship and their similar intellects, and these qualities make Heyward a perfect judge and protector of Selden's book.⁶

According to Richard Helgerson, Jonson's prefaces are characteristic of the discourse of the "self-crowned laureate." In his book of the same title, Helgerson distinguishes between three types of poets in England from approximately 1580-1680, the professional, the amateur, and the self-crowned laureate, differentiating between them based upon their approaches to writing as an activity. For the amateur, who composed poetry only in his youth, creative writing was unimaginable as a career ambition. In due time, he rejected it in favor of the public employment his civic humanism required of him, usually in the form of an office in the state, church, university, or court (Helgerson 28-29). In Francis Davison's "To the Reader" that prefaces *Poetically Rhapsody* (1602), a collection of juvenelia by Davidson, his brother, and an anonymous friend, the author represents poetry as a viable exercise as long as it leads to something more important:

⁶ For a discussion of this poem and of Jonson's treatment of poet-patron relations, see Stanley Fish, "Author-Readers: Jonson's Community of the Same," in *Representing the English Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) 231-64.

If thou condemne Poetry in generall, and affirme, that it doth intoxicate the braine, and make men utterly unfit, either for more serious studies, or for any active course of life, I only say, *Jubeo te stultum esse libenter*. Since experience proves by examples of many, both dead and living, that divers delighted and excelling herein, being Princes or States-men, have governed and counceled as wisely, being Souldiers, have commanded armies as fortunately, being Lawyers, have pleaded as judicially and eloquently, being Divines, have written and taught as profoundly, and being of any other Profession, have discharged it as sufficiently as any other men whatsoever. (Gerbert 148-49)

As evidence, Davidson cites the example of his brother who “was not 18. yeeres old when hee writt these Toyes” and is now “by profession a Souldier” (Gerbert 149). Since amateurs circulated their poetry in manuscript coterie circles, they prefaced their press publications with explanations for appearing in print. Davison’s claim that he was “induced, by some private reasons, and by the instant intreatie of speciall friendes, to suffer some of my worthlesse Poems to be published” (Gerbert 148) is characteristic of the discourse of the amateur. Another amateuristic stance is to justify publication in order to intercept or to counter the effects of surreptitious publication. In his preface to *Cælia* (1594), for example, William Percy explains his dilemma:

Courteous Reader, whereas I was fullie determined to have concealed my Sonnets as thinges privie to my self, yet of courtesie having lent them to some, they were secretlie committed to the Presse and almost finished before it came to my knowledge.

*Wherefore making as they say, Vertue of necessitie, I did deeme it
most convenient to prepose mine Epistle* (Gerbert 106)

Percy presents his book of sonnets as a “pledge” that something “more fruitfull and pounderous” is to follow and encourages the reader to “account of [his sonnets] as of toyes and amorous devises” (Gerbert 106). The bias against print often motivated the amateur’s desire for anonymity. When he took his manuscript to the printing house, Davison explains, “My friendes name I concealed, mine owne, and my brothers, I willed the Printer to suppresse, as well as I had concealed the other, which he having put in, without my privity, we must both now undergoe a sharper censure perhaps then our nameles works should have done, & I especially” (Gerbert 148).

According to Helgerson, professional writers in the Renaissance shared the amateur’s resistance to print. Professionals were theatre men who were primarily concerned with keeping their audiences entertained so that they could enjoy the financial profits. Helgerson argues that in the case of the professionals, when their work was printed, it appeared anonymously or posthumously, and was accompanied by dedications rather than self-presentational prefaces (36-38). The dedications are underscored by a sense of economic dependency. In dedicating the *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) to the Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare explains that he is “bound” to Southampton in “all duety”: “What I have done is yours, what I have to doe is yours, being part in all I have, devoted yours” (Gerbert 107). And in dedicating *Cornelia* (1594) to the Countess of Sussex, Thomas Kyd promises that he will “ever spend one howre of the day in some kind service to [her] Honour, and another of the night in wishing [her] all happines. Perpetually thus devoting [his] poore selfe” (Gerbert 105). Rather than belonging to the poet, the discourse of the professional is commonly used by the publisher. In

the preface to J. C.'s *The Two Merry Milke-Maids* (1620), the stationer presents a play that "had the happinesse to please" and promises, "Some good words here you shall finde for your Money" (Gerbert 246). Heminge and Condell's preface to Shakespeare's folio (1623) also participates in the discourse of the professional. This epistle is addressed to "the great Variety of Readers," including everyone

From the most able, to him that can but spell: There you are number'd. We had rather you were weighd. Especially, when the fate of all Bookes depends upon your capacities: and not of your heads alone, but of your purses. Well! It is now publique, & you wil stand for your priviledges wee know: to read, and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth best commend a Booke, the Stationer saies. Then, how odde soever your braines be, or your wisdomes, make your licence the same, and spare not. Judge your sixe-pen'orth, your shillings worth, your five shillings worth at a time; or higher, so you rise to the just rates, and welcome. But, what ever you do, Buy. . . . Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe: and if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him. And so we leave you to others of his Friends, whom if you need, can bee your guides: if you need them not you can leade your selves, and others. And such Readers we wish him. (Gerbert 259-60)

In the prefatory rhetoric of the professional writer, the word "friend" more commonly refers to a potential customer. Nicholas Breton's preface to *A Flourish Upon Fancy* (1577) illustrates this point; it is addressed to the

following reader: "My friend, who so thou bee, that faine woulst buy this booke" (Hazlitt 58).

To summarize, the concepts of judgment, understanding, encouragement, and friendship are put to different use in the prefaces to texts by laureate, amateur, and professional writers. In the tradition of the self-crowned laureate, the ideal reader is a friend who has received the same kind of education that the author has and therefore is able to understand the author and judge the work in the same way that the author would. The friend usually has already shown his encouragement of the author before being given the text. In prefaces by amateurs, the friends are the amateur's coterie who have encouraged him to publish his manuscript, sometimes after an incorrect copy has been printed. The reader is supposed to understand that an exercise in poetry is a stepping stone to something greater. Finally, the professional writer is interested in pleasing the reader. In this prefatory discourse, the prospective buyer is the friend, usually a stranger to the author, who is given his right to judge the author's work after he's bought it and according to how much he's paid for it. The threat is that if that buyer isn't pleased it's because he doesn't possess enough sense to understand the author. In each of these cases, the vocabulary of the preface, with its interest in judgment, understanding, encouragement, and friendship, stays the same, but the definitions of the terms change. This suggests a malleability inherent in the space of the preface, a kind of slipperiness that can allow for difference. Women writers of the Renaissance and seventeenth century put the semantic pliability of the discourse of the preface to their own use.

In Anne Wheathill's address "To all Ladies" from *A handfull of holsehome (though homelie) hearbs*, . . . (1584), the author admits that she expects to be judged harshly: "of the learned I may be judged grose and

unwise; in presuming, without the counsell or helpe of anie, to take such an enterprise in hand" (Travitsky 146). However, Wheathill explains, her limited understanding is irrelevant because God is judging her work based upon the goodness of her intentions, and "thys small handull of grosse hearbs, holesome in operation and workeing, shall be no lesse acceptable before the majestie of almightie God than the fragrant floures of others, gathered with more understanding" (Travitsky 146). She offers the text to "the good judgement and liking of all [her] brethren and sisters in the Lord" (Travitsky 147) and claims that in writing this she has extended her spiritual community and "[has] gained those, whom she know[s] not, as well strangers to [her], as [her] acquaintance, to be [her] friends" (Travitsky 147).

Many prefaces to women's religious writing draw upon the community of fellow believers (often fellow women) to befriend the author and the text. Rachel Speght addresses *Mortality's Memorandum* (1621) to her godmother Mrs Mary Moundeford, thanking her "careful friends" for encouraging her to write it (Martin 33). Other women writers find ingenious ways around the importance that many men's prefaces put on friendship. In her preface to her translation of *John Poynt's Way of Reconciliation*. . . (1605) Lady Elizabeth Russell circumvents that importance of "friends" by claiming that she isn't concerned with how "to make enemies friends." Men's censure of her book only acts as evidence that it is good: "*If I should please men, I should not be the servant of Christ. Farewell, and indeavour thy self to please Christ*" ("The Author to the Reader" Travitsky 150).

In many prefaces by women, "understanding" relates to a spiritual literacy that is presented as being superior to the kind of understanding that results from a secular, university education. Lady Eleanor (Touchet) Douglas claims that her inward authority comes from the spirit of the prophet Daniel,

which, she says, lives inside of her. In "A GENERALL EPISTLE, to the fold and Flocke of Christ, and to them that are gone astray, that say they are Apostles, and Catholiques and are not, etc." from *A Warning to the Dragon and all his angels* (1625), she signs herself "O A SURE DANIEL," an anagram of her name. Douglas publishes because, she says, "It seemed good unto me, having a *perfect understanding* given mee in these things, and the dispensation of them, *an office not a trade*; to. . . present this Visitation to your view" (Travitsky 157--italics mine).⁷

In addition to Douglas, several contemporary women (including Margaret Tyler, Esther Inglis, Esther Sowernam, Aemelia Lanyer, and Constantia Munda) resist the tradition of the amateur's preface and present their texts as "labour," "worke," "enterprise," "exercise" or "travaile" (Travitsky 145-46, 151, 154-55; *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* 62, 139). Suzanne Du Vegerre refers to her task to "overthrow so many fabulous Bookes. . . Romants, Adventures, Chivalries, and other such trash" as an "imployment" and a "labour" ("The Authours Epistle to the READER" to her translation of *Admirable Events. . . by John Peter Camus* (1639). It is, she says, "a labour like unto that of Danaides, or or Sisyphus" or indeed of "Hercules," but "what

⁷ Tore Janson has noted that the prefatory convention of presenting one's lack of formal education as a strength exists in several Latin prose prefaces. According to him, "the inadequate education of the apostles came to be regarded as something positive" (Janson 136). As Janson explains, Latin writer Solpicius Severus denies "even his knowledge of the more elementary rules of speech. . . by speaking of. . . actual linguistic errors" and blames his poor language skills on a "lack of practice" (137-38). In addition to the women mentioned above, several seventeenth-century religious writers borrowed from this tradition. George Fox, husband of Elizabeth Fell Fox and Quaker minister, wrote "The Lord opened unto me that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ; and I stranged at it because it was the common belief of the people" (qtd. in Ezell *Writing Women's Literary History* 7). Remarking on this passage, Ezell writes, "This must have had enormous appeal for women, who, literate or not, would never have had the slightest opportunity for university theological training." In the case of the Quaker women, "[i]nstead of being subordinate to the external, masculine institutions of academia and the church, the woman sought knowledge residing in her; she, and she alone, became the 'authority' through the Light" (*Writing Women's Literary History* 137). For more on prefaces to women's spiritual writings, see Ezell (*Writing Women's Literary History* 132-60) and Hinds.

cannot a courage do, animated by a zeale of pleasuring his neighbour, and provoked by desire to advance the light of vertue, and to lessen vice" (Travitsky 160). As with Wheathill, then, Du Vegerre is motivated by zeal. In contrast to the type of self-encouragement that men seek in their prefaces, "zeal" indicates an encouragement that moves outward. Rather than asking for the reader to encourage the author, Du Vegerre hopes that her book will "incourageth the reader" (Travitsky 161). Indeed, in women's prefaces it is often the author's interest in encouraging the spiritual understanding of the reader that justifies the publication of the text. Jane Owen offers the *Antidote against Purgatory* (1634) to "THE WORTHY AND CONSTANT CATHOLICKES OF ENGLAND: And more particularly, to such, who be of the best temporall Meanes" by apologizing for overstepping the bounds of female decorum. "[P]ardon I pray the boldnes of my Sexe heerin," she writes, "My charity towards the advancing of the spiritual good of your soules, is the maine Allective, inviting me to write this small Treatise" (Travitsky 158-59).

Like these writers, Aemilia Lanyer justifies the publication of her *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* based upon her interest in the spiritual encouragement of virtuous women readers, and like her contemporaries, she finds remarkable strategies to manipulate her lack of formal education to her advantage. "In this triall of my slender skill," she writes in a dedication to Queen Anne, "I wanted knowledge to performe my will" (9, lines 131-32). Lanyer goes on to explain how she writes of Christ's passion: "Not that I Learning to my self assume, / Or that I would compare with any man" (9, lines 147-48). In fact, those "Scholars" who "by Art do write" have no advantage over Lanyer, for, as she explains in a dedication to the Countess of Dorset, the Lord's "worth is more than can be shew'd by Art" (47, line 144). In order to write of Christ's passion, one must be divinely inspired, and one

must be blessed by Nature. Since Lanyer is both, she has the advantage over learned men. "But as they are Scholars, and by Art do write, / So Nature yeelds my Soule a sad delight," Lanyer explains (10, lines 149-50). In a move that Margaret Cavendish would replicate later in the seventeenth century, Lanyer argues that because Nature was the *first* of God's creations, naturally able writers have the advantage over those who have formal training in language arts:

And since all Arts at first from Nature came,
That goodly Creature, Mother of Perfection,
Whom Joves almighty hand at first did frame,
Taking both her and hers in his protection:

Why should not She now grace my barren Muse,
And in a Woman all defects excuse.

("To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie" 10, lines 151-56)

This privileging of natural understanding over book learning, which is evident in Lanyer's pretexts, continues throughout the *Salve Deus*. The "unlearned men" (75, line 553) who betray Christ are represented as scholars, most notably Judas, who sells his knowledge of Christ for self-profit. And Lanyer takes advantage of Judas's weakness to extend her critique of his behavior to secular scholars. "If in Christs Schoole, he tooke so great a fall, / What will they doe, that come not there at all," she warns (83, lines 743-44). Caiphas's "Owly eies are blind, and cannot see" (82, line 712), and the "High Priests and Scribes, and Elders of the Land" who question Christ are portrayed as scholarly "Fooles" (73, lines 490, 495). They are "blinde," "dull," "weake," "stony hearted," "void of Pitie," "full of Spight" (73, lines 505-09). They lived

in "learned Ignorance" and "al their powres, their wits, their strengths, they bend / Against one siely, weake, unarmed man" (75, lines 546, 550-51). Not surprisingly, this description of Christ aligns with Lanyer's description of herself. Her writing is composed of "siely lines" (63, line 277), and she is unarmed (65, lines 333-34); her "Wit" is "weake" (63, line 287) and her "Braine" is "farre too weak" (63, lines 276-77) to write the Passion of Christ. However, Lanyer writes her weakness to her advantage yet again: "the Weaker thou doest seeme to be / In Sexe, or Sence, the more his Glory shines" (63, lines 289-90). Lanyer's weakness becomes evidence that her writing is divinely inspired and that her "Power and Strength to Write" (64, line 298) come from the Lord. If she is unarmed, it is because her hand is led by God: "I may Write part of his glorious Merit, / If he vouchsafe to guide my Hand and Quill" (65, lines 333-34)

In contrast to the men of limited understanding, the women in the *Salve Deus* have natural sense and spiritual intelligence. For instance, the daughters of Jerusalem who mourn the crucifixion have "hearts" that "think" (94, line 992). Similarly Pilate's wife tells her husband, "Open thine eies, that thou the truth mai'st see / Doe not the thing that goes against thy heart" (84, line 755-56). The idea that true knowledge comes from looking into one's heart and is often delivered in mystical ways, as in the dreams of Pilate's wife, is repeated in the extratextual materials. In the postscript "To the doubtfull Reader," Lanyer reveals that the title of the poem sequence was given to her in a dream. *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, Lanyer explains,

was delivered unto me in sleepe many yeares before I had any
intent to write in this manner, and was quite out of my memory,
untill I had written the Passion of Christ, when immediately it

came into my remembrance, what I had dreamed long before; and thinking it a significant token, that I was appointed to performe this Worke, I gave the very same words I received in sleepe as the fittest Title I could devise for this Booke. (139)

The knowledge that comes from dreams proves important in Lanyer's prefaces as well. In one of these prefaces, "The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of *Pembrooke*," Lanyer "looks backe into" her "thoughts" and her "eie of Reason" to visualize a court of nine virgin muses (21, lines 5-6). Morpheus, the god of dreames, tells her that she will not awake until she "understands" the "summe of all" (22, line 20). Lanyer and the group of women move to a "sacred Spring" at which the ladies act as "umpiers" of the "quarrell" between "Art and Nature" for supremacy. The ladies decide that "T'would be offensive either to displace" and "'twas impossible either should excell" and so the two are pronounced "equall in state, equall in dignitie" and live forever "In perfit unity by this matchlesse Spring" (25, lines 81-90). In dedicating *Salve Deus* to nine female patrons, judges who understand the importance of Nature, Lanyer replicates the community of knowing women that appear in her dream.

The community of women that Lanyer constructs in the prefatory material operates in contrast to the communities of men in the text itself. Playing upon the use of the word "friend" among male scholars, the only references to "friends" in the *Salve Deus* are to those men who betray Christ. This includes his "three deere friends" (67, line 374), Peter, James, and John. While Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, these disciples turn into "sleeping Friends" who "could not watch one houre for love of thee, / Even those three Friends, which on thy Grace depends, / Yet shut those Eies that

should their maker see" (69, lines 418-20). Lanyer explores the abuses of male friendship for more than 500 lines. Eventually Christ's "deere Disciples" prove traitorous: "Though they protest they never will forsake him, / They do like men, when dangers overtake them" (78, lines 631-32). After Christ is exchanged between Caiphaz, Pilate, and Herod, he is ultimately crucified simply as a gesture of loyalty between the three men who are "friends" (89, line 880; 91, line 919). Lanyer began the *Salve Deus* by claiming, "None lives that can his wondrous workes declare" (54, line 78); his "wondrous works no mortall eie can see" (57, line 148). And yet, ultimately, Christ is a "wonder, more than *man* can comprehend" (103, line 1217--italics mine). The women of the *Salve Deus*, who think with their hearts, live with their eyes wide open, and prefer understanding dreams to easeful sleep, seem to have no problem comprehending the wonder of Christ. Open your eies that you may see, says Pilate's wife. Open your eyes, unlike the three blind examiners, says Lanyer; open your eyes, unlike the three sleeping disciples. Open your eyes to the truth in the way that women do, she says, as she dedicates her text to Queen Anne's "judiciall view" (6, line 64), to the Countess of Bedford's "cleare Judgement" (33, line 15) and "cleare sight" (32, line 7), and to the Countess of Cumberland's "most perfect eyes of. . . understanding" (35, line 28).

In the Renaissance and seventeenth century, then, women found ways to adapt and appropriate the language of the preface, with its attention to encouragement, understanding, judgment, and friendship, to their own ends. However, the prefaces to men's texts had more than vocabulary in common. As the work of Leah Marcus and Jeff Masten illustrates, a number of characteristics are consistent in most of seventeenth-century prefaces by men, the most impressive of which is that the circulation of the book itself is

consistently imagined as an exchange between men. In their dedication of the Shakespeare folio to the earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, for example, Heminge and Condell imagine “a decorous Presentation at the Temple. . . of the ‘first fruits’. . . of their firstborn literary ‘son’” (Marcus *Puzzling Shakespeare* 107). Marcus argues that “[s]imilar ceremonialized offerings were made over and over again in the Jacobean court masque before the ‘divine’ person of the monarch” (107). In the same way that the Shakespeare folio privileges relationships between male couples (i. e. the pair of editors offers the product of their combined efforts to the pair of earls), male-male coupling and collaboration figure prominently in the commendatory verses that preface the Beaumont and Fletcher folio, many of which imagine the authors as the ideal parents. Berkenhead’s poem, “On the happy Collection of Master FLETCHER’S Works, never before PRINTED,” for instance, conceives of the folio as being

(Got by Two Fathers, without Female aid)

Behold, two Masculine espous’d each other,

Wit and the World were born without a Mother.

(qtd. in Masten 137)

This poem, which wishfully yet unequivocally, in the words of Masten, “appropriates female generative power for male purposes” (137), is representative of the sentiment that fills the prefaces to a number of men’s folios. Indeed, Masten’s description of the prefatory discourse of “patriarchal-absolutist and homoerotic modes of textual reproduction” that he identifies in the folio’s commendation (8) is one that could easily be extended to most men’s prefaces. Certainly the majority of seventeenth-century men “wrote

within a paradigm that insistently figured writing as mutual imitation, collaboration, and homoerotic exchange" (9). As Masten points out, "models and rhetorics of sexual relations, intercourse, and reproduction" are bound together with "notions of textual production and property" in the commendatory verses to the Beaumont and Fletcher folio (4).

Wendy Wall's study of Renaissance pretexts shows that in a number of prefaces produced during this period, the

relationship between the male patron and writer is dramatized for the public reader's benefit. The private relationship becomes scandalized when it is staged as the exchange of the 'maiden' textual woman between men. This eroticized exchange is held out to inspire the reader's envy and desire. In fact, the desire for the beautiful woman becomes indistinguishable from the reader's desire for the book. (203)

The necessary factor in prefatory exchanges between men, then, is the woman, who alternatively figures either as the female muse whose powers are ultimately stolen or as the virgin text who is corrupted and despoiled by one or more perpetrators (the press, the pirates, the practice of publication itself) and whose purity can be restored only by a legitimate male representative (the patron, the poet, the authorized preface).

In the prefatory materials to *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, Aemelia Lanyer appropriates these traditions by presenting her text as the male body exchanged between women. According to the biblical history that Lanyer outlines in the preface "To the Vertuous Reader," Christ was always in the midst of communities of women:

it pleased our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, without assistance of man. . . to be begotten of a woman, borne of a woman, nourished of a woman, obedient to a woman; and that he healed woman, pardoned women, comforted women: yea, even when he was in his greatest agonie and bloodie sweat, going to be crucified, and also in the last houre of his death, tooke care to dispose of a woman: after his resurrection, appeared first to a woman, sent a woman to declare his most glorious resurrection to the rest of his Disciplines. (49-50, lines 40-50)

Drawing upon the tradition of Christ as the bridegroom of the Christian church, Lanyer instructs "all vertuous Ladies in generall,"

Put on your wedding garments every one,
The Bridegroom stays to entertaine you all
.....
Let all your robes be purple scarlet white,
Those perfit colour purest Virtue wore,
Come deckt with Lillies. . . .
.....
Come swifter than the motion of the Sunne,
To be transfigur'd with our loving Lord.

(12, lines 8-9, 15-17; 14, lines 50-51)

Queene Anne is encouraged to "let her blessed thoughts this book imbrace" (9, line 144) and to allow "this Booke" to "kisse" her "hands" (9, line 142). But

as the dedication sequence progresses, the descriptions becomes increasingly erotic as Lanyer details the reception that each wife is to give to Christ and the pleasure that she can expect in return. The Countess of Kent is encouraged to "Take this faire Bridegroom in [her] soules pure bed" (20, line 42), and Lady Arabella Stuart is told, "Come like the morning Sunne new out of bed, / And cast your eyes upon this little Booke" (17, lines 8-9). "[S]pare one look / Upon this humbled King, who all forsooke, / That in his dying armes he might imbrace / Your beauteous Soule, and fill it with his grace" (17, lines 11-14), Lanyer tells her. To the Countess of Bedford Christ is presented as "The true-love of [her] soule, [her] hearts delight" (32, line 6). Lanyer invites Bedford,

Vouchsafe to entertaine this dying lover,
 The Ocean of true grace, whose streames doe fill
 All those with Joy, that can his love recover

 Give true attendance on this lovely guest
 While he doth to that blessed bowre impoart
 Flowres of fresh comforts, decke that bed of rest,
 With such rich beauties as may make it blest.

(33, lines 16-18, 23-26)

And even the "noble daughters" of the Countess of Suffolk can "see" in Lanyer's book "a Lover much more true / Than ever was since first the world began" (38, lines 49-53). Lanyer's Christ is one "In whom is all that Ladies can desire" (40, line 85). Indeed, in the dedication to the Countess of Suffolk Lanyer represents him as the ideal partner. "Who can compare with his Divinitie?" Lanyer asks, and she produces a litany of virtues, including

“wisedome,” “wealth,” “honour,” “fame,” “zeale,” “grace,” “love,” “pietie,”
“constancie,” “faith,” “faire obedience,” “valour,” “patience,” “sobrietie,”
“chaste behaviour,” “meekeness,” “continence,” “justice,” “mercie,”
“bountie,” and “charitie.” Importantly, at the head of the list of Christ’s
attributes is “Beauty”: “who hath bin more faire than he?” (40, lines 86-95).
Lanyer concludes the dedication to the Countess of Suffolk by empowering
the female readers to imagine Christ as their lover, suggesting that they spend
their free time “in contemplation / Of his rare parts” and attending to their
“sweet desires” that are “Mounting” their “soules” (40, lines 103-7).

The metaphor of sexual consummation for textual consumption that
Lanyer establishes in her dedications continues throughout the *Salve Deus*.
After Christ’s crucifixion, his “most pretious body” is placed into a tomb that
is, in Lanyer’s version of the story, characterized as a blessed virgin tomb, an
image of the mind of the virtuous woman reader:

a Tombe most rarely blest,
In which was never creature yet interred;
There this most pretious body he inclosed,
Imbalmd and deckt with Lillies and with Roses.

(106, lines 1277-80)

Christ’s body is surrounded by flowers, representing virtuous women readers,
both simple and elite. These lillies and roses are similar to the “sundry
flowers” “[o]f sev’rall colours” that adorn the “fields” that the uniting, male
“spring” runs through in Lanyer’s dream of a community of women readers
and writers (26, lines 109-11). Just as the “spring” unites Art and Nature in
Lanyer’s dream, the spring of Christ’s blood unites the women:

For by his glorious death he us inroules
In deep Characters, writ with blood and teares,
Upon those blessed Everlasting scroules;
His hands, his feete, his body, and his face,
 Whence freely flow'd the rivers of his grace.
Sweet holy rivers, pure celestiall springs,
.....
Swift surged currents that salvation brings.

(124-25, lines 1724-31)

After his resurrection, Lanyer returns to the theme of Christ's beauty, presenting him to her readers of the following manner:

This is that Bridegroom that appeares so faire,
So sweet, so lovely in his Spouses sight,
That unto Snowe we may his face compare,
His cheekes like skarlet, and his eyes so bright
As purest Doves that in the rivers are,
Washed with milke, to give the more delight;
 His head is likened to the finest gold,
 His curled lockes so beauteous to behold;
Blacke as a Raven in her blackest hew;
His lips like skarlet threeds, yet much more sweet
Than is the sweetest hony dropping dew,
Or hony combes, where all the Best doe meet;
Yea, he is constant, and his words are true,

His cheekes are beds of spices, flowers sweet;
His lips, like Lillies, dropping down pure mirrhe,
Whose love, before all worlds we doe preferre.

(107, lines 1305-20)

The description of Christ's body is remarkable in that given all of the attention to color and detail, the picture that Lanyer paints is still considerably vague. Christ's hair is gold and black; his lips are red and white. Lanyer's inclusive description allows each woman reader to imagine Christ in her own way. Indeed, Lanyer concludes her description by drawing attention to her reluctance to complete "This taske of Beauty which [she] tooke in hand" (108, line 1323). Just as she had in the dedication to the Countess of Suffolk, Lanyer again authorizes the female reader to use her imagination and picture Christ in her heart's mind:

There may you reade his true and perfect storie,
His bleeding body there you may embrace,
And kisse his dying cheekes with teares of sorrow,
Withful joyfull grieve, you may intreat for grace;
And all your prayers, and your almes-deeds
May bring to stop his cruell wounds that bleeds.

(108, lines 1331-36)

The attention that Lanyer pays to "almes-deeds" at the conclusion of the *Salve Deus* is significant. Not only is Christ the ideal lover and the perfect book; he is also the ideal reader,

Whose heavenly wisdom read the earthly storie
Of fraile Humanity, which his godhead borrows;
Loe here he coms all stucke with pale deaths arrows:

In whose most pretious wounds your soule may reade
Salvation, while he (dying Lord) doth bleed.

(32, lines 10-14)

But more importantly, Christ is the ideal patron, who in writing a new covenant with his blood has, Lanyer explains, “purchast all [their] loves” (15, line 59). Having the “base and meanest berth” (5, line 46), “so meane a berth” (72, line 476), himself, Christ knows that there is “hony in the meanest flower” (30, line 196), as Lanyer describes herself. Lanyer requests of her lady patrons that they “To virtue yet / Vouchsafe that splendor which [her] meannesse bars” (4, lines 27-28), and as the ideal patron, Christ sets the example for how they are to respond: “Unto the Meane he makes the Mightie bow, / And raiseth up the Poor out of the dust” (56, line 124). As Lanyer explains to the Countess of Dorset, “All worldly blessings he vouchsafes to you, / That to the poore you may return his due” (46, lines 135-36):

Gods Stewards must for all the poore provide,
If in Gods house they purpose to abide.
To you, as to Gods Steward I doe write,
In whom the seeds of virtue have bin sowne.

(43, lines 55-58)

The community of women readers, writers, and patrons that Lanyer

constructs in her dedication sequence, then, is more than a poetic exercise. Lanyer is proposing a real alternative to the system of intellectual and economic exchanges between Renaissance men that is codified and celebrated in the space of the patronymic preface.⁸

* * *

The next three chapters are devoted to a discussion of the textual presentation of Katherine Philips, Margaret Cavendish, and Aphra Behn, three women who inherited both the prefatory conventions of the Renaissance men as well as Renaissance women's strategies for circumventing the gender bias of the patronymic preface. The prefaces to these women's texts participate in different discourses that reflect each woman's approach to writing. Katherine Philips was an amateur writer who circulated her texts in manuscript coterie circles, Margaret Cavendish fashioned herself as a self-crowned laureate, and Aphra Behn was the first professional Englishwoman writer. In each case, however, the author's gender complicates the discourse of the amateur, self-crowned laureate, or professional.

In Chapter Two, I show how the commendatory poem, more than any other type of preface, offered the least amount of space for the woman poet. In the mid-seventeenth century, Katherine Philips circumvented the problem by assuming her politics as the criteria for her right to trade commendatory verse and creating her own discourse of commendation based upon the goals of her particular royalist stance, one that praised those who

⁸ There is a considerable amount of scholarship on the prefaces of Aemilia Lanyer. Those studies that situate the dedication sequence in relation to the eroticized, material text include Jonathan Goldberg, *Desiring Women Writing: English Renaissance Examples* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997); Jacqueline Pearson, "Women Writers and Women Readers: The Case of Aemilia Lanier" In *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing*, ed. Kate Chedgzoy et al., (Duquesne: Duquesne UP, 1997) 45-54, and Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP) 1993.

made restoration and eternal life their cause. Philips makes the restorative mode her own by combining it with the prefatory discourse of the amateur, which imagines the surreptitiously printed text as an innocent girl who has been deflowered and defaced. "Restoration" is a prominent theme in commendatory verses by Philips, and it recurs in the prefatory materials to the 1667 edition of her *Poems*.

In Chapter Three, I respond to those scholars who characterize Margaret Cavendish's prefaces as garrulous, monstrous, vacillating, and unedited by showing how they are deliberately crafted devices for establishing her public identity as England's first self-crowned female laureate. The prefatory discourse of the self-crowned laureate, which values male commendation and establishes the poet as separate and morally superior, occasionally comes into sharp conflict with those sentiments in Cavendish's prefaces that have been identified as feminist, namely her arguments for women's education and female community. Unfortunately, when the ideological stances of these two representations clash, a traditional approach only allows for limited explanations, usually reading Cavendish's sentiments as anti-feminist statements. I read them as pro-laureate rather than anti-feminist. The image of the self-crowned female laureate recurs throughout Cavendish's *Blazing World* and *Life of the Duke*.

Since this study is motivated by an interest in the larger topic of gender and textual presentation in addition to the subject of women's writers' strategies of self-authorization, it is not limited to those prefaces written by Philips, Cavendish, and Behn but also includes prefaces written about them as well as prefaces akin to their several discourses. Chapter Four is devoted to a discussion of A. B.'s *Covent Garden Drollery*, an important work in the history of the anthologized preface because it is the first collection to include a

large selection of pretexts as texts. Moreover, the prologues and epilogues in the drollery participate in the discourse of the professional woman in theatre, representing women (particularly Restoration actresses) in a way that runs counter to the unsympathetic representation of women in other contemporary drolleries. In this century, several scholars have attributed the drollery to Aphra Behn, and a similar attention to women in the theatre is also evident in the prefaces, prologues, and epilogues to Behn's plays, pretexts that argue for the woman artist's ability to impersonate across gender lines.

CHAPTER TWO
RESTORING ORINDA'S FACE:
PREFATORY COMMENDATION AND KATHERINE PHILIPS'S POETRY

My Rimes but libell whom they would commend.
'Tis true; but none can reach what's set so high:
And though I misse, I've noble company.

Katherine Philips¹

According to Franklin B. Williams Jr.'s account, the cult of commendatory verse, which Williams calls the "rise of the art of puffing," reached its apex in the 1650s, a time which saw the publication of the collected works of Beaumont and Fletcher (1647) and William Cartwright (1651) (Williams 3). The former contains thirty-seven and the latter no less than fifty-four "puffs." Williams claims that the composition of commendatory verses was an integral part of the Renaissance curriculum, equal in importance to the learning of Latin, both of which can be considered "puberty rites":

at school and university the cultivation of complimentary verses in the learned tongue was part of the liturgy of that rite. The numerous pamphlets of Latin verses published at the universities

¹ "Mr. Francis Finch, the Excellent Palaemon" (*Poems* 73; *Works* 1: 143-45, lines 64-66).

on memorial or congratulatory occasions from the death of Sidney to the royal blessed event of 1640 suggest that able students as well as dons were pressured to produce polished effusions, and one suspects that at times the task was a study assignment with publication of the best as an incentive. (5)

As the century progressed, commendatory verse came to function as a means for marking one's political and social allegiances and marketing one's literary alliances. This was especially true in royalist circles. Helgerson suggests that "[o]n the basis of commendatory poems alone, we can draw lines connecting, directly or indirectly, virtually all the cavalier poets, and, if we add other poems and nonliterary documents, we end with as tightly woven a net of personal relations as one could produce for any Renaissance generation" (233). In the mid-seventeenth century, then, there was a significant rise in the publication of commendatory verses, and the exchange of these verses played an important part in establishing the reputation of both the author of the commendatory verses and the author of the text that they prefaced.

Because commendatory verse composition was taught at school and university, and because these poems were most frequently exchanged between men who subscribed to the discourse of the aristocratic amateur writer, the commendatory verse, more than any other preface, offered the least amount of space for the woman poet, especially one who was not an aristocrat. As a woman, Katherine Philips was not university educated, and as the daughter of a London merchant and the wife of a prominent Parliamentarian, Katherine Philips certainly was not an aristocrat. An excerpt from one of Philips's letters suggests that in writing commendatory verses

she was consciously stepping over class and gender boundaries: “[S]ometimes I think that to make verses is so much above my reach, and a diversion so unfit for the sex to which I belong that I am about to revolve against it forever” (*Works* 2: 150). Instead of quitting, however, Philips circumvented the hindrances of gender and class by assuming her politics as the criteria for her right to trade commendatory verse and by creating her own discourse of commendation based upon the goals of her particular royalist stance, one that praised those who made restoration and eternal life their cause.

One of Philips’s poems was published when she was only nineteen years old. It was a set of verses written to commend William Cartwright’s *Poems* (1651), and, according to Maureen E. Mulvihill, it “gave her immediate local visibility” (82). Given Philips’s sex and her social rank, contemporary women writers found her participation in the trade of commendatory verses to be a remarkable rarity. Sarah Jinner, in the epistle “To the Reader” that prefaces her *An almanack or prognostication for the year of our Lord 1658*, defends the legitimacy of her own writing with the example set by Philips: “I pray you, what a rare Poem hath one Mistres Katherine Philips near Cardigan writ, it is printed before Cartwrightes Poems, who, if her modesty would permit, her wit would put down many mens in a Masculine strain” (sig. B; qtd. in Beals 153).² In her tribute, Jinner specifies the location of Philips’s poem not only so that the potential reader can find the poem but also so that the reader appreciates that Philips’s poem is a woman’s published commendation of a prominent male poet. Jinner aptly characterizes the genre of the commendatory verse as “masculine.” Written by a group that Patrick

² Peter Beals writes, “This is an especially notable contemporary tribute to Philips since it seems to be based on acquaintance with but a single poem by her, and also apparently on hearsay knowledge, both that the ‘K. P.’ who signed this poem was Katherine Philips and that she lived in Cardigan” (153).

Thomas has described as “a roll-call of royalist sympathisers” (6), the prefatory materials to the Cartwright volume include contributions by John Berkenhead, Henry Brome, Sir Edward Dering, Francis Finch, James Howell, John Jeffreys, Henry Lawes, Martin Llewellyn, Edward Sherburn, Henry Vaughn, and Izaak Walton. The commendatory poems of these eleven men, and forty-two other men, are presented in order of descending rank. Significantly, it is Philips’s commendation that appears first. Katherine Philips’s commendatory verses to others are consistently distinguished by place of prominence. Her commendatory poems appear first in virtually every collection, including Henry Lawes’s *The Second Book of Ayres, and Dialogues* (1655) (sig. b) and Henry Vaughan’s *Thalia Rediviva* (1678) (sig. A5).

The fact that Katherine Philips fully understood the importance of making a good *first* impression cannot be overstated. Throughout her brief literary career, for example, we see her enlisting prominent people as her representatives and distributing gift copies to important figureheads, in particular the Duchess of York and Charles II (*Works* 2: 62, 110). Martha Straznicky posits that “much as she denied it, [Philips] engineered a very public career” (715), and Mulvill interprets the “Orinda myth” as a “remarkable literary campaign conceived and promoted by Philips herself, her relatives, and some of the literary bosses of the Restoration old boys’ network” (73). The “ambition” of Philips, to which Mulvihill and others have pointed (100), is evident even in her choice of subject and style, compatible with the tastes of Charles II and important members of the cavalier literati. In one of her many letters to Sir Charles Cotterell, alias Poliarchus, master of ceremonies to Charles II and Orinda’s London

correspondent and literary agent, Philips's anxiety about pretextual propriety in regards to the publication of *Pompey* is evident. She writes,

I consent to whatever you think fit to do about printing [*Pompey*], but conjure you by all our mutual Friendship, not to put my Name to it, nay, not so much as the least mark or hint whereby the Publick may guess from whence it came; for could I have prevail'd with my self so far as to have made my Name publick in print, I would have beg'd the Dutchess's Leave to have laid it at her Feet in a Dedication: But since that is not to be done without a Name subscrib'd, I have taken the Resolution rather to seem rude in her Opinion, than so confident both in hers and the World's, as to imagine that any thing I could produce were worthy of her Acceptance and Protection, or the Notice or Regard of the Publick. (*Works* 2: 91)

Although Katherine Philips avoided including overtly self-presentational prefaces in her own publications, the sentiments that she expressed in her correspondence and the choices that she made throughout her literary career exhibit an appreciation of both the literary and functional value of the well-wrought pretext.

It could be argued that manuscript exchange is in itself a system in which every text is a pretext to the next. On more than one occasion, Philips employs the tradition of manuscript circulation to distribute a text as a sort of prefatory piece, a text that promises more, looks to the future, begs to be made pretextual. Philips's translation of Act 3 of *Pompey* functioned in this very way. Sometime in 1662, Philips began to circulate a scene, which magically

“fell into” the “Hands” of Roger Boyle, the Earl of Orrery. As Philips explains in a letter to Cotterell, dated August 1662, Orrery “was pleas’d to like it so well, that he sent me the French Original; and the next time I saw him, so earnestly importun’d me to pursue that Translation” (*Works* 2: 47). This gesture initiated a series of exchanges of similar “prefaces” between Orrery and Philips. After she finished the third act and presented it to Orrery, she writes, he “brib’d me to be contented with the Pains by sending me an excellent Copy of Verses, which, were I not conscious of my own Unworthyness, would make me rather forget the Subject, than disbelieve the Complements of his Lordship’s Muse” (*Works* 2: 48). In turn, Philips proposes a similar trade between herself and Cotterell:

I will by my next send you my Lord’s Verses, on Condition that in Exchange you will let me have a Copy of your Translation of *Le Temple de la Mort*; his Lordship is in Love with the Original, and you will infinitely oblige me in putting it in my Power to shew him your excellent Version of it. To bribe you yet farther, I will send you mine of POMPEY as fast as I do it; and because this is no great Temptation, I will send you some Translations from VIRGIL by Mr. COWLEY. (*Works* 2: 48)

On another occasion Philips distributed the songs that she had authored to function as prefaces for her production of *Pompey*. On January 14, 1663, she writes to Cotterell, “The first Song you will find to be brisk, and made on purpose for such an Air. . . . Almost all that can sing here have learnt it already” (*Works* 2: 72). By January 31, 1663, the strategy has worked, and

Philips supposes that the songs “have been the chief reason that has made my Lord Orrery resolve to have *Pompey* acted here” (*Works* 2: 74).

Remarkably, a great deal of Philips’s correspondence is concerned with the carefully controlled correction, distribution and proper use of extratextual materials. In a letter dated January 14, 1663, Philips proudly informs Cotterell that Lord Roscommon and Sir Edward Dering have provided a prologue and epilogue for *Pompey*. She explains, “Several other Hands have likewise oblig’d me with both Prologues and Epilogues; but those I first mention’d will be only repeated; for they are the best writ that ever I read any thing of that kind” (*Works* 2: 75). Evidently, however, even the victorious prologue and epilogue were not above improvement. In a letter dated April 8, 1663, we find Philips promising Cotterell that both have been corrected according to the judgment of the translator and the editor, not Roscommon and Dering: “You will find the Prologue in print much improv’d since ‘twas sent you in writing; and indeed I am proud that your Judgment concurr’d so much with mine in the Approbation of that and the Epilogue” (*Works* 2: 78).

On at least three occasions, she solicited Cotterell’s advice on how to address the Duchess of York in a dedication, in Paulina Kewes’s words, “agonizing at length” over such matters (25). In a letter dated December 27, 1662, she explains her strategy:

Believe me, Poliarchus, I writ the Letter to the Dutchess in Prose, neither out of Laziness nor Disrespect, but merely because I thought it would have look’d more pedantick and affected to have address’d my self to her in Verse. I verily believe I could more easily have pleas’d my self with what I should have said in Rhime, but I

thought Prose would savour less of Ostentation: Besides, having so lately written to her in Verse, on a like occasion, I strictly enjoin'd my self to write in Prose now, and that too by the Advice of all my Friends here; who, I hope were not mistaken in their Opinions, and that the matter of my Application to her Highness will not be misunderstood, nor taken amiss. (*Works* 2: 66)

Philips's correspondence suggests that prefaces were clearly important to her. It is difficult to reconcile her almost obsessive attention to prefaces and her stance against prefatory self-presentation without an understanding of historical and contemporary attitudes toward and practices of preface writing.

Following classical tradition, a preface of any kind (dedicatory or otherwise) was regarded as unseemly. Greek rhetoricians advised against prefaces for two reasons: they were considered unethical—a trick to woo the audience—and they were signs of weakness in that they existed outside the text-proper. To Aristotle, the well-written text was solely comprised of truth, was in itself pure, and, therefore, had no need of any extratextual crutch (Dunn *Pretexts of Authority* 2). Like her contemporary John Milton, who wrote that “Heav’n’s high behest no Preface needs” (*Paradise Lost* 11.251) and whose lack of prefaces is equally remarkable, Philips subscribed to the Greek philosophy of the preface. The “good man,” like the good poet, Philips explained in a poem entitled “Happiness,” “takes no pains to be observ’d or seen, / While all his acts are echoed from within” (*Poems* 118-19; *Works* 1: 188-90, lines 17, 37-38). These sentiments form an integral part of the production, circulation, and reception of Philips’s writing. In order to present her self and her work as virtuous, truthful, and proper, Katherine Philips

must appear to provide no text except for the text-proper. Philips's gimmick is that she has no gimmick. Whenever possible, then, Philips chooses to represent herself as invisible.³ Her solution to the *Pompey* problem is to substitute her patron's authority for her own. She suggests to Cotterell,

I remember to have seen some French Books, without any formal Dedication where there was in the Title Pages, *Dedié a Madame la Princesse, & c.* or the like; why may not we do so too, and say for Example, in the Title Page of POMPEY, *Humbly dedicated to her Royal Highness the Dutchess of YORK*, and no more? If you think this be proper, let it be so; for I am in a great streight between the Desire I have to appear intirely devoted to the Dutchess, and not to appear at all in my true Colours to the World. (*Works* 2: 91)

This passage is important as evidence of Philips's attention to the textual presentation of her predecessors and contemporaries. Furthermore, it establishes Philips's propensity for a particular brand of prefatory rhetoric, the discourse of the aristocratic amateur, which draws heavily upon the traditions of French and English courtier writers,⁴ including the Sidneys and

³ Representing oneself as invisible, I would argue, is not the same as *being* invisible. As Elaine Hobby points out, "In the copy [of *Pompey*] that she sent to the Countess of Roscommon [Philips] certainly made no attempt to hide her name, and the stationer Henry Herringman knew whom to contact when he wanted to bring out a London edition of *Pompey*" (130). Importantly, for all of her protestations of modesty, Philips never resorts to the tradition of the covert paratext; her own initials and signature, and not anyone else's, appear with the commendatory verses to Cartwright and Lawes that were published in the 1650s.

⁴ In "'Un Honneste Passetems': Strategies of Legitimation in French Renaissance Women's Prefaces," Anne R. Larsen offers an overview of the prefatory rhetoric of Madeleine des Roches, Louise Labé, Georgette de Montenay, and Anne de Marquets. Katherine Philips seems to borrow heavily from the tradition of "discours d'escorte" (12). Philips's indebtedness to French prefatory practices deserves further study.

de Scudéry's, and which makes frequent use of the humility trope.⁵

The modesty trope has a significantly long history that dates as far back as the Roman Empire. Although Latin writers inherited from their Greek predecessors a general resistance to preface writing, they nevertheless wrote a good deal of them in the form of defenses and explanations. A characteristic preoccupation in these prefaces was the attempt to excuse the act of writing, which the Romans, unlike the Greeks, considered to be an ignoble practice. According to Tore Janson, Latin preface writers subscribed to the principle of imitation and "avoided projecting their own personalities" (160). In the prose prefaces of the period, "The quality receiving by far the greatest emphasis is the writer's modesty. There is stressed in every conceivable way what little faith the author has in his own capacity and particularly in his capacity to write" (159). Janson also notes "a tendency to renounce responsibility, as manifested in the request for revision and correction and the transfer of responsibility to the dedicatee. In addition to this we sometimes find that the author renounces all claim to originality or personal title to authorship" (159).

Without question, Philips frequently draws upon the modesty trope. In a letter to Cotterell that she authorized for distribution as an *apologia*, Philips discredits her writing and transfers the responsibility for the publication of her poems, even in manuscript form, on to her friends:

The truth is, I have always had an incorrigible Inclination to the

⁵ The title page of Mosley's edition of Madeleine de Scudéry's *Clelia* (1655), one of Philips's favorite writers, lists the book as *Clelia: An Excellent New Romance Dedicated to Mademoiselle de Longueville*. And the romances by the Sidneys, specifically Philip's and Mary's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* and Lady Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, characteristically indicate the dedicatee by making her name part of the title rather than part of a separate dedication.

Vanity of Rhyming, but intended the Effects of that Humour only for my Amusement in a retir'd Life, and therefore did not so much resist it as a wiser Woman would have done: But some of my dearest and best Friends having found my Ballads (for they deserve no better a Name) they made me so much believe they did not dislike them, that I was betray'd to permit some Copies to be taken for other's Diversion, but this with so little Concern for them, that I have lost most of the Originals. (*Works* 2: 234-35)

Regarding this passage, Carol A. Limbert argues that "Philips is carefully painting a picture of herself as a stupid, foolish woman whose friends' flattery caused her to allow her poems to be circulated and whose poems mattered so little to her that she had lost 'most' of the originals. . . . Philips made these statements because they were expected of her by her society and because they were a way of protecting herself" (38). It is certainly possible that Philips was drawn to the humility trope in part because of gendered stereotypes of authorship and out of fear of being branded as an outspoken, public woman. Historically, Philips is not the only woman writer who prefaced her works with self-disparaging remarks. Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, for example, referred to herself in her prefaces as "a worthless little woman" who wrote "clownish compositions."⁶ Ezell points out that a number of seventeenth-century women writers adopted the humility trope: "In the prefaces of books by women, certain patterns emerge. Those women who printed under their own names took great pains to assure their readers that it was not a desire for personal fame and fortune that prompted them to print" (*Patriarch's Wife*

⁶ For a reading of Hrotsvitha's female abjection as a prefatory rhetorical strategy, see Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986) 73-75.

87). Philips's statement, then, would have been recognized by her society not only as gender-norm compliance as a self-protective tactic, but more importantly as a particular kind of prefatory discourse with recognizable conventions that were employed by several writers regardless of gender. As Ezell reminds us, both women and men who wrote in seventeenth-century England were customarily self-deprecating and justified their excursions into print based on their obedience to the authority of God or friends.⁷ Robert Greene, in his preface to *Mamillia* (1593), remarks upon the numerous Renaissance authors' references to their books as "vanities, shadowes, imperfect patterns, more mete for the pedler than the printer, toyes, trifles, trash, trinkets" (Gerbert 12), and John Lyly presents himself to "the Gentlemen Readers" of *Euphues* (1579) as one that "seeketh pardon for his offence" of writing (Gerbert 51). Like these men's, Philips's stance is that of the courtly amateur who "claimed to write only for his own amusement and that of his friends" (Helgerson 37).⁸

⁷ In particular, Ezell singles out Hannah Woolley, Quaker pamphleteer Elizabeth Bathurst, Anglican Elinor James, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Lady Mary Chudleigh, John Flowres, Edward Reyner, and T. M. (*Patriarch's Wife* 87-88).

⁸ As Ros Ballaster has recently shown, both Philips and Cavendish borrow heavily from Renaissance models ("Restoring" 324-52). Importantly, though, when the authors themselves draw attention to their use of them, Cavendish emphasizes her difference and Philips stresses her adherence. Philips and Cavendish also differ in the way that they represent the office of the poet. Although she feigned indifference in state affairs, Cavendish often depicts the poet as the monarch's counselor. In Philips's poetry and plays, the poet's appropriate role is to entertain and defend, but never to instruct, the patron. The first song to *Pompey* establishes the poet's primary function: to "contribute" to the king's "repose." But this is not an unimportant office; "diversion" from the "angry and rough" business of state is absolutely necessary for the monarch to perform at his best (*Works* 3: 21-22). In "Upon the double murder of K. Charles," Philips suggests that it is acceptable for the poet to defend the king publicly and castigate those subjects who contribute to his abuse (*Works* 1:6, lines 1-10). Council and advice from subjects, however, including poets and parliamentarians, is never beneficial. As Cleopatra explains in act 2, scene 1 of *Pompey*: "whilst [princes] trust themselves, they still are brave. / All the disorders, which in Kings we see, / To others Councils must imputed be" (*Works* 3: 23, lines 18-20).

Given Philips's complicated stance toward prefatory rhetoric, especially her interest in avoiding visible signs of self-promotion and immodesty, her inclination to participate in the exchange of commendatory verse should come as no surprise. In particular Philips was proud of "all the Prologues and Epilogues that were sent me for POMPEY, and all the complementing Verses I receiv'd on that Translation; together with a Prologue spoken the other day to a Play that was acted before my Lord Lieutenant, in which the Poet has taken occasion to flatter me on account of POMPEY" (*Works* 2: 88). In April 1663, Philips wrote to Cotterell, "I have had many Letters and Copies of Verses sent me, some from Acquaintance, and some from Strangers, to compliment me upon POMPEY, which, were I capable of Vanity, would even surfeit me with it; for they are so full of Flattery, that I have not the Confidence to send them to you" (*Works* 2: 78). Philips's seemingly modest reluctance to advertise her success was short lived. She sent a copy of the collection of commendations to Cotterell the next month. Surely these materials were invaluable to Philips, for they made it possible for her to authorize a preface without actually authoring it herself; they made it possible for Philips to render, rather than to represent, her public self. The extra-textual material that Philips supplied to her literary agent would soon be put to important use.

On January 14, 1664 an advertisement appeared in the *London Intelligencer* announcing the publication of "the Poems of the incomparable Madam Catherine Philips. Sold by Richard Marriot at his shop under St. Dunstan in Fleetstreet" (qtd in Souers 234). Katherine Philips claimed that she did not authorize the publication, that the poems were printed surreptitiously. Her complaints motivated a series of events that ultimately resulted in what Ezell has called "the most celebrated incident of a woman's

distress over appearing in print" (*Patriarch's Wife* 85). In responding to the unauthorized publication, Philips was faced with a dilemma, for if the publication had damaged the appearance of invisibility that she had so carefully cultivated, her very adherence to the code of concealment made it difficult for her to restore her public image without resorting to the kind of visibility that she claimed to oppose. How could Philips address her readers without writing an address to her readers?

In the weeks immediately following the advertisement of the 1664 edition of *Poems*, Katherine Philips sent out a series of letters (we know of at least four and the preface to *Poems* (1667) suggests that there were many more), asking her friends to *publish* her innocence.⁹ She instructs Colonel John Jeffries "to get ye Printer punished, the book called in, and me some way publicly vindicated" (qtd. in Souers 222-23). To Cotterell, who has advised her to "vindicate herself by publishing a true copy" of her poems as well as a prefatory defense in verse, she sends two letters, one to Cotterell and one addressed to Cotterell but intended for her larger reading public. The latter epistle is concerned entirely with Philips's "true Thoughts" on the surreptitious publication; Philips explains that she has "mix'd nothing else with it" so that Cotterell may "shew it to any body that suspects [her] Ignorance and Innocence of that false Edition of [her] Verses." This letter, then, which explains the author's side of the situation and suggests how the reader should interpret both the author and the text, is meant to function as an author's preface, a manuscript writer's version of an epistle to the readers. Philips suggests that her preface will be more effective because it will circulate under the guise of a private letter. Her choice to write in prose serves as

⁹ The author of the preface to *Poems* (1667) explains, "She writ divers Letters to many of her other friends full of the like. . ." (sig. ar).

evidence of the letter's authenticity. "I believe it will make a greater Impression on them, than if it were written in Rhyme," she explains (*Works* 2: 125). This was not the first time that the importance of creating an impression of sincerity and truthfulness was also a determining factor in Philips's decision to write a preface in prose; in composing the dedication of *Pompey* to the Duchess of York, Philips opted for prose, which "would savour less of Ostentation," rather than verse, which "would have look'd more pedantick and affected" (*Works* 2: 66).

In addition to the letters to Jeffries and Cotterell, Philips wrote another epistle to Dorothy Temple, informing her,

some most dishonest person hath got some collection of my Poems
as I heare, and hath deliver'd them to a Printer who I heare is just
upon putting them out and this hath soe extreamly disturbed me,
both to have my private folly so unhandsomely exposed and ye
belief that I believe the most part of ye worlde are apt enough to
believe yt I connived at this ugly accident that I have been on ye
rack ever since I heard it. (qtd. in Souers 222)

Philips concludes by repeating her request for her friends to produce her public vindication: "I shall need all my friends to be my champions to ye criticall and mallicious that I am soe innocent of this pittiful design of a knave to get a groat that I never was more vexed at anything and yt I utterly disclaim whatever he hath soe unhandsomely expos'd." Otherwise, Philips explains, "I must never show my face there or among any reasonable people again" (qtd. in Souers 223).

Philips's allies responded quickly to their friend's loss of face. On January 18th, four days after he had advertised the poems, the *London Intelligencer* published Richard Marriot's confession that in unwittingly printing an incorrect, unauthorized edition of her poems, he had done Philips "a double Injury." Marriott announced that he had withdrawn the edition and concluded by expressing his "hope" that "this false Copy, may produce the true One" (qtd. in Souers 234). Cotterell, too, encouraged Philips to publish an authorized edition of her poems, and although she thought it "too airy a way of resenting such an Injury" (*Works* 2: 125), she promised, "if you still think it proper, I will resign my Judgment and Humour to yours, and try what I can do that way" (125). Even six months later, in the last poem Philips wrote, "To his Grace Gilbert Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury," she is still preoccupied with the piracy, which she dramatizes as the rape and molestation of a "Hebrew Virgin":

That private shade, wherein my Muse was bred,
She alwaies hop'd might hide her humble head;
Believing the retirement she had chose
Might yield her, if not pardon, yet repose;
Nor other repetitions did expect,
Than what our Ecchoes from the Rocks reflect.
But hurry'd from her Cave with wild affright,
And dragg'd maliciously into the Light.
(Which makes her like the Hebrew Virgin mourn
When *from her face her Veil was rudely torn*)
To you (my Lord) she now for succour calls,

And at your feet, with just confusion falls.

(*Poems* 166-67; *Works* 1: 239-40, lines 1-12--italics mine)

In the rest of the poem Philips suggests the similarities between her victimized, unveiled, defaced self and the broken condition of the church, and concludes with a request to the Archbishop to “Govern,” “Restore,” and “repair” the “Ruines” of both (*Works* 1: 240, lines 20-21, 41).

The discourse of defacement / restoration is associated with the monarchy from the time of the civil war. On April 27, 1646, Charles I fled Oxford wearing servant’s clothes, his hair and beard cut short. When royalists anxiously refer to the event known as the King’s disguise, they employ what James Loxley terms “the language of defacement” (139, 152). Loxley argues that the *Eikon* (1649) was published in an effort to restore the image of the monarch in general, and the representation of Charles’s body in particular: “as a relic of the royal martyr the *Eikon* appropriates the corporeal substance of its author, fusing writer and writing in the one object” (182; see also Potter 175). When Philips alludes to the Oxford event, she refuses to record Charles’s disguise as a success. Importantly, she equates the impossibility of hiding the king’s nobility with the noble poet’s difficulty in keeping his work from being published. In “To Mr. J. B. the noble Cratander, upon a Composition of his which he was not willing to own publicly,” Philips imagines John Berkenhead’s situation:

As when some injur’d Prince assumes Disguise,
And strives to make his Carriage sympathize,
Yet hath a great becoming Meen and Air,

Which speaks him Royal spight of all his care:
So th' Issues of thy Soul can ne're be hid,
And the Sun's force may be as soon forbid
As thine obscur'd; there is no shade so great
Through which it will not dart forth light and heat.
Thus we discover thee by thy own Day,
Against thy will snatching the Cloud away.

(*Poems* 31-32; *Works* 1:100-101, lines 1-10).¹⁰

These examples suggest that the restorative mode is always premised on some inadequacy. While this is a problem when writing about a king, the very ambiguities and problematics make it a compatible mode for an amateur woman writer.¹¹ In petitioning for the restoration of her defaced poetry and reputation, Katherine Philips was making the restorative mode her own by combining it with the prefatory discourse of the amateur, which imagines the surreptitiously printed text as an innocent girl who has been deflowered and defaced.

We will never know whether or not Philips intended to publish an authorized edition of her poems; six months after the surreptitious publication, she died of smallpox. At the same time, around 1666-7, writers like John Milton and Andrew Marvell began to appropriate the language of defacement / restoration to critique rather than support the court party (Jose 102). When Milton's Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden, for instance,

¹⁰ Interestingly, Philips employs the same language when she writes of the surreptitious publication of her poetry in her poem to the Archbishop of Canterbury (see pages 49-50 of this chapter.)

¹¹ I am grateful to Jessica Munns for suggesting this idea to me.

they look back to see that the entrance to the paradise they have lost is “thronged” with “dreadful faces” (*Paradise Lost* 12.644). And Marvell’s attention to faces is especially rigorous. As Jose points out, in Marvell’s three “Advice to a Painter” poems, “the language of the restoration is beginning to be reworked in a way which was to prove politically constructive, and stubbornly subversive of the Stuart cause” (102). In these poems about the failure of the Dutch wars and the corruption of the court, the royal fleet is “divided” like the “Face” of the soldier Arlington, secretary to the Earl of Bristol (“The third Advice to a Painter” 139, line 298). The Duke and the Duchess of York are represented as incompetent, self-interested fools, and Barbara Villiers, Lady Castlemaine and Margaret Brooke, Lady Denham are represented as licentious sluts who slight their partners’ “Face[s]” (“The last Instructions to a Painter” 155, lines 76, 85). The courtiers are represented as “a despicable Rout” who nevertheless “know the World, and well [can] face about” (157, line 158). The only character whose face emerges unscathed belongs to Archibald Douglas, the commander of a company of Scottish troops, who “fac’d that horrid Day, / And wonder’d much at those that [ran] away” (176, lines 659-60) and yet ultimately dies in flames: “His burning Locks adorn his Face divine” (line 682). At the end of the poem, Charles II awakes in the middle of the night to imagine “th’ uneasy Throne” (183, line 888), and this image gives way to “a sudden shape with Virgin’s Face” (line 889), which is either “*England or the Peace*” (line 904):

Her mouth lockt up, a blind before her Eyes;
Yet from beneath the *Veile* her blushes rise,
And silent Tears her secret anguish speak;

Her Heart throbbes and with very shame would break.

(lines 893-96--italics mine)

At least three of the people satirized in Marvell's poems were in some way connected with Katherine Philips's translated dramas. Philips had dedicated *Pompey* to the Duchess of York, Lady Castlemaine played Camilla in the court production of Philips's *Horace*, and Sir John Denham had completed the translation of *Horace* after Philips's death. Because during her life Philips had represented herself as a royalist poet as well as a modest, virtuous woman who had been forcefully defaced and unveiled, one way to reclaim the discourse of defacement / restoration for the court party was to publish a restored edition of the poetry and drama of Philips.

In 1667, *POEMS By the most deservedly Admired Mrs. KATHERINE PHILIPS The matchless ORINDA: To which is added MONSIEUR CORNEILLE'S POMPEY & HORACE, With several other Translations out of FRENCH* was published by Henry Herringman (also Denham's publisher). The collection was prefaced by many of the commendatory verses that Philips had given to Cotterell in 1663, including poems by the Earl of Orrery, The Earl of Roscommon, Abraham Cowley, and "Philo-Philipa," whom Philips believed to be an Irish woman. Additionally, *Poems* contained three elegies by James Tyrrell, Thomas Flatman, and, again, Abraham Cowley as well as "The Preface," probably written by Cotterell, in which the master of ceremonies reprinted his copy of the manuscript "preface" that Philips had sent to him to distribute on her behalf after she learned of the surreptitious publication in 1664. As was the case with those who supplied commendatory verses to Cartwright's volume of poetry, Philips's list of commenders are

predominantly royalist sympathizers and poets who subscribe to the code of amateurism. As Carol Barash has recently pointed out, the collection of commendatory verses and elegies “was crucial in constructing the public image and reputation of Philips that has stood for over three hundred years” (58n). Importantly, the prefatory materials are replete with the same language of defacement / restoration that Philips employed in the presentation of her public self throughout her literary career and in response to the surreptitious publication in particular.

* * *

Each of the three terms in the title of this chapter, “Restoring Orinda’s Face,” points to important, recurrent themes in the prefatory materials to *Poems* (1667) and in the work of Katherine Philips. To begin with, the text itself is presented by Philips and significant members of her network as the *recovered* text, and the restoration of its appearance and authority becomes synonymous with the restoration of Katherine Philips’s potentially damaged virtue and reputation. In particular, the writers of the preface and commendatory verses are preoccupied with restoring Philips’s damaged textual body to good health, transforming it into the property of the spiritual, virtuous Orinda. Interestingly, they set about the task of restoring the writer by literally covering her body of work with layers of prefaces, as if in an effort to produce an impenetrable face, the face of Orinda, posthumously restored to life and, importantly, endowed with a special kind of restorative power herself.

In imagining the second printing of Philips’s *Poems* as the unanticipated and unwelcome reaction necessitated by the unfortunate and unconscionable publication of the unauthorized edition, Philips’s production team borrows

heavily from the Renaissance discourse of amateurism. Those who subscribe to this discourse often claim that they have had publicity thrust upon them, that their new and often boldly authorized versions are born of necessity rather than audacity or desire for celebrity. In his "To Any Who Will Read It," to cite only one of many Renaissance examples, Michael Drayton presents the second edition of *Poly-Oblion* as just this sort of recovery effort. As Drayton tells it, the printers bungled the first edition of the collection quite badly, for they "either despightfully left out, or at least carelessly neglected the Epistles to the Readers," an action that enables Drayton to conclude that the printers have "cousoned the Buyers with *unperfected* Bookes" (Gerbert 217-18--italics mine). Drayton has been forced to publish the restored second edition, complete with a fully authorized "face" in an effort to present the perfect book.¹² In a number of seventeenth-century texts, the hyper-authorized preface is the hallmark of the discourse of the restored, second edition. In his dedication of *Kemp's Nine Daies Wonder* (1600) to Anne Fitton, for example, William Kemp shudders at the thought of "having but an ill face before" and then "appearing to the world without a [pre]face" (Gerbert 143). Three factors motivate Kemp's decision "to make publick this journey," first, to "reprove lying fooles I never knew," second, "to commend loving friends," and third, to "show his duty" to his patron (Gerbert 144). Of these three reasons, Kemp devotes most of the preface to complaining against the "lying fooles" and his printers, "A sort of mad fellows" who "have so bepainted [him] in print," causing the book to include "thinges that were never thought" (Gerbert 143). This prefatory convention in which "the

¹² In the preface to *She Ventures, and He Wins* (1696), Ariadne writes, "I Dare not venture to send this Play bare-fac'd into the World, without saying something in its defense" (sig. A2).

author was forced to publish his book because so many copies, mean and defaced, had been sent abroad to printers" was in many cases, Clara Gerbert suggests, "likely a mere hoax to mystify readers in order to relieve the poet of responsibility for the publication of his own works" (9).

The prefatory discourse of the restored text, then, can only come after the seizure of the text, which also is, according to Wendy Wall, a prevalent convention in seventeenth-century prefaces:

The most common means for the writer or printer to ease the text into the public eye was for him to suggest that publication did not have full authorial consent. This strategy of dissociating text and author created a skewed vision of printed texts; they seemed to be private words snatched away from their producers and offered for sale to the public. (173)

These two conventions, that of the text as the author's secrets made available for general consumption against the author's will and that of the despoiled text in need of authorial restoration, operate in tandem in a number of early prefaces. Probably the most noteworthy one is John Day's "The P. to the Reader," which prefaces Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's second edition of *Gorboduc*. This play, performed for the Inner Temple and subsequently for Elizabeth I, was "never intended by the authors therof to be published." While both men were out of town, "one W. G." had the audacity to "put it forth exceedingly corrupted." Days goes on to imagine the printer of the first edition as a rapist: "even as if by meanes of a broker for hire, he should have enticed into his house a faire maide and done her villanie." The

feminized text emerges from her first pressing barely recognizable to “her frendes,” for the printer has “bescratched her face, torne her apparell, berayed and disfigured her, and then thrust her our of dores dishonested.” Her “parentes, the authors” have taken care to present her “for common honestie and shamefastnesse new apparelled, trimmed, and attired her in such forme as she was before,” and the printer has dressed her in “one poore blacke gowne lined with white” so that she may “goe abroad among you withall” (Gerbert 34-35).

Similarly, the image of the maimed face is one that recurs in the materials that preface Sir Philip Sidney’s work. H. S.’s epistle “to the Reader,” which introduces the 1599 edition of the *New Arcadia*, refers to the old *Arcadia* as “the disfigured face” that Mary took “in hand the wiping away those spots wherewith the beauties thereof were unworthely blemished” (sig. n. pag.). Similarly, Mary’s prefatory poem to *Psalms*, “To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney,” refers to the manuscript left at Sidney’s death as a “half maim’d peece” that his “matchlesse Muse begunne” and she has “finish’t now” (xxxv-vi). Mary Sidney’s language to describe the restoration of the “maimed” works of a “matchless” poet is clearly and deliberately echoed in the prefatory materials to the *Poems* of Katherine Philips, the “Matchless Orinda.”¹³

¹³ The term “matchless” is also used in reference to Renaissance manuscript scribe Esther Inglis. She and her husband Bartholomew Kello were “in charge of passports, testimonials, and letters of commendation” (Goldberg *Writing Matter* 146—italics mine). Inglis was primarily a “copyist of religious texts,” but she also wrote several prefaces and prefixed a number of self-portraits to her works (147). In Inglis’s gift book transcription of *Octonaries Upon the Vanitie and Inconstancie of the World* (1607), which she offered to William Jeffrey, a G. D. wrote of her as the “matchlesse Mistresse of the golden Pen” (qtd. in Goldberg *Writing Matter* 150). G. D. goes on to characterize her as the “glorie of her sex, and mirakill to men” who “Dost purchase to thy selfe immortell prayse and fame / By draughts inimitable, of thy unmatched Pen” (qtd. in Goldberg 148). This language is the same used in the recreation of Philips as the “matchless” Orinda.

In the prose preface, both the first edition and its author are represented as potentially despoiled bodies. The preface reads almost like a narrative, for the author of the preface (probably the printer) relates the story of the 1664 and 1667 editions. The 1664 edition is referred to as “the false Edition” that “stole into the light” and “exposed” the author, and much ado is made of the efforts of Philips and her “friends” to “get it suppress’d” (*Poems* sig. Ar). To underline Philips’s complete adherence to the code of amateurism, the preface reprints the previously mentioned letter that Philips supplied to Cotterell, and the author of the preface presents the letter as evidence “to shew how little she desired the fame of being in print” (sig. Ar).¹⁴ As I have already suggested, and as Hobby has accurately remarked, this letter “was not the ‘private’ communication it is presented as, but was designed for a public audience” (132). Indeed, the letter functions as a sort of staged secret, “taken from her own hand” and written “under that disguised name” which she used “with most of her particular friends” (*Poems* sig. Ar). Hobby’s notion that “the image of Orinda that has come down to us is dependent on the belief that her writing was really a secret and private affair” (129) is inarguably accurate when applied to this preface.

In many ways, the presentation of Philips’s 1667 edition is reminiscent of the presentation of Sidney’s *Arcadia*. When Philip Sidney died, he left an undated letter to his sister in which he referred to the manuscript copy of *Arcadia* as “a trifle,” specifying that the book’s “chiefe safetie” would be in

¹⁴ Ballaster remarks that Philips’s recorded compulsion to control her relationship to print complicates her protestation that she was solely interested in the manuscript circulation of her works within her coterie (“Restoring” 235-36). In a letter to Cotterell, Philips writes, “Let me know what they say of me at Court *and every where else*, upon this last Accident, and whether the exposing all my follies in this dreadful Shape has not frightened *the whole World* out of all their Esteem for me” (*Works* 2:224-25—italics mine). Philips’s interest in “the whole world” suggests that she desired to reach a wider reading audience than she herself might have been willing to admit in public.

“not walking abroad” (Gerbert 65-66). This letter was published by Fulke Greville as a preface to the *New Arcadia* in 1590.¹⁵ Recently Annabel Patterson has remarked upon the “obvious conflict” inherent in using a private letter that records an author’s resistance to print as the preface to the published version of the text. Given the incongruity between Sidney’s request and the end result, Patterson suggests that the possibility that “the letter is only a clever and specious disclaimer” devised by either the author or the printer (27).

Indeed, there are several cases of seventeenth-century writers employing clever and specious strategies to publish their works. Probably the most notorious is George Gascoigne, who engineered what Wall refers to as a “literary psuedomorph,” a device used by some gentlemen amateur poets in an effort to evade the consequences of intentionally appearing in print. Following this strategy, the author allowed the first edition of a text to be regarded as a piracy, thereby necessitating an authorized second edition and excusing his foray into print. When Gascoigne’s *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* was printed in 1573, it included a series of prefaces that suggested, without identifying Gascoigne as the author, that *Flowres* was a manuscript work intercepted by the printer. In 1575, Gascoigne republished the work as *The Posies* under his own name, presenting it as the converted and correct work, a claim which is bolstered by twenty commendatory verse prefaces (Wall 245-46). Philips’s correspondence is replete with her concern that the public will disbelieve her protestations of innocence and interpret the 1664 edition of *Poems* as a literary psuedomorph engineered by Philips herself. Curiously, there is no record of Philips asking to see the 1664 version of her

¹⁵ “To My Deare Ladie and Sister, The Countesse of Pembroke” preface to *Arcadia* (1590).

Poems, and the order of poems remains the same in both collections, causing even some modern critics to conclude that the lady doth protest too much.¹⁶

But the public's interception of secret, private writing is also a theme that becomes replete with royalist feeling by the mid-seventeenth century. After the royalists' defeat at Naseby, parliament seized Charles I's private letters to the queen and subsequently published them in a pamphlet, putting the originals on display in a room in Westminster.¹⁷ In the introduction to the pamphlet, entitled *The King's Cabinet Opened* (1645), the publishers argue that "the King himselfe has not appeared with an open face in the business" (sig. [A4v]). The royalist response to the parliament-sponsored publication of the king's duplicity was to argue that the letters were private and that in reading them the rebels had violated at least one of the king's two bodies. Christ Church poet Martin Llewellyn, for instance, proposes, "Our *Thoughts* no *Commons*, but *Inclosures* are: / What bold *Intruders* then are who assaile, / To cut their Princes *Hedge*, and break His *Pale*" (*Satyr, occasioned by the author's survey of a Scandalous Pamphlet Intituled The King's Cabinet Opened* 2).

In language reminiscent of the royalist complaint against the publication

¹⁶ Lists of the contents of the three manuscript collections of Philips's poetry and the 1664 edition are provided in Barash (291-98). Lucy Brashear argues that Philips could have concocted the piracy as a sort of public relations campaign strategy (68-76). Elizabeth H. Hageman espouses a more moderate view: "Philips means what she says: she did not choose to publish a collection of her verse. Moreover, had she anticipated a volume of her work, she would have wanted control over which poems would appear--and in what form" (579). Philips is like the Wizard of Oz, and we are not fooled when she tells us to pay no attention to that woman behind the curtain. Or are we? The fact is that we are not sure at what point the woman ends and the magician begins. This is at once the strength and weakness of the invisible preface.

¹⁷ For more on the response to the interception of Charles's letters see Patterson (209) and Potter (59).

of the king's letters, Philips complains of being "expos'd to the world" and of her "unworthy usage," "injury," and "abuse" (*Poems* sig. Av; *Works* 2: 147). "[E]very way I have so much injury," Philips writes, "and the worthy persons that had the ill luck of my converse, and so their Names expos'd in this impression without their leave, that so few things in the power of Fortune could have given me so great a torment as this most afflictive accident" (*Poems* sig. A2v; *Works* 2: 151).¹⁸ She insists upon her "innocence" and expresses her desire to "recover those fugitive Papers that have escap'd my hands" (*Poems* sig. A2v; *Works* 2: 147-48), quoting Lord Falkland to establish her amateuristic resistance to "a Press" and Sir Edward Derrington's epilogue to her own *Pompey* as proof of her "chaste lines" (*Poems* sig. A2r; *Works* 2: 149). In particular, Philips objects to the theft of her private property, referring to herself as follows:

I who am that unfortunate person that cannot so much as think in private, that must have my imaginations rifled and exposed to play the Mountebanks, and dance upon the Ropes to entertain all the rabble; to undergo all the raillery of the Wits, and the severity of the Wise, and to be the sport of some that can, and some that cannot read a Verse. (*Poems* sig. Av; *Works* 2: 148)

"This is," Philips claims, "a most cruel accident" (*Poems* sig. Av; *Works* 2: 148).

¹⁸ If it is true as Arlene Stiebel argues that Philips employed "masquing techniques" to disguise the lesbianism in her poetry and that her "contemporaries recognized the homosexual bias" of Philips as a poet (226), then certainly Philips's concern to protect the identity of those who participated in the "conversation" (a term that in the seventeenth century had sexual undertones) might also have motivated her desire to keep her poems private.

After quoting Philips's letter in its entirety, the writer of the preface goes on to tell the story of her death and of the subsequent collaborative production of the 1667 edition of *Poems*. In particular, the author of the preface unequivocally states the editorial philosophy at work throughout the compilation process:

all industry has been us'd to make this Collection *as full and as perfect as it might be*, by the addition of many that were not in the former impression, and by divers Translations, whereof the first has the Original in the opposite Page. . . . In short though some of her Pieces may perhaps be lost, and others *in hands that have not produc'd them*; yet none that upon good grounds could be known to be hers, are left out; for many of the less considerable ones were publish'd in the other; but those, or others that shall be judged so, may be excused by the politeness of the rest which have more of *her true spirit*, and of her diligence. (*Poems* sig. arv--italics mine)

Interestingly, while making no attempt to claim that Philips herself authorized the 1667 edition before her death (instead the texts are presented "as she possibly her self would have done, had she consented to a second Edition"), the writer of the preface makes a clear distinction between those who were involved in the production of the 1664 and 1667 editions. The latter group is concerned with engineering the metamorphosis of Katherine Philips's "deformed Poems" in "that strange disguise" into "the beauties of [Orinda's] mind" (*Poems* sig. a2v). The preface concludes with a reference to "these once transformed, or rather deformed Poems, which, are here in some

measure restor'd to their native Shape and Beauty" (*Poems* sig. a2v).

Indeed a remarkable amount of attention is given to "shape" and "beauty" in the prefaces to Philips's folio, and the stress on physical bodies is especially striking considering the author's attention to non-physical concerns of virtue, honour, friendship, and platonic love. While Philips herself plays with the convention of the despoiled female text, it is her "imaginations" that she claims have been exposed by the printer, not simply her body. The author of the preface, on the other hand, makes the analogy much more explicit, portraying the guilty Stationer as the father of Philips's first edition of poems who "possess'd himself of a false Copy, and sent those children of her Fancy into the World, so martyred" (*Poems* sig. ar). In doing so, the Stationer becomes "an injurious. . . Printer of her face" (*Poems* sig. ar). What the printer has done to Philips's textual face, the writer of the preface goes on to argue, the smallpox has done to Philips's physical body:

But the small Pox, that malicious disease (as knowing how little she would have been concern'd for her handsomness, when at the best) was not satisfied to be as injurious a Printer of her face, as the other had been of her Poems, but treated her with a more fatal cruelty than the Stationer. . . that murtherous Tyrant, with greater barbarity seiz'd unexpectedly upon her, the true Original, and to the much juster affliction of all the world, violently tore her out of it, and hurried her untimely to her Grave, upon the 22 of June 1664, she being then but 31 years of age. (*Poems* sig. ar)

Straznicky has remarked that this passage "exhibits a concerted effort to

disembody the author," which she interprets as "a rhetorical strategy that morosely takes advantage of Philips's premature death of small pox" (717). She finds this preface "sportive" and posits that "[t]he criss-crossing between physical violence and surreptitious publication is unsettling, not least because its primary effect is to replace Philips the person (and author) with Philips the collected works" (717). Similarly, Dorothy Mermin suggests that women's "works and their selves are so often confused with each other. Their physical person--their beauty, or in the case of Philips, who died of smallpox, its despoiling--is generally the prime object of critical regard" (Mermin 338).¹⁹

Certainly bodies *do* matter in the prefaces to *Poems*, as do the images of illness, disease, death, and resurrection; however, in this case, Straznicky and Mermin ignore an important point. In establishing an equation between the author's body and her body of work, Philips's editors were following a well-established tradition of folio production, one example of which is Jonson's preface to Shakespeare's first folio, which, as Marcus has pointed out, "abolishes Shakespeare as an entity apart from his writings" to such an extent that "there is no space at all between the man and his work. . . . Shakespeare is the book" (*Puzzling Shakespeare* 19). According to Marcus, this trend toward the "identification of corpse and *corpus*" is well established by the 1630s and 1640s, as evidenced in the prefatory materials to the poetry collections of Donne in 1633 and 1635 and Milton in 1645 (*Unediting* 193). Philips and her

¹⁹ While the promotion of Katherine Philips as a female body restored to her original virtue is one of the most prominent themes in the prefatory materials to *Poems* (1667) and while references are made to the poet's physical beauty, the portrayal of Philips is remarkably non-sexual. In his elegy to Philips, however, John Crouch explicitly celebrates the attractive prospect of curling up with the good book that was Orinda: "Here, Plato! here's thy wish't for Visions! / When she put off her Clay, thou mightst have seen / Vertue undrest, just like a Naked Queen" ("JC, An Elegie, Upon the Death of the most Incomparable, Mrs. Katharine Philips, The Glory of her Sex" *Works* 3: 208, lines 34-36). His poem was never included as a preface to any of Philips's works.

commendators borrow heavily from the language of Donne's preface writers, for example, publisher and bookseller John Marriot, who, in his prefatory commendation of Donne's *Poems* (1633), establishes Donne's book as "the poet's living soul" (qtd. in *Unediting* 194).²⁰ Coupled with the attention to the poet's spirit is an awareness of his physical body. In "The Printer to The Understanders" the 1633 edition is presented as "a scattered limbe of this Author" rather than "a whole body" (qtd. in *Unediting* 194). It could be argued, then, that by the end of the seventeenth century, most poets' works and selves were often confused with each other, regardless of the writer's gender, especially when the collected works were published posthumously.

Moreover, just as it was Philips who first represented the piracy of her poems as her defacement, it is Philips herself who introduces the analogy between surreptitious publication and physical illness. She refers to the 1664 publication as "a most cruel accident, [which] hath made so proportionate an impression upon me, that really it hath cost me a sharp fit of sickness since I heard it" (*Poems* sig. Av; *Works* 2: 148). The connection between "this wicked impression of those fancies" and Philips's physical body continues throughout her letter, as Philips wonders how "those fugitive Papers" could have "escap'd [her] hands," questions the "shape" of her "collected" poems, and castigates herself for not making "a sacrifice of them all" (*Poems* sig. A2; *Works* 2: 150). Even the remedies for Philips's dilemma are expressed in corporeal terms: If it becomes "absolutely necessary to the reparation of this misfortune, and to general satisfaction" and if her "friends will press [her] to it," Philips suggests that she might consent to authorize a second edition of

²⁰ In "To Mr. J. B. the noble Cratander," for example, Philips's writes: "Yet we must grant thy Soul transmitted here / In beams almost as lasting and as clear. / And that's our highest praise, for but thy Mind, / Thy Works could never a resemblance find" (*Poems* 31-32; *Works* 1: 100-101, lines 14-17).

poems, but only “with the same reluctance as [she] would cut off a Limb to save [her] Life” (*Poems* sig. A2r; *Works* 2: 150).²¹

In protesting the abuse of her body of work and insisting upon her right to control it, Philip evokes one of the privileges of sovereignty. As Michel Foucault delineates in *History of Sexuality*, the seventeenth-century monarch’s power was fundamentally characterized by his ability to control his subjects’ bodies; put more specifically, the monarch possessed the power *over* life, which manifested itself in the ability to punish or destroy. Power *over* life, Foucault goes on to say, is distinctly different from the power *to give* life, or the ability to create. In many seventeenth-century prefaces, the living poet presents himself as one who has the power to preserve life (his own life, his subject’s life, his patron’s life) via the creation of immortalizing verses, and similarly, in many seventeenth-century prefatory verses and epistles, editors and commendators present the posthumous publication of an author’s collected works as having the ability to bring the author back to life. As Marcus explains, “If books diminished the living they could, like necromancy, reanimate the dead” (*Unediting* 200).

It is both “the true Original” (the body of Philips’s poems) and the “face” (her reputation, her beauty, and her worthiness of commendation) that the

²¹ Whereas Limbert asserts that Philips’s poetry is characterized by a lack of attention to bodies and physical appearance (32), I would argue that this attention to corporeality exists in Philips’s poetry as well. For only a few of many examples, see, “Rosania shadowed whilst Mrs. Mary Awbrey” which contains multiple references to the subject’s “face” and “looks,” “smile” and “eyes” (*Poems* 48-49; *Works* 1: 117-20), “To Mrs. M. A. upon Absence,” in which the poet complains of being “Kept from [her] face, link’d to [her] heart” (*Poems* 70; *Works* 1: 141, line 16), and “To Mrs. Mary Awbrey,” in which bodies provide the place for and evidence of the union of souls: “Thy Heart locks up my Secrets richly set, / And my Breast is thy private Cabinet. / Thou shed’st no tear but what my moisture lent, / And if I sigh, it is thy breath is spent” (*Poems* 71; *Works* 1: 142, lines 9-12). In “To my Lady M. Cavendish, choosing the name of Policrite,” Philips remarks on the subject’s “Face,” “Eyes,” “shape,” and “So bright a form” (*Poems* 142; *Works* 2: 213, line 6). The body is important if only because it the cabinet of the soul.

editors of the 1667 edition seek to restore. They attempt to restore the former by putting the poems “into the order they were written in, as she possibly herself would have done, had she consented to a second Edition,” subscribing to the code of authorial intention and making “this Collection as full and as perfect as might be” (sig. arv). They attempt to restore the latter by prefacing the edition with a frontispiece of “Orinda,” a bust of Philips that presents her face, as it were, recovered from, or at least unaffected by, the effects of smallpox (fig. 1). The author of the preface accentuates the frontispiece, whose very constructedness is meant to draw attention to the authenticity of the poems themselves, the true representatives of Philips’s spirit and mind:

Her merit should have had a Statue of Porphiry wrought by some great Artist, equal in skill to Michael Angelo, that might have transferr’d to posterity the lasting image of so rare a Person: but here is only a poor paper shadow of a Statue made after a Picture not very like her, to accompany that she has drawn of her self in these Poems, and which represents the beauties of her mind with a far truer resemblance, than that does the liniaments of her Face.

(Poems sig. a2r)

In the seventeenth century, most scholars would argue, the selection of a frontispiece is rarely an indiscriminate act. As Wall points out, “When publishers chose to display the author’s portrait in the introductory material to their books, they asked their audience to read the work not only through the rubric of a singular writer, but also according to a specified visual, often



Fig. 1. The Matchless Orinda. Frontispiece to Katherine Philips's *Poems* (1667). By William Faithorne. It is also reproduced in Beals, page 176.

emblematic, and embodied perception of that writer" (83).²² Moreover, the prefatory poems by Cowley repeatedly direct the reader's attention to Philips's face. His commendation of her poems admires her "Numbers gentle," that are as "smooth" as her "Forehead," and her "Fancies high," that are as "sparkling as [her] Eye" ("Upon Mrs. K. Philips her Poems" *Poems* sig. cr; *Works* 3: 190). In addition, the elegiac ode is addressed to the smallpox, the "Cruel disease" that "assaults the fairest place. . . even the face" and ultimately "Defaces the Innocent Pride of beauteous Images" (*Poems* sig. f2r; *Works* 3: 215). Finally, the restoration of faces is also a royalist theme. And this royalist tone continues throughout the preface, as the author explains how the publication of these newly restored and properly commended verses on friendship was delayed by natural and political disasters, including the Great Fire and "the harsh sounds of War, which with the thunderings of Cannon, deafn'd all ears to the gentle and tender strains of Friendship" (*Poems* sig. a2r). By the preface's end, the restoration of Philips's poems, which have "out-liv'd all these dismal things to see the blessing of Peace" (sig. a2r), has become synonymous with the restoration of London in particular and Britain in general. The final epigraph alludes to the conclusion of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "Nec Jovis ira, nec ignis, nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas, & c.," a sentiment that can be applied, we are told, to the new edition of Philips's poems with "little alteration, more truth, and less vanity

²² In Philips's own poetry, the language of faces is often used in conjunction with spirituality, morality, and propriety. "On Controversies in Religion" contains a reference to the soul's "open face" (*Poems* 61; *Works* 1: 132, line 73). "[Y]our glories in your face be seen" Philips writes in "To the Honoured Lady E. G.," whose religion similarly "shews her face" (*Poems* 62; *Works* 1: 133, line 47). In "The World," Philips imagines afterlife as a place where sin and "stain" are "defac'd" (*Poems* 113; *Works* 1: 182-85, line 95). Similarly, when divinely ordained government and order fail, in the poem "Submission," the whole World is "disorder'd and defac'd" (*Poems* 108; *Works* 1: 178-81, line 20).

than" Ovid himself (sig. a2v).²³

It would seem, then, that the prefatory materials to Katherine Philips's 1667 edition of *Poems* participate in a number of well-established prefatory conventions. What is especially remarkable about these pretexts is that they take these conventions one step further, for they suggest that "Orinda" has a particular kind of life power, namely, the power to resurrect others, the power *to restore life*. Indeed, the suggestion is that inclusion in the edition of Philips's poems has the ability to give life to the commender.²⁴ The group

²³ "Not Jove's anger, and not fire nor steel, nor fast-consuming time can sweep away." The entire paragraph from Ovid reads:

Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis
net poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.
Cum volet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:
parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.

And now, I have completed a great work,
which not Jove's anger, and not fire nor steel,
nor fast-consuming time can sweep away.
Whenever it will, let the day come, which has
dominion only over this mortal frame,
and end for me the uncertain course of life.
Yet in my better part I shall be borne
immortal, far above the stars on high,
and mine shall be a name indelible.
Wherever Roman power extends her sway
over the conquered lands, I shall be read
by lips of men. If Poets' prophecies
have any truth, through all the coming years
of future ages, I shall live in fame.

Both the Latin text and the English translation are taken from the Tufts University "Perseus Project." <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>

²⁴ Thomas Flatman built his reputation as a writer on his commendatory verse to Philips's and Cowley's work. In a commendatory verse to Flatman's *Poems and Songs* (1674), Francis Bernard points out that anyone "who e're did hear, / Of Cowley or Orinda's fame" would appreciate Flatman's poems (sig. a8; qtd. in Loscocco 265).

of commendars is presented as a sort of community, or a sacred coterie, by James Tyrrell in "To the memory of the Excellent Orinda." Tyrrell writes of Philips as a "bright Saint," and he imagines himself as "a Vo'try" who "rudely dares intrude among" the "sacred, and inspir'd throng." "[L]ooking round me," explains Tyrrell, "ev'ry one I see, / Is a sworn Priest of Phoebus, or of thee. / Forgive this forward zeal for things divine, / If I strange fire do offer at thy Shrine" (*Poems* sig. er; *Works* 3: 219). In the second stanza of the poem, Tyrrell laments the deaths of Philips and Abraham Cowley, "the great Pindars greater Son": "He, and Orinda from us gone,/ What Name like theirs shall we now call upon?" (*Poems* sig. er; *Works* 3: 219).²⁵ In the third and final stanza, Tyrrell commits Philips to "Fame," along with her poems, "these last remains of gen'rous wit," and charges Fame to "enroll/This glorious Name in [its] immortal Scroll" (*Poems* sig. ev; *Works* 3: 220):

Write ev'ry letter in large Text,
And then to make the lustre bold,
Let it be done with purest Gold,
To dazle this Age, and outshine the next:
Since not a Name more bright than Hers,
In this, or [Fame's] large Book appears.

(*Poems* sig. ev; *Works* 3: 220)

²⁵ The editor's important statement "She has call'd her self ORINDA" (*Poems* sig. a2r) echoes throughout these prefatory materials. Philips's naming of her poetic self is equated to an act of God, and the name itself is injected with divine power. The Earl of Roscommon invokes the "Magick of ORINDA'S name" (*Poems* sig. b2r; *Works* 3: 190), and Cowley celebrates the indestructability of "her embalmed name" (*Poems* sig. f2r; *Works* 3: 215). The divinity of Orinda's name is stressed to an even greater degree in the 1705 edition of *Poems*. The editors have taken Philips's letter to Cotterell, deleted the local markers of time and place, and adapted the sign-off so that instead of reading "I am still, Worthy Poliarchus, Your most faithful, most obliged Friend, and most humble Servant, ORINDA," it reads "I am still ORINDA." Reprints of the 1705 letter are available in *Works* (2: 143-52).

Tyrrell goes on to instruct the “powerful Grave” to preserve not only Orinda’s “deathless Poems,” but also “These Reliques,” a reference to the accompanying commendatory verses:

May they still rest from other mixture pure
Unless some dying Monarch shall to trye
Orinda, though her self could dye,
Can still give others immortality;
Think, if but laid in her miraculous Tomb.
As from the Prophets touch, new life from hers may come.

(*Poems* sig. ev; *Works* 3: 220)

But there is even more evidence in the prefatory materials to indicate that Orinda has the ability to raise the dead. The prefaces to the 1667 *Poems* stage the resurrection of Abraham Cowley, the royalists’ poster boy of English poetry, who died earlier the same year. Two Cowley poems appear in the second edition, “Upon Mrs. K. Philips her Poems,” reprinted from the 1664 edition, and an elegy, “On the Death of Mrs. Katherine Philips.” The order in which Cowley’s poems appear is significant. The first is placed before the Tyrrell poem that laments the deaths of Philips and Cowley and suggests that Philips’s folio, her “miraculous Tomb,” may have the ability to produce “new life.”²⁶ Tyrrell’s poem is followed by Thomas Flatman’s tribute, and then, as if returning from the grave, Cowley rises to deliver the final elegiac

²⁶ Similarly, Beals describes the “Rosania Manuscript,” a collection of Philips’s works transcribed after Philips’s death for presentation to her friend Mary Aubrey, as “the manuscript equivalent of a kind of private Baroque chapel to Orinda, in which she is immortalized, in which her triumph over death is celebrated, and in which she is actually empowered to communicate with her beloved friend from Heaven” (167).

ode, an ode that repeats the theme of restorative commendation:

The certain proofs of our Orinda's Wit
In her own lasting characters are writ,
And they will long my praise of them survive,
Though long perhaps too that may live.

(*Poems* sig. f2v; *Works* 3: 217)

Cowley's poem confirms Tyrell's suspicions: the "touch" of Orinda hands *can* raise the dead.

Jeffrey Masten has pointed out the prevalence of references to hands in seventeenth-century prefaces and prologues by men, characterizing them as "Human hands--hands that applaud, but also the hands that pay to see the play, the hand-shaking that seals the bargain, the collaborating hands of exchange and commerce" (15). In the prefaces to Philips's poem, the hands are just as human, but they function in a different way: the virtuous hand that penned the letter, the limb that Philips is willing to sacrifice in order to save her body, the community of hands that contribute commendatory verses for their friend, the healing hand that raises poets from the dead, and the divine hand that holds the pen of life, all combine to counteract the effects of the corrupted, unauthorized hands that produced and sold the 1664 edition. "What *hand* can draw the perfect Scheme?" Tyrrell asks, and the answer comes back, "None but her self could such high subjects fit" (*Poems* sig. er; *Works* 3: 220).²⁷

²⁷ In Philips's poetry, references to hands are usually preceded by disparaging adjectives. Hands are "litigious" ("Mrs. Mary Lloyd" *Poems* 43), "bold and bad" ("To the Honoured Lady E.G." *Poems* 65). In "Death," the title character's "secret hand" snatches people into "the dust" (*Poems* 120; *Works* 1: 190-91, lines 11-12).

The staging of Orinda's resurrection of Cowley is even more effective given that in his preface to *Poems* (1656) Cowley had announced his retirement from the world of English letters, imagining the event as a "*Death to the Muses*" in which "the *Poet* dyes before the *Man*" (6).²⁸ Additionally the title-page contained an epigraph that read "*temptanda via est, qua me quoque possim tellere humo victorque virum volitare per ora,*" or "I must find a way to raise myself from the earth and fly victorious, my name on the lips of men" (qtd. in Corns 253). In James Gardiner's prefatory poem to Samuel Woodford's *A Paraphrase Upon The Psalms of David* (1667), Cowley and Philips are presented as "that Immortal pair," the twin laureates of their nation and age (Sig. dv) (qtd. in Loscocco 265; *Works* 1: 23).²⁹ And Edmund Elys, in a pamphlet against Cowley's "Lascivious and Prophane Verses" (1670), presumes that Philips "by her acquaintance with Mr. COWLEY" is the responsible "instrument of the great and good GOD to excite him to that sense of Piety, which he discover'd in that desire above mentioned, that his works should be revis'd, &c" (qtd. in *Works* 1: 24). As early as 1651, Philips's fellow poets were attributing to her "New miracles in Poetrie" (*Works* 3: 183, line 16); the prefatory materials to the 1667 edition of *Poems* merely extends

²⁸ In this preface, Cowley encourages the reader to imagine him in the following form—"Dead, or at least a *Dying Person*, and upon my *Muse* in this action, as appearing, like the *Emperor Charls the Fifth*, and assisting at her own *Funeral*" (6)—so that the publication of his *Poems* "will be the more excusable" and Cowley may lay "just claim to the undoubted privilege of *Deceased Poets*, which is to be read with more *favor*, then the *Living*. . ." (8). Zwicker reads the preface to *Poems* as the attempted restoration of Cowley's literary reputation (26). Patterson interprets the "notorious preface" as Cowley's declaration of his anti-party platform (144-57).

²⁹ The two poets are so similar in their celebration of poetic retreat that it is unclear whether Philips speaks as herself or as Cowley in her poem "Upon Mr. Abraham Cowley's Retirement. Ode": "In this my sov'raign Privacy / [. . .] Not envy on a Laurel will bestow, / Whil'st I have any in my Garden grow" (*Poems* 123; *Works* 1: 193-95, lines 25, 49-50).

Philips's ability to effect poetic miracles beyond the grave.³⁰

Philips is portrayed in this way, I would argue, not simply because of the image she created of herself as a virtuous, saintly woman but primarily because of the image she created of herself as a poet, specifically as a writer of commendatory verse and poetry of praise. During Philips's lifetime, and I believe partly because of Philips's contributions to the genre, it became conventional to extol the antidotal properties of commendatory verse. In his ode "Upon occasion of a Copy of Verses of my Lord Broghills," Cowley wrote,

Nothing so soon the drooping Spirits can raise
As Praises from the Men, whom all men praise.
'Tis the best Cordial, and which only those
Who have at home th'Ingredients can compose,
A Cordial, that *restores* our fainting Breath,
And keeps up *Life even after Death*.

(408--italics mine)

Steven Zwicker argues that during and immediately after the civil war, "The language of prefaces and defenses of poetry" reflects the writers' concern with "the restoration of the state" (25), and Sharpe and Zwicker identify a post-war "language of healing" (16). In Philips's poetry, the two languages are interrelated. The poem "To Mr. Henry Lawes" extols the restorative properties of music, and encourages Lawes to make it his "care our Age to

³⁰ "Henry Vaughan To the most Excellently accomplish'd, Mrs. K. Philips." According to Greer and Little, "This poem was first published in *Olor Iscanus. A Collection of some Select Poems, and Translations, Formerly Written by Mr. Henry Vaughan Silurist. Published by a Friend*. Printed by T. W, for Henry Moseley, 1651. It was not reprinted in any editions of Katherine Philips's works, possibly because it was simply not known to her editors, Vaughan remaining obscure until his rediscovery in the nineteenth century" (182).

new-create: / What built a World may sure repair a State" (*Poems* 19; *Works* 1: 87-88, lines 39-40). In another poem, Philips congratulates Palaemon, the "great Deliverer" of Friendship, who "rescu'd her" after she had been "flung down" by "rude Malice," elevated her, "Unveil'd her Face, and then restor'd her Crown" ("To the noble Palaemon, on his incomparable Discourse of Friendship" *Poems* 15; *Works* 1: 83-84, lines 15-18). As we might imagine, Philips depicts the king as having the ability to heal people. "To the Queen's majesty, on her late Sickness and Recovery" celebrates the queen's health "restor'd" by "Great Charles." The Queen's illness is figured as a "bold" and "rebellious" "Distemper" which is only "quench'd" by Charles's "Genius" and "rich tears" (*Poems* 121; *Works* 1: 191-92, lines 18, 23-24, 29). Importantly, Philips's criteria for determining a person's ability to restore the world is not based upon gender. In "Orinda to Lucasia" the poet asks her muse to "restore [her] life" (*Poems* 154; *Works* 1: 226, line 24), and several of the women in Philips's poetry are able to effect restoration on a large, even global, scale. "[T]hou canst restore" greatness, Philips assures the subject of the poem "To my dearest Friend, upon her shunning Grandeur" (*Poems* 161; *Works* 1: 233-35, line 3), and Pastora is credited with having "restored" the World, the Female Sex, and Friendship all at once ("To Pastora with her Friend" *Poems* 163; *Works* 1: 235-37, line 9). Similarly, the Countess of Carbury is portrayed as having "Worth to recruit the dying world again" ("To the Right Honourable Alice Countess of Carbury, at her coming into Wales" *Poems* 16-17; *Works* 1: 84-85, line 30).

Furthermore, Philips indirectly depicts herself as having a remarkable amount of restorative power. In one of the prefaces to the 1667 edition of *Poems*, Thomas Flatman eulogizes Philips as one "Whose happy verses made

others live, / And certain Immortality could give" (*Poems* sig. e2v; *Works* 3: 212).³¹ And in her commendatory verses, that's what Katherine Philips does: she orders poets to live. For example, in the conclusion of one of her commendatory poems "To the much honoured Mr. HENRY LAWES," Philips commands her subject to "Live then (Great soul of nature!)" (*Second Book* sig. b; *Works* 1: 88, line 31).³² Philips's poem to Cratander concludes by stating that he "*Lives* in a height which levels all the rest" (*Works* 1: 100-101, line 40). Similarly, in the last stanza of "To Mr. Henry Vaughan, Silurist, on his Poems," Philips instructs the poet to

Live! till the disabused World consent

.....

There's no pleasure but in serious things.

(*Thalia Rediviva* sig. A5; *Works* 1: 96, lines 33, 38)

Vaughan's other commenders, J. W. and I. W., may celebrate the *Thalia's* "happy resurrection from the dead" and remark upon Vaughan as "the Eternal Poet," but Philips's language suggests that it is she who effects the miracle. Moreover, Philips's poem not only opens the collection, but in an epistle "To the Reader," I. W. establishes Philips's approval as the criterion for

³¹ Barash remarks that Philips's elegies "refuse to be elegies because their object will not die or disappear" (99).

³² In *The Second Book of Ayres, and Dialogues* (1655), Philips's commendatory poem "To the much honoured Mr. HENRY LAWES, On his Excellent Compositions in Musick" appears first. Unlike the Cartwright poem, which is signed K. P., this poem bears the name "KATHARINE PHILIPS." Other commenders include singer Mary Knight, doctors of music John Wilson and Charles Colman, and John Berkenhead. Importantly, the poem "To Mr. Henry Vaughan the Silurist: upon these and his former Poems," the last of Philips's commendatory verses to be published, is signed "Orinda" (sig. A5).

publication in the first place: “even these [Vaughan’s] Diversions have been valuable with the matchless Orinda, and since they deserv’d her esteem and commendations; who so thinks them now worth the publishing, will put himself in the opposite Scale, where his own arrogance will blow him up” (*Thalia Rediviva* sig. A4). Even in her poem “In Memory of Mr. Cartwright,” Philips orchestrates the poet’s return, cautioning him to “stay” until the time when their “fancys” are able to “create / A worth that may upon thy glorys wait” (*Poems* 71; *Works* 1: 143, lines 9-10), a reference to the impressive bulk of materials that preface the Cartwright volume. According to Germaine Greer and Richard Little, it is possible that Philips not only contributed the verses but also engineered the entire “project of embellishing” Cartwright’s works with commendatory poems (*Works* 3: 184 n. 1).³³ This argument is supported by Philips’s specification of just exactly whose “hand” may contribute to the creation of Cartwright’s “shrine,” suggesting that only commendatory verses from certain writer’s hands are welcome (*Poems* 71; *Works* 1: 143, line 13). Those “bold” hands who would “profane” the Cartwright project Philips denounces as guilty of “treason” (lines 13-14). Presumably, Cartwright’s readers must first make their way through the interpretive framework of fifty-some royalist-authored commendations before being able to “descry / The splendour of restored Poetry” (line 12).³⁴ Given that Philips’s own poetry and projects suggest her ability to resurrect others, it is not surprising that the writers of the prefaces to the 1667 edition of

³³ Greer and Little base this argument on a passage from a poem by Henry Vaughan: “. . . for gifts divine / Are strung upon a Vital line / Which touch’d by you, Excites in all / Affections Epidemicall” (*Works* 3: 183-84, lines 33-36).

³⁴ Loxley claims that Jasper Mayne’s commendatory poem to Cartwright’s works also “attributes to Moseley’s edition an effectively restorative power” (233).

Poems imagine Philips as the royalist miracle-worker.

At the same time, it should be said that not all of the prefaces imagine and respond to Philips's restorative power in the same way. Tyrell imagines Philips's greatest strength as her ability to resurrect male royalist poets. Flatman suggests that any power Philips might have had has gone with her to her grave. "Blasted are all thy blooming glories now," he writes,

The Laurel wither'd o're thy brow:
Methinks it should disturbe thee to conceive
That when poor I this artless breath resign,
My Dust should have as much of Poetry as Thine.

(*Poems* sig. e2v; *Works* 3: 212)

Flatman's elegy concludes in a refusal to commend any woman except Katherine Philips. Addressing women as "the sex that would be fair," he instructs them, "With envy think, when to the Grave you goe, / How very little must be said of you, / Since all that can be said of vertuous Woman was her due" (*Poems* sig. fv; *Works* 3: 214). Orinda's greatest achievement, Flatman explains, was "Her Pen," for "'Twas that made Pompey truly Great." Flatman portrays Philips as the sole cause of Pompey's poetic resurrection: "Neither th'expende of bloud nor sweat, / Nor yet Cornelia's Kindness made him live agen" (*Poems* sig. fv; *Works* 3: 214). In this poem, Flatman celebrates the death of Philips's restorative power, a temporary power, which, importantly, he extends only to her and to no other woman.

Philo-Philipa's depiction of Philips's poetic power is remarkably different. Like Flatman, Philo-Philipa praises Philips for her *Pompey*, but she

does not suggest that the resurrection of Pompey was ever Philips's goal. In Philo-Philipa's poem, Pompey the man is still quite dead, if seemingly appreciative of Philips's dramatic tribute:

If that all Aegypt, for to purge its Crime,
'Were built into one Pyramid o're him,
Pompey would lie less stateley in that Herse,
Than he doth now, Orinda, in thy Verse:

(*Poems* sig. dv; *Works* 3: 202, lines 121-24)

The active character in Philo-Philipa's commendation is Pompey's widow, Cornelia, whose "hand" "plants" Pompey's "Laurel" on Orinda's "brow":

So equal in their merits were both found,
That the same Wreath Poets and Princes Crown'd:
And what on that great Captain Brow was dead,
She Joies to see re-flourish'd on thy head.

(lines 125-30)

Whereas in Flatman's poem the women are dead or powerless, in Philo-Phillip's poem the men are dead, and the active women work in tandem to put the dead man's power to better use. Philo-Philipa celebrates the restorative power that exists in partnership between women.³⁵

Clearly these different notions of Philips's restorative power are

³⁵ According to Philip Webster Souers, Thomas Flatman and Katherine Philips were not acquainted. See F. A. Child (13). The identity of Philo-Philipa is not known; she was assumed by Katherine Philips to be an Irish-woman.

strikingly gendered.³⁶ According to Joanna Lipking, women's commendation of women's writing is distinctly different from commendation by men:

"While women's commendations tend to embrace or collect female predecessors, those by men, on a more competitive model, usually declare them outstripped" (61). In an effort to illustrate this argument, both Lipking and James Biester turn to the commendatory materials of Katherine Philips's *Poems* (1667). Lipking and Biester contrast the commendation of Philips by

³⁶ I believe that it is a gender distinction which is reinforced by Philips herself, for the different ways that these commendators imagine restoration and community coincide with the two different notions of friendship which recur in Philips's own work. Philips characteristically conceives of friendship between women as a union of *two* souls (a fact which I am grateful to Ros Ballaster for pointing out to me); it is a union which allows room for "no third partner" ("Friendship in Embleme" *Poems* 39; *Works* 1: 106, line 56 and "A Dialogue of Friendship multiplied" *Poems* 144; *Works* 1: 216, line 26). I would argue that this rule of numeric limitation does not seem to apply in Philips's fictive and factual "friendships" with men; instead, she seems to cultivate a sort of polyandrous community of multiple male mentors. Barash suggests that Philips's two conceptions of friendship are sequential. As her literary career progresses, Barash claims, female nobles (i.e. Duchess of York, Anne Hyde; Elizabeth Boyle, Countess of Thanet; Frances, Lady Roscommon; and Lady Mary Cavendish, daughter of the Duke of Ormonde) "take the place of intimate friends as her ideal audience" (81). The word "Friend" has gone from meaning 'political ally' [as it did in reference to William Cartwright] to 'confidante' or even 'connection'" (80). The language that Philips employs in writing to her female patrons, however, echoes the language of her love poetry to women, suggesting that Philips conceives of the relationship between herself and her female reader as a monogamous friendship. In her poem "To the Lady E. Boyl," Philips imagines her "trivial heart" as a "Story" that is so "bruise'd" that surely Boyle will reject it, "For never Deity did prize/ A torn and maimed Sacrifice" (*Poems* 149; *Works* 1: 221-22, lines 8, 33, 14, 17-18). In "To the Countess of Roscommon, with a Copy of Pompey, Philips writes, "Not like a Judge you'll listen, but a friend" (*Poems* 151; *Works* 1: 223-24, line 14). The poem "A Friend" establishes the sympathetic alliance between "Poets and Friends" and insists upon women's right to participate in the discourse of friendship: "If no soules no sexes have, for men 't'exclude / Women from friendship's vast capacity, / Is a design injurious and rude, / Onely maintain'd by partiall tyranny" (*Works* 1: 165-68, lines 168, 19-23). The relationship that Philips imagines between herself and her female patrons is what we might today call serial monogamy. She portrays her relationship with her women friends in a similar way, as in "On Rosania's Apostacy, and Lucasia's Friendship," a poem that ceremonializes Philips's transfer of affection and commitment from the unrequiting Rosania to the "Great Lucasia" (*Poems* 106; *Works* 1: 176-77). In "To Pastora being with her Friend," Philips equates her "Pen" with her "Heart" (*Poems* 164; *Works* 1: 235-37, lines 37, 39). In "To my Lucasia, in defence of declared friendship," Philips writes, "But as the morning Sun to drooping flowers / [...] Such is to me from thee a look that's kind" (*Works* 1: 153, lines 65, 68). Philips repeats the imagery exactly in the dedication of *Pompey* to the Countess of Cord. She imagines herself and her translation in the following manner: "As some untimely Flower, whose bashful head / (Ready to drop into her humble Bed) / Is rescue'd by the Sun's prevailing Ray" (*Works* 1: 241, lines 1-3).

Philo-Philipa with that by Philips's male commendators, particularly Cowley and Tyrrell. Biester argues that the poem by Philo-Philipa manages to praise "both Orinda herself and her sex in general" and to deconstruct gender expectations and categories in favor of "anti-essentialism" (516) whereas the prefaces by Cowley and Tyrrell establish Philips as a uniquely talented woman, "a wonder," "a novelty, a bizarre exception," and ultimately "reinforce the idea of 'natural' male superiority" (512-13). Masten has convincingly argued that even texts that ostensibly praise particular women, such as dedications to noblewomen, nevertheless participate in the discourse of the preface and are characteristically heavily imbued with the language of male/male friendship and collaboration (33).

Similarly, Mermin argues that seventeenth-century commendatory verses to women were creatively limited and limiting: "Women writers were easily, if condescendingly, praised" (336), and this is especially the case, she argues, in the prefaces and verses that introduce Katherine Philips's works, which, according to Mermin, "recur in unabated fascination to her sex" (336). Mermin reads the commendatory verses to *Poems* (1667) as "a war for preeminence between the sexes, the men either hastily asserting or gallantly disclaiming resentment at her success" (336).

But, as I have tried to illustrate, the prefaces to *Poems* contain another story, for, however different their responses to it might be, all of the commendators agree upon the nature of Philips's success. Lipking argues that "the question" in commendatory verses written by men for women "always is 'Who is she in relation to us?'" (60), but certainly this is the question in commendatory verses written by women for women as well. And in Katherine Philips's case, the answer to the question is the same to the extent

that she is consistently portrayed as a poet who is notable for her contributions to the discourse of praise, and in particular she is presented as a writer of commendatory verse. In Philipo-Philipa's account, Philips is so successful at this particular genre that Daphne awards her with not just a branch but the entire laurel tree for Philips to share with the rest of the female sex:

And says to Verse, so unconstrain'd as yours,
Her Laurel freely comes, your fame secures:
And men no longer shall with ravish'd Bays
Crown their forc'd Poems by as forc'd a praise.

(Poems sig. c2r; Works 3: 197, lines 5-8)

And Cowley writes,

The trade of Glory managed by the pen
Though it be, and every where is found,
Does bring in but small profit to us men;
'Tis by the number of the sharers drown'd,
Orinda in the female Coasts of fame
Engrosses all the Goods of a Poetique name,
She does no Partner with her see;
Does all the Business there Alone which we
Are forced to carry on by a whole company.

(Poems sig. f2v; Works 3: 217)

Cowley imagines Orinda's success as a poet of praise as a victory for herself;

Philo-Philipa imagines it as a victory for all women. Importantly, both suggest that it is ultimately unprofitable for male poets for a woman to write commendatory verses.

By 1705, the year in which Philips's letters were first published, this resistance to commendation by and about women poets has escalated. The writer of the preface to *Letters* argues that "To praise her Poems, after they have stood the Test of COWLEYS and ROSCOMONS Examination, and been so deservedly commended by those accurate Judges, and have been receiv'd by all who are Friends to the Muses, would be like the Whispering in a general Shout, nor need we any Recommendation of these Letters, since they are able to make their own Panegyrick" (*Works* 2: 153). However, the indirect commendation in this anonymous tribute is followed by a poem by James Gardiner, a full-blown refusal to commend Katherine Philips. Gardiner offers a sort of non-commendation of Philips's work, telling the publisher who has requested a copy of verses for the collection of letters that any recommendation of a woman's writing is unnecessary given that woman's writing is never the subject of critical inquiry:

Cease to request what will be needless writ,
No Man's so rude to damn a Lady's Wit:
Praises of course, to the fair Sex belong,
We complement the Ladies right or wrong.

Gardiner goes on to present the practice of exchanging commendatory verses as an activity that is only mandatory, and, therefore, only suitable, between men.

Hard Fate of Men! hence first the Trade began
For poets publickly to praise the Man;
And by the Commendations preingage
The Readers hearts, and quell the Critick's Rage.

(*Works* 2: 154)

Following Gardiner's account, women's essential qualities exempt them from the necessity of bartering for prefaces as men do, for they are able to "quell the Critick's Rage" with their female charms: "With their own native Charms are Women bright, / Nor need the Faire to shine with borrow'd Light" ("To the PUBLISHER OF *Orinda's* Letters: UPON His Requesting a Commendatory Copy of Verses" *Works* 2: 153-56). If, as Lipking suggests, "the question" in commendatory verses written by men for women "always is 'Who is she in relation to us?'" (60), Gardiner answers the question by asserting that Philips is no one. . . no one in need of commendation, at least. Not only is his response remarkably different from that of the royalists of the 1650s and 1660s, who responded, "Who is she in relation to us? She is Orinda! The one who makes us immortal; the one who brings us back from the dead," but given the importance of commendatory verses to the seventeenth-century author's career, Gardiner's absolutely ludicrous, back-handed compliment is insulting and potentially damaging to the careers of all women writers.

According to Paula Loscocco, the shift in Philips's reception can be partly accounted for by the change in discursive conventions: "by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the critical vocabulary available to commend a woman poet like Philips was almost entirely masculine in its

orientation" (272). But we also need to consider that even long before Philips, the commendatory verse tradition was always almost entirely masculine in its orientation. The commendatory poem, more than any other type of preface, offered the least amount of space for the woman poet. During her lifetime, Philips circumvented the problem by quietly asserting her politics as the criteria for her right to trade commendatory verse and creating her own discourse of commendation based upon the goals of her particular royalist stance, one that praised those who made restoration and eternal life their goal.

CHAPTER THREE
SELF-CROWNED LAUREATESS:
TOWARD A CRITICAL REVOLUTION OF THE CAVENDISH PREFACE

In Book 3 of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle commences his discussion of the function of the preface by alluding to a line from Euripide's *Iphigenia in Tauris*. "Why," Aristotle asks, "Why all this preface?" He answers, "Introductions are popular with those whose case is weak; it pays them to dwell on anything rather than the actual facts of it. That is why slaves, instead of answering the questions put to them, make indirect replies with long preambles" (3.14.10). Aristotle's question *Why all this preface?* may be a particularly appropriate one to ask of Margaret Cavendish. Those who study her life and writing frequently remark upon what biographer Douglas Grant calls Cavendish's "absurd number of prefatory epistles to the reader" (144).¹ In addition to commenting on the tremendous number, scholars often remark upon the tedious length and unconventional style of Cavendish's prefatory epistles. Cavendish's preliminaries have been characterized by Janet Todd as "a jumble"; Donald Stauffer prefers the metaphor of "a fanfare" (Todd *Sign* 57, Stauffer 153). In terms of adjectives, Jeffrey Masten considers them "elaborate"; Susan Wiseman calls them "endless"; Todd classifies them

¹ According to Hilda Smith's count, each of Cavendish's books contains at least "five prefatory remarks explaining her defects in particular areas of scholarship" and "a few have more than a dozen" (77). Janet Todd estimates Cavendish's average to be ten or eleven prefaces per book (*Sign* 57). These tallies are technically incorrect—for instance, only one brief epistle "To the Readers" prefaces Cavendish's second folio of *Playes* (1668); nevertheless, they serve to reflect modern scholarship's prevailing notion that "even in a century much given to this form of apologia," Margaret Cavendish publishes a record-breaking amount of prefaces (Smith 77).

as “garrulous”; Sophia B. Blaydes thinks they are “irritating”; and Grant finds them “disturbing” (Masten 157, Wiseman “Gender” 170, Todd *Sign* 55, Blaydes 54, Grant 128). What is to be made of these boisterous, infinite, rambling pretexts? Or, put another way, how might we answer the question: *Why all this preface?*

However we respond to the question, there can be no doubt that the prefaces of Margaret Cavendish are important. Those who study and write about Cavendish depend heavily--sometimes almost entirely--upon her prefaces to support their arguments. As John Rogers has recently remarked, Cavendish’s pretexts have traditionally received more attention than the texts themselves (181). And Rogers should know; his essay, interestingly enough, ultimately hinges on Cavendish’s philosophy of gender as expressed in “The Preface to the Reader” in *The World’s Olio*.² In this practice, Rogers is not alone. For example, Dolores Paloma’s argument that Cavendish aspired to “the heroic ethic of the masculine world” (56) is bookended with quotations from Cavendish’s prefaces to *Natures Pictures* and *The World’s Olio*. Sylvia Bowerbank’s acceptance of Cavendish’s refusal to self-edit as articulated in the “Epistle to the Reader,” which prefaces the second edition of *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1663), is an integral part of Bowerbank’s depiction of Cavendish’s “female imagination” (296). Additionally, Catherine Gallagher’s influential essay is based upon the idea that the absolutist politics of the female authoresses in *Blazing World* mirror those of the female author of *Blazing World*, and in order to establish the infinite similarity between them, she compares the characters’ dialogue with the sentiments expressed by Cavendish herself in the preface to the book (“Embracing” 31-32). Finally,

² Rogers argues that Cavendish’s particular brand of feminism prompted her “conversion from mechanism to vitalism” in 1663 (186).

Elaine Hobby justifies her ultimate assessment of Cavendish as “an entirely submissive wife” upon the evidence she finds in the preface to *Life of the Duke* (84).

In addition to the scholarship that grounds its arguments on evidence procured from Cavendish’s prefaces, we might also turn to the many articles, chapters and books in which quotations taken from Cavendish’s prefaces function as opening paragraphs, epigrams, and, especially, titles.³ This is certainly the case with both of the most recently published biographies, *Margaret the First* and *A Glorious Fame*. The use of quotations from Cavendish’s prefaces as titles of these works that purport to be factual histories seems appropriate, for by far the most common approach to Cavendish’s prefaces is to regard them as factual documents. In her survey of early modern women playwrights, Nancy Cotton credits Cavendish’s introductions, dedications and letters as “the best source of biographical material” (215 n. 19). Similarly, Kathleen Jones, Cavendish’s most recent biographer, finds Cavendish’s prefaces “often more interesting than the text because *they reveal more of their author*” (112–italics mine). Because of the thinness of Cavendish’s early autobiography, Jones claims, she relies heavily upon Cavendish’s prefatory materials to reconstruct her life: “Her opinions and the minutiae of her daily life as related in my own biography have been taken from the *deeply personal* prefaces and epistles that she wrote to her other works” (112, 2–italics mine). Jones also regards Cavendish’s *plays* as quasi-autobiographical writings. She justifies her evidential interpretation of

³To cite only a few examples: Todd takes the title of her chapter from Cavendish’s preface “To all Professors of Learning and Art” in *Sociable Letters*, a preface, which is, in Todd’s opinion, characterized by a “wonderfully adolescent and naive craving for importance” (*Sign* 66). The title of Grant’s biography is taken from one of the prefaces to *Blazing World*, entitled “To the Reader” in the 1666 edition and “To all Noble and Worthy Ladies” in the 1668 edition. Jones’ title is a phrase from “To the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle, On Her Book of Poems,” the preface by William Cavendish that appears in the second editions of *Poems and Fancies* (1664).

Cavendish's dramatic work, it is important to point out, based upon the resemblance between Cavendish's plays and her prefaces, arguing that Cavendish's dramatic characters "make speeches containing sentiments and phrases that also occur in Margaret's prefatory epistles" (3). I find it interesting that Jones reads prefaces as truth statements in order to present Cavendish's dramatic work as valid biographical evidence when she might just as easily establish the commonalities between these two genres in order to argue that Cavendish's prefaces are as constructed, performative, fictive, and dramatic as her plays.⁴

A similar school of thought, twin to that which treats the Cavendish preface as an historical document, regards Cavendish's prefaces as the primary means of truly understanding her psyche, as represented by Linda R. Payne when she stresses "the insecurity that shines through all the apologies and prefaces about [Cavendish's] own efforts to master the written word" (29). In characterizing the Cavendish preface as insecure, Payne aligns herself with the many scholars who consider these epistles to be little more than *defenses*. These scholars echo Aristotle's answer to the question *Why all this preface?*, for they agree that "Introductions are popular with those whose case is weak." According to this line of reasoning, Cavendish's prefaces are boisterous, infinite and rambling because their author is naturally shy, anxious about transgressing gender norms, and hyperaware of her ignorance and of the poor quality of her writing. As Grant tells the story, "Once her book was finished, Margaret viewed its entry into the world with such trepidations that she scribbled one preface after another in an attempt to justify it and to anticipate criticism. As her bashfulness distracted her behaviour in society, so it forced

⁴ Jacqueline Pearson comes close to implementing this approach when she argues that in Cavendish's prefaces "the central *character* is Cavendish herself" (*Prostituted* 127—*italics mine*).

her to adopt similar mannerisms in print" (12). Grant's narrative is characteristic of those who subscribe to the interpretation of the Cavendish preface as apology or defense.⁵

However, if Cavendish's prefaces were nothing more than self-defenses, modern scholars and readers might not esteem them very highly. In fact, it would seem that in the past few decades, scholars have been inclined to value Cavendish's prefaces based upon the degree to which they can be recognized not merely as self-defenses but, rather, as defenses of women's rights. In analyzing Cavendish's prefaces, then, there is increasingly a great deal at stake, for many critics believe that these texts are the most polemical of all her writings. Kathleen Jones, for one, traces the chronological evolution of Cavendish's feminism via her prefaces (104). And Rogers concurs that "[i]t is in the personal, informal setting of the preface that Cavendish fashions a discourse whose outlines have been justly identified as 'feminist'" (181).

It should be said that it is in these same prefaces that Cavendish fashions a discourse whose outlines have been justly identified as non-, or even anti-, feminist. In fact, it would seem that for every scholar who acknowledges Cavendish's polemics, as Jones does when she reads in Cavendish's prefaces the evolution of her feminism, there is a Todd, arguing that in Cavendish's prefaces "the last word is rarely given to such feminist pleadings" (*Sign* 65). Finding it difficult to locate a feminist voice in Cavendish's prefaces, Sara

⁵ In addition to Grant, this group includes Smith, Mendelson, Paloma, and Jones. Smith argues that "With each new work [Cavendish] tried to defend herself against the attacks lodged against previous ones. Seldom has an ambitious author devoted so much effort to excusing faults or fending off expected criticism" (77). Mendelson agrees that Cavendish "prefaced each volume with an inventory of its imperfections. By this means she hoped to forestall criticism and create the impression that she could have written far superior works had she wished to do so" (36). According to Paloma, "Throughout her career [Cavendish's] prefaces continue to reveal her sensitivity to public criticism, and she continues to apologize for her work or defend it in a very self-effacing way" (66). Finally, Jones argues that beginning with *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* and *Sociable Letters*, "the Prefaces to [Cavendish's] books were becoming increasingly defensive" (150).

Mendelson has formulated the novel idea that “When representing her own opinion in essays or prefatory epistles, Margaret acceded to male conceptions of female capacities and female roles. Furnished with a disguise in her plays and stories, she allowed submerged feelings and desires to come to the surface, and explored alternatives that her reason repudiated” (57). According to this interesting, if unfounded, reading, Cavendish’s orthodox prefatory rhetoric functioned to shield the public, and even the author herself, from realizing her radical feminism. Rachel Trubowitz posits a similar argument in that she characterizes the Cavendish preface as relatively anti-feminist in comparison to the politics expressed in some of Cavendish’s texts-proper. In particular, Trubowitz highlights the preface to *The World’s Olio*, which, she claims, “refutes the claim for women’s natural equality to men” that can be read in the *Female Orations* and *Blazing World* (240). While a number of scholars regard Cavendish as an early modern feminist, among them Cotton, who dubs her “England’s first feminist playwright” (42), and Grant, who believes that Cavendish was “an ardent feminist” (20), just as many believe that Cavendish was--there is no other way to put this--*not feminist enough*, their most frequent complaint being that she presents herself, both in her texts and in her life, as one who prefers male commendation to female community.⁶ As Gallagher puts it, “historians of feminism have found her a troublesome ancestress, embarrassingly apt to deliver such sentences as [those] which open her 1655 book *Worlds Olio*” (“Embracing” 26).

⁶ Variations upon the theme of Cavendish’s feminism include Smith’s argument that Cavendish’s “greatest contribution to feminist thought was the degree to which questions of sex division dominated her work. No matter what her subject, no matter what the context of a particular piece, the duchess introduced the fact that she was a woman and explained how this influenced her work” (78). Dale Spender also argues that “Margaret Cavendish was a feminist who reflected at length on the position of women and the power of men”; however, Spender goes on to explain Cavendish’s attitude toward other women by suggesting that Cavendish was “never the sort of feminist who condoned or excused the behaviour of her sex on the grounds that they were victims of a society which abused them” (36).

In coming to their conclusions about Cavendish's gender politics, many scholars often employ a curious kind of biocritical approach, an approach that often grounds its assumptions about Cavendish's life and texts upon her *pretexts*. In fact, the frequency of use and particular kind of attention that Cavendish's prefaces have received is remarkable. In my research, I could not find a single piece of scholarship that did not include quotations from and references to one or more of Cavendish's prefaces. In some cases, scholars depend on Cavendish's prefaces to support their arguments without an adequate understanding and appreciation of Cavendish's prefatory rhetoric.

According to Todd, for example, one characteristic of Cavendish's prefatory discourse is to "feminise and naturalise her writing through images from needlework" and other acceptable female activities such as spinning, cooking, and conversing (*Sign* 62), yet Cavendish's prefaces are replete with representations of herself as a tailor, architect, physician, property owner, painter, musician, preacher, teacher, scholar, philosopher, and poet. Todd argues that Cavendish "saw her work replacing her babies" (60), but Cavendish makes this analogy in only two of her hundred or so prefaces.⁷

⁷ In contrast to Todd, Jeffrey Masten contends that in the prefaces to *Playes* (1662), Cavendish's prefatory materials are characterized by an "unwillingness to speak the languages of textual reproduction those other volumes [of plays written by Beaumont and Fletcher and other men] register with such persistence. Cavendish does not use the discourses of patriarchal reproduction or absolutism except in describing her male playwright precursors" (157). On this point, I side with Masten, whose argument I would extend to most of Cavendish's prefaces, for I find only two occasions, in the introductory materials to *Poems and Fancies* and to *Grounds of Natural Philosophy*, where Cavendish referred to her book as a child. It is true, however, that a number of men who wrote to Cavendish referred in their commendatory addresses to her works as babies, among them, Thomas Shadwell, who refers to "The Nobler Issue of her mighty Mind" (*Letters and Poems* 167), and Robert Creyghtone, who encourages Cavendish, "Go on then (most Honourable Madam) to bless the World, with these noble Infants of your Brain" (87). Jasper Mayne of Oxford University writes of "the children of [her] Mind" on at least two occasions as "that which renders [her] to be the Glory and happiness of [her] Sex" (83, 96). Finally, the Cambridge men were particularly inclined to imagine Cavendish as perpetually with child. They refer to her "pregnancy of wit" and her "pregnant imagination" (5, 31), and in the same collection of epistles, two unattributed poems make reference to Cavendish's "pregnant brain" (157, 160).

Paloma turns to Cavendish's prefaces for evidence that she valued the masculine world and especially the esteem of universities and other male writers, and yet Cavendish never prefaced her works with any of the commendatory verses and epistles that she received from these men throughout her entire career. Rosemary Kegl also mentions Cavendish's supposedly exclusive feminism, claiming, strangely enough, that Cavendish undervalued "the tasks performed by her female printers" (123). Kegl's criticism of Cavendish's treatment of women is based upon what I consider to be a misreading of a preface to *Sociable Letters*.⁸

Clearly, the most common approach to Cavendish's prefaces is to regard them as quasi-autobiographies or as a record of her gender politics. In other words, scholars either read Cavendish's prefaces as factual documents or they attempt to align these works with a single discursive code, a code that is

⁸ The section in question is in the first part of "The Preface" addressed to the "Noble Readers": "As for my Work, The World's Olio, they may say some Words are not Exactly Placed, which I confess to be very likely, and not only in that, but in all the rest of my Works there may be such Errors, for I was not Bred in an University, or a Free-School, to Learn the Art of Words; neither do I take it for a Disparagement of my Works, to have the Forms, Terms, Words, Numbers, or Rymes found Fault with, so they do not find Fault with the Variety of Subjects, or the Sense and Reason, Wit, and Fancy, for I leave the Formal, or Worditive part to Fools, and the Material or Sensitive part to Wise men" (sig. cv). Kegl goes so far as to suggest that in this preface Cavendish intentionally referred to her female printers, Alice Warren and Anne Maxwell, as the "fools" who pay attention to the technical correctness of the words and whom she contrasts with the "wise men" who are more interested in understanding the deeper meaning of the words (Kegl 125). First of all, Kegl's argument that Cavendish undervalues the work of Anne Maxwell in a preface that was written in 1664 is anachronistic, for, as Kegl herself points out, Maxwell did not print any of Cavendish's work until 1666. More to the point, however, Cavendish is certainly calling names throughout this preface, but none of the criticism is directed at Alice Warren, or any of her printers, regardless of their sex. Instead, Cavendish is making a distinction between two types of readers: those who complain about her lack of proper, rule-bound, technical perfection in contrast to those "understanders" who value Cavendish's message. Throughout this preface, Cavendish chronicles and responds to her public reception; her criticism is directed at those readers who disparaged her books because they did not follow conventional rules of literature. She begins the preface by writing, "I Hope you will not make the Mistake of a Word a Crime in my Wit, as some former Readers have done, for in my Poems they found Fault that the Number was not Just, nor every Line Matched with Perfect Rime" (sig. cr). Kegl points out, with seeming disappointment, that in regards to her women printers, Cavendish "granted them no authority in helping to shape her literary, scientific, or social projects" (126).

usually feminist. In contrast, I believe that it is necessary to emphasize the public, performative, rhetorical nature of Cavendish's prefaces in order to develop tenable arguments about them. I would argue that Cavendish's paratexts are the products of *multiple* discourses, especially, as I will demonstrate, the self-crowned laureates' strategies of authorization. This discourse, which values male commendation and establishes the poet as separate and morally superior, occasionally comes into sharp conflict with those sentiments in Cavendish's prefaces that have been identified as feminist, namely her arguments for women's education and female community. However, when we trace the evolution of Cavendish's prefatory rhetoric, paying particular attention to her attempt to establish herself as England's premiere laureatess, a number of questions about Cavendish seem to answer themselves. My argument, for example, provides for a reading of *Blazing World* that complicates Gallagher's assertion that Cavendish can only imagine female power as absolute subjectivity. My argument also allows for a qualification of Hobby's assertion that Cavendish's biography of her husband, her final work and the only one dedicated to the king, is the ultimate act of female capitulation and wifely obedience. In contrast to those scholars who characterize Cavendish's prefaces as garrulous, monstrous, vacillating, unedited, and unthoughtful, I read them as deliberately crafted devices for establishing her public identity.

"The First English Poet of Your Sex": Cavendish's Early Prefaces

Throughout her career, Margaret Cavendish wrote close to a hundred prefaces. Remarkably, only three of them are written to women; two are addressed to women in general and one is addressed to Elizabeth Toppe, Cavendish's waiting woman and "loving friend." Both "To All Noble, and

Worthy Ladies” and “An Epistle to Mistris Toppe” are included in the introductory materials to Cavendish’s first publication, *Poems, and Fancies* (1653).

There are a number of notable characteristics of this folio that we might interpret as feminist: in addition to her epistle to her waiting woman, the address to the ladies suggests that Cavendish hoped to include women in her reading audience. There are no epistles addressed to her husband, no evidence of that wifely submission which Hobby denounces, and none of the William Cavendish’s panegyric verses to his wife that appear in later editions of her work. Instead, we find Cavendish’s brazen announcement that she is writing without anyone’s permission; this volume is entirely self-authorized:

In this Action of setting out a Booke, I am not clear without Fault, because I have not asked leave of any Freind [sic] thereto; for the feare of being denied, made me silent: and there is an Old saying: That it is easier to aske Pardon, then Leave: for a fault will sooner be forgiven, then a suite granted: and as I have taken the one, so I am very confident they will give me the Other. (“An Epistle to Mistris Toppe” sig. A4v)

Additionally, the first of the prefatory letters, “To All Noble, and Worthy Ladies,” contains what appear to be some of Cavendish’s most recognizably feminist statements. In arguing that “Poetry, which is built upon Fancy, women may claime, as a worke belonging most properly to themselves” and establishing that “Fancy goeth not so much by Rule, and Method as by *Choice*,” Cavendish seems to posit an argument unequivocally in favor of

women's entitlement to intellectual freedom and literary ownership.

On the other hand, even from her opening address, Cavendish's reluctance to completely align herself with women as a social group is evident in her language:

Condemne me not as a dishonour of *your* sexe, for setting forth this Work; for it is harmelesse and free from all dishonesty; I will not say from Vanity; for that is naturall to *our* sex, as it were unnaturall, not to be so. Besides, Poetry, which is built upon Fancy, Women may claime, as a worke belonging most properly to *themselves*: for I have observ'd, that *their* Braines work usually in a Fantasticall motion (sig. A3r--italics mine).

The vacillation between possessive markers so pointedly apparent in this half-sentence is characteristic of the entire letter. Particularly difficult to explain from a feminist standpoint is the distinction Cavendish makes between *women as us* and *women as them*. Ezell defines an early modern "feminist" as one who exhibits "a self-consciousness of [herself] as a woman writer and a conscious concern with the condition and roles of women in society" (*Writing Women's Literary History* 55). While most scholars agree that Cavendish consistently presents herself as a woman writer, some of them are quick to point out that Cavendish occasionally seems to encourage the existing, limited roles of women in order to point out her own distinctiveness.

For instance, while she does highlight the importance of women's work, Cavendish imagines the various products of most women's fancies as decorative and ornamental. The "curious things that they [women] make"

include "Flowers, Boxes, Baskets with Beads, Shalls, Silke, Straw, or any thing else." These crafts are meant to function as evidence that women's "Thoughts are imployed perpetually" (sig. A3r); however, in the subsequent epistle to Elizabeth Toppe, Cavendish focuses upon women's lack of employment, which, when coupled with an excess of "waste time," usually results not in curious knick knacks but, rather, "wilde thoughts" that "not onely produce unprofitable, but indiscreet Actions" (sig. [A5]r). Concerned that men will think that her writing is an immoral activity, Hobby explains, "Margaret Cavendish runs through a wide variety of 'proofs' that writing is virtuous" (9). In this case, Toppe's epistle functions as the testament of a lifetime friend and companion, witness to Cavendish's education, virtuous comportment, and "honour"--a term that appears in various constructions no less than nine times in Toppe's short epistle.

Even as Cavendish argues that she writes, to borrow a phrase from Hobby, in order to "prevent unwomanly idleness" (9) and maintain her female virtue, she also seems worried that her readers will remain unpersuaded by such justifications. Men especially, Cavendish reasons, will regard the publication of her book as a power move: "Men will cast a smile of scorne upon my Book, because they think thereby, Women incroach too much upon their Prerogatives; for they hold Books as their Crowne, and the Sword as their Scepter, by which they rule, and governe" (sig. A3). At this point, Cavendish attempts to enlist her women readers as defenders and protectors of her publication:

But if they do throw scorne, I shall intreat you, (as the Woman did in the Play of the Wife, for a Month, which caused many of the Effeminate sex) to help her to keep their Right, and Priviledges,

making it their own Case. Therefore pray strengthen my Side, in defending my Book; for I know Womens Tougns [sic] are as sharp, as two-edged Swords, and wound as much, when they are anger'd. And in this Battell may your Wit be quick, and your Speech ready, and your Arguments so strong, as to beat them out of the Feild [sic] of Dispute. So shall I get Honour, and Reputation by your Favours; otherwise I may chance to be cast into the Fire. But if I burn, I desire to die your Martyr; if I live, to be Your humble servant. (sig. A3v)

It is easy to read this as a depiction of the battle between the sexes.

Importantly, though, Cavendish does not figure herself as a champion for women's "Right, and Priviledges"; instead, she argues that women will benefit by defending Cavendish's rights as a woman. It can be said, then, that the prefatory materials to *Poems, and Fancies* align Cavendish with women even as they indicate her uniqueness. Cavendish's feminism is not necessarily exclusive--she does speak on behalf of her sex--but, strangely enough, Cavendish does not always include herself in this group. How is this possible?

Elizabeth Toppe's epistle provides an answer. "You are not onely the first English Poet of your sex, but the first that ever wrote this way," Toppe's commendatory letter announces to Cavendish and to the world (sig. [A5]v). The first English Poet of your sex, the first that ever wrote this way: It is important to recognize that Toppe is providing not one but two separate descriptions here. The former suggests that Cavendish aspires to be a leader for women writers; she is *the first English poet of her sex*. The second suggests that because of her innovative writing style, Cavendish deserves a

place in History in general; she is *the first English poet who ever wrote this way*, regardless of gender. Thus, from her first publication, the depiction of Cavendish as premier poetess co-exists with the representation of Cavendish as premier poet.

Cavendish's next publication, *The World's Olio* (1655), has played an important role in establishing the limitations of her contribution to feminist thought, for it contains some of her most disparaging statements. It is difficult to read "The Preface to the Reader," purportedly written in order "to give some Reasons why we [women] cannot be so wise as Men," as anything other than a concession of women's innate inferiority to men. Interestingly enough, this preface also contains one of Cavendish's often quoted arguments in favor of women's education:

True it is, our sex make great complaints, that men from their first Creation usurped a Supremacy to themselves, although we were made equal by Nature: Which Tyrannical Government they have kept ever since; so that we could never come to be free, but rather more and more enslaved; using us either like Children, Fools, or Subjects, in flattering or threatening us, in alluring or forcing us to obey; and will not let us divide the World equally with them; that is, to Govern and Command, to Direct and Dispose, as they do: Which Slavery hath so dejected our Spirits, that we are become so stupid, that Beasts being but a degree below us, Men use us but a degree above Beasts: Whereas in Nature we have as clear an understanding as Men, if we were bred in Schools to mature our Brains, and to manure our Understandings, that we might bring forth the Fruits of Knowledg [sic]. (sig. [A4]r)

Nature created women and men equally, Cavendish argues. Male-constructed custom, and nothing else, denies women access to knowledge and power. This certainly seems to be an argument in favor of women's entitlement. Additionally, the defense of women's claim to free thought that Cavendish established in the preface "To All Noble, and Worthy Ladies" in *Poems, and Fancies* resurfaces:

Women can have no reason to complain of being Subjects, as if it was a hinderance from thinking; for Thoughts are free, or can ever be enslaved: and we are not hindered from studying, since we are allowed so much idle time, that we know not how to pass it away, but may as well read in our Closets, as Men in their Colledges; and Contemplation is as free to us as to Men. (sig. [A5]r)

Cavendish concludes this preface, however, with an apparent admission that women seem to be naturally inferior and that this innate inequality rather than the inequitable treatment that women receive results in their lack of wisdom and authority. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, as Cavendish goes on to explain, for "though it seem to be natural, that generally all Women are weaker than Men, both in Body and Understanding; and that the wisest Woman is not so wise as the wisest Man, wherefore not so fit to Rule; yet some are far wiser than some Men" (sig. [A5]v). One woman in particular, we are encouraged to believe, is far wiser than some men. That woman, we assume, is Cavendish.

Cavendish returns to the equation of herself as an exceptional woman as a justification for her writing in "An Epistle to my Readers," one of the

prefaces to her next work, *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655):

most industrious and ingenious students, cast me not out of your Schools, nor condemn my opinions, out of a dispisement of my sex; for though nature hath made the active strength of the effeminate sex weaker then the masculine, yet perchance she may elevate some fancies, and create some opinions, as sublime, and probable in effeminate brains as in masculine. (sig. a2)

The prefaces to this work also record her criticism of the female sex. In an epistle "To the Reader," for instance, Cavendish depicts women as vain and witless, and seemingly subscribes to disparaging stereotypes: "our sex takes so much delight in dressing and adorning themselves, as we for the most part make our gowns our books, our laces our lines, our imbroderies our letters, and our dressings are the time of out studie; and instead of turning over solid leaves, we turn out hair into curles" (sig. B2r).

In the very same preface, however, and in contrast to both the representation of women as incapable of studious thought and the representation of Cavendish as separate and superior to other women, Cavendish's address "To the Two Universities" suggests that men are accountable for women's lack of knowledge and power. Specifically, she instructs the university men to receive her works

without a scorn, for the good incouragement of our sex, lest in time we should grow irrational as idiots, by the dejectednesse of our spirits, through the carelesse neglects, and despisements of the masculine sex to the effeminate, thinking it impossible we should

have either learning or understanding, wit or judgement, as if we had not rational souls as well as men, and we out of a custom of dejectednesse think so too, which makes us quit all industry towards profitable knowledge being employed onely in loose, and pettie imployments, which takes away not onely our abilities towards arts, but higher capacities in speculations, so as we are become like worms that onely live in the dull earth of ignorance, winding our selves sometimes out, by the help of some refreshing rain of good educations which seldom is given us; for we are kept like birds in cages to hop up and down in our houses, not suffered to fly abroad to see the several changes of fortune, and various humors, ordained and created by nature; thus wanting the experiences of nature, we must needs want the understanding and knowledge and so consequently prudence, and invention of men: thus by an opinion, which I hope is but an erronious one in men, we are shut out of all power, and Authority. (sig. B2v)

Again and again, Cavendish criticizes men for denying women access to formal education, for speaking to them as though they were children, for enslaving their bodies, minds, and wills, and for refusing them the right to public lives and offices.⁹ When she complains about the present situation, she expresses her anger on behalf of all women. When she looks toward the future, however, she requests educational privileges for one woman, herself, as in "An Epistle to My Readers," which prefaces *The Philosophical and Physical Opinons* (1655): "I Desire my Readers to give me the same priviledge

⁹ For instance, in "An Epilogue to my Philosophical Opinions," Cavendish castigates "wise learned men" who insult women by speaking to them as if they were babies (sig. [B4]r).

to discourse in natural Philosophy, as Scholers have in schooles" (sig. [a3]r).

In "An Epistle to my Readers," one of the prefaces to *Natures Pictures* (1656), Cavendish repeats her desire to be regarded as separate from and superior to other women: "I have not read much History to inform me of the past Ages, indeed I dare not examin the former times, for fear I should meet with such of my sex, that have out-done all the glory I can aime at, or hope to attain; for I confess my Ambition is restless, and not ordinary" (sig. cr). What Cavendish writes next, however, is of the utmost importance, for it suggests that the race is not only against all other women; Cavendish intends to run against the men, too:

And since all heroick Actions, publick Employments, powerfull Governments, and eloquent Pleadings are denied our sex in this age, or at least would be condemned for want of custome, is the cause I write so much, for my ambition being restless, though rather busie than industrious, yet it hath made that little wit I have to run upon every subject I can think of, or is fit for me to write on. (sig. cr-v)

Such a passage is reminiscent of Elizabeth Toppe's proclamation to the world: "You are not onely the first English poet of your sex, but the first that ever wrote this way." Again and again, Cavendish declares her dual intention: to outdo other women and to outdo other writers. Heroic, public, powerful, eloquent, exhaustive, voluminous, ambitious Margaret Cavendish. "I write so much," she announces in 1656, "because I would have an extraordinary fame" (sig. cr).

Cavendish's thirst for fame is a recurring theme in practically every

preface she writes in the first phase of her career. In the dedication to Charles Cavendish, her brother-in-law, which prefaces *Poems, and Fancies* (1653), Margaret Cavendish expresses her desire “to Spin a Garment of Memory, to lapp up my Name, that it might grow to after Ages” (sig. A2r). Similarly, she tells “All Noble, and Worthy Ladies”:

all I desire, is Fame, and Fame is nothing but a great noise, and noise lives most in a Multitude; wherefor I wish my Book may set a worke every Tonge. But I imagine I shall be censur’d by my owne sex; and Men will cast a smile of scorne upon my Book, because they think thereby, Women incroach too much upon their Prerogatives; for they hold Books as their Crowne, and the Sword as their Scepter, by which they rule, and governe. (sig. A3r-v)

In “An Epistle to Mistris Toppe,” Cavendish continues the theme: “I have an Opinion, which troubles me like a conscience, that tis a part of Honoure to aspire towards a Fame. For it cannot be an Effeminacy to seek, or run after Glory, to love Perfection, to desire Praise; and though I want Merit to make me worthy of it, yet I make some satisfaction in desiring it” (sig. A4r). In the same preface, she goes on to say, “[M]y Ambition’s great. . . . I had rather venture an indiscretion, then loose the hopes of a Fame” (sig. A4v). The “Preface to the Reader” also records Cavendish’s enterprise: “If Fortune be my Friend, then Fame will be my Gaine, which may build me a Pyramid, a Praise to my Memory” (sig. [A7]v) and the image of the “Pyramid of Fame” is repeated in the prefatory poem “The Poetresses hasty Resolution” (sig. [A8]r).

Cavendish’s subsequent work, *Philosophical Fancies* (1653), is actually dedicated to Fame:

To thee, great Fame, I dedicate this Peece.
Though I am no Philosopher of Greece;
Yet do not thou my workes of Thoughts despise,
Because they came not from the Ancient, Wise
Nor do not think, great Fame, that they had all
The strange Opinions, wich we Learning call.
For Nature's unconfin'd, and gives about
Her severall Fancies, without leave, no doubt.

("A Dedication to Fame" sig. A2r)

In the prefatory materials to the same book, an epistolatory poem entitled "Another to the Thoughts" contains more evidence of Cavendish's ambition. She personifies her thoughts as runners in a race:

But when they finde a way, they run so fast,
No Reason can perswade to stay their hast.
Then they strait seek a Credit for to win,
Perswading all they meet to follow them:
And with their Rhetoricke hope they to grow strong,
Striving to get beleife, as they go on.
.....
Striving to get a Victory of Praise.

(sig. B2v)

The World's Olio (1655) is dedicated to Fortune rather than Fame, but the preface assumes a relationship between the two, for Fortune may "place

my Book in Fames high Tow'r, where every Word, like a cymball, shall make a Tinkling Noise; and the whole Volume, like a Cannon Bullet, shall Eccho from Side to Side of Fames large Brazen Walls, and make so loud a Report, that all the World shall hear it" ("A Dedication to Fortune" sig. Av). In *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655), Cavendish credits Nature rather than Fortune, but the rationale remains consistent: "for she hath given me such materials, as I hope to build me a monumental fame therewith" ("To the Reader" sig. Br).

According to Richard Helgerson, such "premature ambition" is characteristic of the self-crowned laureate (5). In his book of the same title, Helgerson distinguishes between three types of poets in England from approximately 1580-1680, the professional, the amateur, and the laureate, differentiating between them based upon their approaches to writing as an activity. For the most part, professionals were theatre men who were primarily concerned with keeping their audiences entertained so that they could enjoy the financial profits. They were similar to the amateurs in that they conceived of writing as play. Professionals and amateurs also shared a resistance toward print. In the case of the professionals, when their work was printed, it appeared anonymously or posthumously, and was never accompanied by self-presentational prefaces (Helgerson 36-38).

For the amateur, who composed only in his youth, creative writing was unimaginable as a career ambition. In due time, he represented it as a selfish, adolescent activity which he rejected in favor of the public employment, usually in the form of an office in the state or church (Helgerson 28-29). While it is not the focus of Helgerson's argument, clearly there is a significant class distinction between the professional and the amateur. If Cavendish's social rank kept her from being a professional, her gender made it impossible

for her to subscribe entirely to the amateur's approach to writing, for it would require her eventually to abandon writing in favor of public office, and as a woman she could never expect to be offered a job as Dean of St. Paul's. It makes sense, then, that Cavendish would be attracted to the laureate enterprise.

Helgerson points out the important distinctions between the laureate and the amateur, which could provide an opportunity for someone like Cavendish:

For the amateur, poetry was, as we have seen, a way of displaying abilities that could, once they had come to the attention of a powerful patron, be better employed in some other manner. For the laureate, poetry was itself a means of making a contribution to the order and improvement of the state. This difference resulted naturally in differing attitudes toward the circulation of their work and in literary careers of markedly different shape. The amateurs avoided print; the laureates sought it out. The amateurs wrote only in youth or, more rarely, in the interstices between business; the laureates wrote all their lives. (28-29)

Read with Helgerson's categories in mind, Cavendish's assertion in the preface to *Nature's Pictures* makes sense; she is announcing her intention to be laureate, an announcement that echoes through all of her prefaces: "I confess my Ambition is restless, and not ordinary; because it would have an extraordinary fame" (sig. cr). Certainly Cavendish's ambition has not gone unnoticed by modern scholars. In reference to this passage in particular, Paloma has remarked, "Perhaps more than she wanted to be a writer,

Margaret Cavendish really wanted to be a hero" (56). But in making this distinction, I would argue, Paloma and others are missing the point: For the laureate, writing is heroic; the great poet and the hero are one in the same.

As Helgerson explains, "proems, prefaces, and prologues" are points of attention for those who study self-crowned laureates, for "in those crossings of the threshold, when the author first appears before his audience, the pressure on self-presentation is greatest. To some extent, each beginning--beginnings of individual works as well as beginnings of careers--brings a renewal of self-presentational pressure" (13). *Why all this preface?* we might ask. The laureate, Helgerson explains, often feels "compelled to rebuke every slight and answer every criticism, even as he pretended indifference to both. Such compulsion could scarcely be resisted by men who were fashioning not only poems, but also a poet" (46). Laureates also name and sign their work in order to establish a sort of public record (12), and they are careful to ensure that their works are printed "as handsomely as possible" and according to their intentions (37).¹⁰ It is not surprising, then, to hear Cavendish complaining of both her readers' and her printers' mistakes quite early in her

¹⁰ Both Kate Lilley and Jeffrey Masten comment upon Cavendish's brazen self-authorization. Lilley comments that such "an unambiguous authorial signature" is significantly anachronistic given Cavendish's gender (x). Masten suggests that it is anachronistic regardless of the author's gender. In reference to Cavendish's *Playes* (1662), he remarks, "In significant contrast to the letters from acting companies to patrons, the addresses by collectors and stationers to the readers, and commendatory verses from contemporary poets to dramatists that begin the Jonson, Shakespeare, and Beaumont and Fletcher folios, the bulk of the Cavendish preliminary materials. . . is signed by Cavendish herself" (157). Regarding Cavendish's attention to the attractiveness of her books, Cotton remarks that the folios "made a statement to her contemporaries partly by their physical appearance. . . large, handsome books with sumptuous engravings of the author's portait" (48). See Leah S. Marcus's *Unediting the Renaissance* for a discussion of some of these strategies of self-authorization as they were employed by seventeenth-century men, in particular, her discussion of Robert Herrick's *Hesperides* (1648), the entire volume of which, which Marcus argues, "is marked by his ownership" (186). Marcus's characterization of a Milton who "embraced print culture and willingly exploited it for its ability to 'embody' his thought and being. . . to give him an almost god-like 'presence' among like-minded friends across seemingly inseparable physical boundaries" (178-79) is analogous to Cavendish's description of herself in an untitled poem that prefaces the second edition of *Natures Pictures* (1671).

career.

These complaints often run together, as in "To the Reader" in *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*. Cavendish begins by addressing the printers' errors in *The World's Olio*, "whereof," she says, "I cannot choose but complain, for in some places it is so falsly printed, as one word alters the sense of many lines; whereby my book is much prejudiced, and not onely by putting in false words. . . but [by changing] the significancy of words" (sig. [A4]r). The errors that appear in *The World's Olio*, however, are insignificant when compared to those in *Poems*, "for where this book hath one fault, that hath ten; for which I can forgive the Printer, and Corrector ten times easier then I did for the other" (sig. [A4]r). Having addressed her displeasure with her printers, Cavendish goes on to express her anger toward the reception those books received: "but setting aside the faults of my book, and complaining thereof, I must take liberty in my own behalf to complain of this ill natured, and unbeleeving age" (sig. [A4]r). Cavendish orders all of this exasperation--toward her printers and readers alike--into one lengthy sentence. In her prefaces, she begins to look forward to "after-ages, which [she] hope[s] will be more just to [her] than the present" ("An Epistle" to A True Relation in Rys 186). Interestingly, "An Epistle to the Reader," which prefaces *The World's Olio*, one of the books in question, contains a section in which Cavendish justifies her decision to publish *The World's Olio* without editing it; she reasons that either way, edited or unedited, her readers, "would have found fault with it" (sig. A3v). This statement suggests that Cavendish's criticism of her readers and her printers is partly a pose and that from the very beginning she has been looking for a difficult audience if not trying to construct it. Such a pose is characteristic of the self-crowned laureate, who defined himself as the misunderstood poet against the multitude.

In fact, most of the sentiments that Cavendish expresses in her prefaces read like a veritable checklist of the self-crowned laureate's enterprise. Helgerson tells us that at the center of the laureate's poetry is his "mind, 'great' and 'free'" (41), and when we turn to Cavendish's prefaces, we find her proclaiming, "The World dispraises cannot make me a mourning garment: *my Mind's too big*" (*Poems and Fancies* "An Epistle to Mistris Toppe" sig. A4v--italics mine). Helgerson tells us that the laureate and his work are characterized by an antiromantic approach to love (72), and when we turn to Cavendish's prefaces, we find her insisting, "As for those Tales I name Romancicall, I would not have my Readers think I write them, either to please, or to make foolish whining Lovers, for it is a humor of all humors, I have an aversion to; but my endeavour is to express the sweetness of Vertue" (*Natures Pictures* "To the Reader" sig. C2r). Helgerson tells us that the laureate "writes in conformity to the dictates of truth and duty" (39), and when we turn to Cavendish's prefaces, we find her defining herself in this way: "I am a Speaker of Truth, that is, I never say any thing from a Truth, that is false, and I am so great a lover of Truth, as I am one of her order, and have taken the habit of sincerity, in which I will live and dye" (*Natures Pictures* "To my Readers" sig. [C6]r).

Indeed, all of the prefaces to *Natures Pictures* exhibit Cavendish's attempt to represent herself as decidedly virtuous. Beginning with "The Dedication," her "Readers all" are instructed "in every piece to learn Something" (sig. ar), and the subsequent verse by William Cavendish informs them that the stories are "innocent," for they "teach not Vice." "A Vestal Nun may read this," the duke goes on to say, and "a Carthusian Confessor allow it" (sig. br). The goodness of the stories reflects the goodness of the author's education and intentions. In "To the Reader" Cavendish

testifies,

I never read a Romancy Book throughout in all my life. . . The most I ever read of Romances was but part of three Books, as the three parts of one, and the half of the two others, otherwise I never read any; unless as I might by chance, as when I see a Book, not knowing of what it treats, I may take and read some half a dozen lines, where perceiving it a Romance, *straight throw it from me*, as an unprofitable study, which neither instructs, directs, nor delights me: And if I thought those Tales I call my Romancicall Tales, should or could neither benefit the life, nor delight the minde of my Readers, no more than those pieces of Romances I read, did me, I would never suffer them to be printed; but self-partiality perswades me otherwise, but if they should not, I desire those that have my book to *pull of those tales and burn them*: Likewise if I could think that any of my writings should create Amorous thoughts in idle brains, I would make blotts instead of letters; but I hope this work of mine will rather quench Amorous passions, than inflame them, and beget chast Thoughts, nourish love of Vertue, kindle humane Pitty, warme Charity, increase Civillity, strengthen fainting patience, encourage noble Industry, crown Merit, instruct Life; and recreate Time, Also I hope, it will damn vices, kill follies, prevent Errors, forswarne youth, and arme the life against misfortunes: Likewise to admonish, instruct, direct, and perswade to that which is good and best, and in so doing, I the Authoress have my wishes and reward. (sig. C2r-C3r--italics mine)

Most readers, contemporary and modern alike, might find it difficult to keep from rolling their eyes at Cavendish's presentation of herself as hyper-virtuous and sanctimoniously truthful.¹¹ Moreover, given Cavendish's gender, such a display of goodness might seem especially regressive because it conforms to female stereotypes. But if it is, to borrow a phrase from Hobby, a necessity for Cavendish to establish her virtue as a woman poet, it is equally necessary for Cavendish to establish her virtue as a laureate poet. According to Helgerson, the laureate writes and publishes out of a moral and social duty (47): "The goodness of the laureate was not to him merely another pose. It was rather the truth that underlay all the poses of his fictive art, the immovable center of his work as of his being" (Helgerson 42).¹² Laureates' works exhibit a decidedly moral tone; they assume the responsibility of punishing and destroying offenders (9) and establishing themselves as exemplars (15) and arbitrators of public order. Not surprisingly, their writing is characterized by "bitterness" and "self-righteous antagonism to the world" (44), a feature which seems ironic since they are the ones to foster a sense of alienation in the first place (53, 188). Often laureates complain that their public service has gone unrecognized and unrewarded (52) and that their works are "misunderstood" by most and "understood" by "few" (24). "These men came to feel that their serious self-presentation was not taken quite seriously," Helgerson explains (53). All of these traits are characteristic of

¹¹ Todd notes that Cavendish is especially resistant to the image of the female writer as seductress, pointing out that, even when read next to Katherine Philips and Mary Astell, Cavendish is "especially firm and repetitive in her condemnation" of amorous passion. At the same time, however, Cavendish is "aware of the power of feminine sexuality and physical beauty over men, and, since she is hungry for power, she has an ambivalent attitude to the sexual manoeuvring of women" (*Sign* 62-63).

¹² Helgerson goes on to make one of my favorite points: Because any self-presentation is necessarily performative, "self-deception" is often "an inevitable result of the laureate enterprise" (45).

Cavendish's prefatory self-presentation.

Cavendish's attention to the laureate's moral project did not go unnoticed by her contemporaries. In a letter dated January 1, 1654, Dr. Walter Charleton, charter member of the Royal Society, writes,

In a word; what Sex, Age, Constitution, Condition is there, whose most secret Ulcers, the sharpness of your Wit and Pen hath not launced open to the bottom; and afterward prescribed most easy and certain Remedies for the Cure of them? So that I may well conclude this Paragraph with saying that your Moral Essayes contain wise Precepts enough in them, for the Reformation of the Age we live in, and that, certainly, is so bad that no Man need ever fear a worse. (*Letters and Poems* 148-49)

That Cavendish considered it her duty as a laureate to improve the morality and understanding of the world is testified to in another letter from Charleton, this one dated May 7, 1667:

Nor are you to be discouraged, Madam, If yor Philosophy have not the fate to be publickly read in all Universities of Europe, as your Grace, doubtless of a most Heroic ambition to benefit Mankind, desires it should. . . . the blame lyes not at your Door, and you ought to consolete your self with this reflexion; that you have sufficiently testified your good intentions, and done more than your Duty, in publishing your Conceptions. . . . Now, this, Madam, you could not have done had you not first had the Ideas of all Virtues within your self. . . . In fine, the Documents of both your

Pen and Life seem to be so good. . . . You have indeed, given the world an illustrious Example. (*Letters and Poems* 112-18)

In addition to necessitating evidence of the author's virtue, the laureate's duty to instruct and improve the world often manifests itself in the compulsion to control the reading process and direct the audience's attention in alignment with the author's intentions. Cavendish is no exception to this rule, as her prefaces attest.

The World's Olio contains a preface that explains why it is vital to give readers clear instructions:

I desire those that will read this book, to read every Chapter clearly, without long stops and stays: for it is with Writers as it is with men, whose ill-affected Fashion or Garb, takes away the natural and graceful form of the Person. To read lamely or crookedly, and not evenly, smoothly, and thoroughly, entangles the sense. Nay, the very sound of the Voice will seem to alter the sense of the Theme; and though the sense will be there in despite of the ill Voice, or ill Reading; yet it will be concealed, or discovered to its disadvantage. . . . So that Writings sound good or bad, as the Readers, and not as their Authors are. ("To the Reader" sig. [A6]r)¹³

¹³ In this case, Cavendish is assuming that her poetry and stories will be read aloud in familial circles in the same way that her husband read to her and to other members of the Cavendish household. This model of reading is standard in pre-eighteenth-century England. In one of the prefatory poems to *Hesperides* (1648), Robert Herrick instructs, "When that men have both well drunk and fed, / Let my enchantments then be sung or read" ("When He Would Have His Verses Read." In *The Later Renaissance in England: Nondramatic Verse and Prose, 1600-1660* 175.3-4). Group reading was prevalent in non-aristocratic households as well. This model of reading was typical in pre-eighteenth-century England. David Roberts says that Elizabeth Pepys read to her husband on over sixty occasions within the space of a year (52).

From her debut, Cavendish is concerned with controlling her readers. In "To Naturall Philosophers," one of the prefaces to *Poems, and Fancies*, she writes, "I desire all that are not quick in apprehending, or will not trouble themselves with such small things as Atomes, to skip this part of my Book, and view the other, for feare these may seem tedious" (sig. [A6]v). Initially, Cavendish protests that her redirection of the readers' interest is motivated by her concern for their pleasure; eventually, however, she admits that her slower readers' lack of comprehension might result in her being unfairly censured, and she entreats her readers with a greater sense of urgency,

Pray do not censure all you do not know,
But let my Atomes to the Learned go.
If you judge, and understand not, you may take
For Non-sense that which learning sense will make.
But I may say, as Some have said before,
I'm not bound to fetch you Wit from Natures Store.

(sig. [A6]v)

In *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* Cavendish's readers are instructed to compare her "writings to others and thoroughly examine them" before they accuse her of imitating, borrowing, or stealing ideas ("An Epistle to My Honourable Readers" sig. B2). As if this assignment were not challenging enough, the same readers are supposed to compensate for the book's lack of illustrations by "taking a little more paines, and care in the reading, and considering part" ("An Epistle to My Readers" sig. a2v). In a subsequent epistle, Cavendish worries that "Perchance many that read this book, will hardly understand it," not because her ideas are irrational or

improbable but because her readers are English Protestants, and they are not “Monastical,” “curious,” “inquisitive,” “contemplary peeople” (“An Epistle to the Reader, for my Book of Philosophy” sig. av). Sometimes she wishes it were written in Latin, Cavendish admits; Latin would keep the riff-raff out (sig. a2r). Since this would also make her work inaccessible to most of her readers as well as, ironically, to the author (Cavendish herself did not know Latin), she has to make do with the strategies available to her. In one of the prefaces to *Natures Pictures* entitled “To my Readers,” for instance, Cavendish makes an opportunity to “recommend” two of her stories, “The Anchoret, and the Experience Traveller” based upon the fact that they are “the most solid and edifying.” So that there is no mistaking their location, she tells the reader exactly where the exemplary stories can be found: “they are the last of my feigned stories in my Book” (sig. [C4]v).

Such over-determined, obstinate direction of their readers’ thought processes coupled with the frustrated concern that their work is bound to be misunderstood is a convention of the self-crowned laureate’s prefatory rhetoric.¹⁴ In aspiring to reform and improve the condition of the world, the laureate imagined himself as a teacher, and he authorized his didacticism by establishing himself as extremely learned. Importantly, the laureate’s self

¹⁴ The discourse of the self-crowned laureate is in many aspects similar to the discourse of the seventeenth-century scientist, or natural philosopher. In this case, Dunn’s study of the prefaces to scientific writings, in particular the prefaces of Bacon and Descartes, is extremely instructive. He contends, for example, that “all science is prefatory, the continuous entrance to the next experiment” (*Pretexts* 112). According to Dunn, the prefatory rhetoric of scientific writings was often characterized by the representation of the author as exemplary scientist (85), the representation of the author’s work and thought as self-originating (87), the appeal to the reader’s common sense, which, for example, motivates a preference to write in one’s native language rather than Latin or Greek (89), and the assumption that the author serves as the prime interpreter of his writings (85). Descartes, for example, in the preface to *Principles*, carefully instructs his audience to read his text in a particular way: “I should like the reader first of all to go quickly through the whole book like a novel, without straining his attention too much or stopping at the difficulties which may be encountered.” Dunn’s observations are certainly relevant in Cavendish’s case, for she also employs all of these discursive conventions in her prefaces.

“was a self that could best be found, not by introspection, but by the careful study of Scripture and those various Greek and Roman mirrors of duty” (Helgerson 46-47). This posed a problem for Cavendish, for although in most respects the pedantic laureate’s gown was a perfect fit, it was not available to her *pret à porter*. She lacked one primary and definitive laureate trait: a university education. In all of Cavendish’s statements on education, she never suggests that education is important for education’s sake alone or even for the inward improvement of the student. No, Cavendish values education for its usefulness as a tool to establish one’s authority; she values education for its relationship to power and office. Her platform on education is expressed quite clearly in one of the prefaces to *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, in which Cavendish illustrates how women’s lack of education produces a situation in which women, Cavendish says, “are never employed either in civil nor marshall affaires, our counsels are dispised, and laught at, the best of our actions are troden down with scorn, by the over-weaning conceit men have of themselves and through a dispisement of us” (“To the Two Universities” sig. B2v). Cavendish’s gender makes it impossible for her to adopt the amateur stance because it is unthinkable that she would ever receive a public office; her gender also makes it difficult for her to adopt the laureate’s stance because of her lack of schooling. Since she is not “excessively well-read,” it is impossible for her to “proclaim her ancient lineage” as other laureates have done (Helgerson 50, 3). Cavendish employs a variety of strategies in order to turn this mark against her into her trump card.

One of these tactics is to represent herself, in true laureate style, “in opposition to a set of contemporary expectations” (26). As Helgerson explains, in order for laureates to create themselves, one factor is essential: the social climate must include strict divisions such as the sharp distinction between

career categories and the decidedly narrow uses of poetry which existed in 1580-1610. These clearly marked sets of expectations functioned to provide Spenser and Jonson with what was at once an obstacle and opportunity. As the seventeenth century progressed, however, the boundaries between amateur, professional, and laureate began to blur so that would-be laureates like Cowley, Davenant, and Milton had to create new strategies in order to distinguish themselves (Helgerson 187, 201). In this case, it could be argued that Cavendish actually had an advantage over the laureate men. While her gender denied her access to many privileges, it certainly made it easy for her to establish herself "in opposition to a set of contemporary expectations," for while the philosophies of poetry and the professional possibilities it provided men might have become more fluid as the seventeenth century progressed, gender stereotypes appear to have remained remarkably solid. Given this situation, Cavendish's attempts to establish herself as "the first English poet of [her] sex" can be read as pro-laureate rather than anti-feminist. This campaign produced noticeable results for Cavendish, for university men were more than willing to subscribe to the argument that she was exceptional, as Charleton illustrates in a letter dated May 7, 1667:

you exceed all of your delicate Sex, not only in this age, but in all ages past. . . . We read not that Nature hath been so Prodigal of her choicest Largesses, as to produce two Cicero's, or two Virgil's, or two Ben Johnson's: why, then, should we seek after your Equal? It was their glory to be single: and it must be yours, to have no Peer, for ought we know, you are the First great Lady, that ever Wrote so much and so much of your own: and, for ought we can divine, you will also be the Last. (*Letters and Poems* 117-18)

It should be pointed out, however, that Charleton is not simply echoing Cavendish's endeavor to be *the first English poet of her sex*; he also represents her as the laureate, *the first who ever wrote this way*. The references to Cicero, Virgil, and Jonson are a significant element of the laureate's trope of literary genealogy, and, interestingly enough, so is the reference to nature.

This is because another of Cavendish's strategies for responding to her lack of university education is to assert that she is the child and heir of a teacher who is preferable to William Camden any day of the week: Cavendish's professor is Nature. In the prefatory epistle to her autobiography, Cavendish attempts to explain her privileged relationship to Nature:

I have not spoke so much as I have writ, nor writ so much as I have thought; for I must tell my readers, that Nature, which is the best and curiosest worker, hath paved my brain smoother than custome hath oiled my tongue, or variety hath polished my senses, or art hath beaten the paper whereon I write; for my phancy is quicker than my pen with which I write, insomuch as it is many times lost through the slowness of my hand, and yet I write so fast, as I stay not so long as to make perfect letters. (Rhys 185)

It is, as Cavendish explains, Nature rather than education that makes her a Poet and a Philosopher:

of the names and tearms of art, and the several opinions of the Antients, and the distinguishment of the sciences, and the like, I

learned them from my neerest and dearest friends as from my own brothers, my Lords brother, and my Lord (but having the words and terms of art makes me not a Philosopher) nor a Poet; and if every one in justice ought to have a due, then nature must have a share, and truly I will never be so ingrateful as not to acknowledge her favours, or to belie her in saying she hath not been bountiful to me, for she hath given me such materials, as I hope to build me a monumental fame therewith. (*Philosophical and Physical Opinions* "To the Reader" sig. Br)

This description of her relationship to Nature is one that Cavendish never abandons; she continues to express her indebtedness throughout her entire career, as in an epistle to the Duke that prefaces his biography: "it pleased God to command his Servant Nature to indue me with a Poetical and Philosophical Genius, even from my birth" ("To His Grace the Duke of Newcastle" sig. Bv). The references to nature allow Cavendish, in true laureate tradition, to name herself poet and philosopher and to equate her actions with those of a preacher and teacher (Helgerson 3). Such a self-representation is unmistakable in the prefaces to *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655), in which Cavendish defines herself as both "the preacher of Nature" ("The Text to My Natural Sermon" sig. [a4]v) and the teacher of Nature:

a scholer is to be learned in other mens opinions, inventions and actions, and a philosopher is to teach other men his opinions of Nature, and to demonstrate the works of nature, so that a scholar is to learn a Philosopher to teach, and if they say there is no

distinction between a profest scholer, and a profest philosopher, I am not of their opinion. ("To the Reader" sig. Bv)

In addition to providing the ability to transform the everyday scholar into a Poet and Philosopher, being schooled by nature has its advantages, as Cavendish rehearses in a preface to *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*: "certainly natural reason is a *better* tutor than education; for though education doth help natural reason to a more sudden maturity, yet natural reason was the *first* educator; for natural reason did *first* compose Commonwealths, invented arts, and discovered sciences" ("To the Reader" sig. B2r--italics mine).

The formula at work here, first equals best, is a fundamental part of yet another strategy that Cavendish employs in an attempt to compensate for her lack of university education: the claim of novelty.¹⁵ Cavendish is not the only seventeenth-century writer who places importance upon the originality of her works; in fact, it is the trait that distinguishes Cowley and Davenant as would-be laureates (Helgerson 212). The value of originality is forwarded by Davenant, for example, in the preface to *Gondibert* when he insists, "Whilst we imitate others we can no more excel them then he that sails by others' maps can make a new discovery" (7). The laureates' rejection of the practice of imitation is significant, for, as Helgerson explains, imitation and improvement to the point of stylistic perfection were the mark of Caroline poetry. Helgerson classifies these writers as "latecomers" and notes their belief that there is nothing left for their generation to achieve and that they have no choice but to imitate their predecessors' work. As their

¹⁵ For more on Cavendish's use of novelty as "a strategy of entitlement," see Laura J. Rosenthal's excellent discussion of the prefaces to *Playes* (*Playwrights* 58-104).

commendatory verses indicate, these writers felt that they were poets by adoption, not by birth (Helgerson 190-94). In the latter half of the seventeenth century, then, laureates attempted to distinguish themselves by rejecting the discursive conventions of their contemporaries. As Helgerson remarks in reference to Milton, "solitariness becomes a sign of greatness" (188).

Read with her contemporaries practices in mind, Cavendish's proclamations of her natural poetic birthright, of her "delight in a singularity" (Rhys 209), and of the originality of all of her works can be regarded as deliberately constructed and carefully managed rhetorical stances. From her first publication, Cavendish's prefaces advertise the novelty of her books: "If any Philosophers have written of these subjects," she says, "it is more then I know of" (*Poems, and Fancies "To Naturall Philosophers"* sig. [A6]r). Having received word that some of her readers doubt her claim to entirely original ideas, she prefaces *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* with "An Epistle, To justifie the Lady Newcastle, and Truth against falshood, laying those false, and malicious aspersions of her, that she was not Authour of her Books," written by her husband. While he admits that she did receive some of her ideas from conversations with him, he is quick to add, "I say some of them she hath heard from me, but not the fortieth part of her book, all the rest are absolutely her own in all kindes, this is an ingenious truth, therefore beleeve it" (sig. [A3]r). As for *Poems, and Fancies*, the duke remarks, "there is excellent, and new Phancies, as have not been writ by any, and that it was onely writ by her is the greatest truth in the world" (sig. [A3]r). And "As for the Book of her Philosophical Opinions, there is not any one thing in the whole Book, that is not absolutely spun out by her own studious phancy, and if you will lay by a little passion against writers, you will like it, and the best, of any thing she has writ, therefore read it once or twice" (sig.

[A3]r).¹⁶ In his letter, Newcastle explains that what “makes” and “Glorifies” a poet is “new born and creating Phansies” (sig. A2v-[A3]r). It makes sense that having targetted novelty as the mark of a true poet, most of the letter is concerned with testifying to Margaret’s innovation.¹⁷

In “The Preface to the Reader” that introduces *The World’s Olio*, Cavendish herself asserts the importance of breaking out of imitating patterns of thought and discourse. Cavendish poses the question, “What did we [women] ever do but, like Apes, by Imitation?” and then goes on to suggest that since “Thoughts,” “studying,” and “Contemplation” are “as free to [women] as to Men,” women would do well to spend less time complaining and more time inventing (sig. [A5]r). Breaking out of imitating patterns of

¹⁶ The majority of modern scholars rely upon Cavendish’s prefatory remarks as primary, if not sole, evidence of the existence of a malicious, overly critical readership. See, for example, Mendelson (36) and Rosenthal, who argues that “The charges of plagiarism against Cavendish must have been frequent, particularly disturbing, or both, for she defends herself vehemently” (*Playwrights* 58). However, other than the Cavendishes’ vehement defenses of her originality, there is little evidence to suggest that Cavendish was frequently charged with plagiarism. The Cavendishes’ prefaces to *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* were written in response to a letter from Walter Charleton, dated January 1, 1654, which prompted the Newcastles’ concern (*Letters and Poems* 142-49). The relative portion reads: “Madam, among those, who have perused your Writings, I meet with a sort of Infidels, who refuse to believe, that you have alwayes preserved your self so free from the Contagion of Books, and Book-men. And the Reason they give me, is this; that you frequently use many Terms of the Schools, and sometimes seem to have Imp’d the Wings of your high-flying Phansy with sundry Feathers taken out of the Universities, or Nests of Divines, Philosophers, Phisicians, Geometricians, Astronomers, and the rest of the Gowned Tribe” (146). Charleton goes on to list a few dozen terms. There is nothing in Charleton’s letter, however, to explain the ferocious sense of urgency that propels the Cavendishes’ lengthy response to her detractors, and this suggests that they were looking for a misunderstanding if not malicious audience. Lilley, too, argues that in her prefaces, Cavendish “assumes a continuing audience for her work: those implied readers whose existence confirms her career as a writer in a public sense” (xvi), but she does not regard this audience as necessarily malicious. Lilley’s approach to Margaret Cavendish’s prefaces contains the most possibilities, for she reads them as a “poetics,” “probably the most extensive theorization we have available to us of an individual seventeenth century woman’s relation to the resources of writing and publication, and the gendered construction of knowledge in a secular context” (xiv).

¹⁷ In a letter dated May 3, 1663, Charleton writes, “[U]pon all occasions you either produce new things, or speak old ones after a new manner; so that you stagger the truth of that saying of the wise Man, That nothing is new under the Sun” (*Letters and Poems* 92).

thought and discourse is synonymous with breaking out of gender expectations.

It is important to point out that Cavendish writes her rejection of imitation not only as a laureate move but also as a feminist move. Having suggested the similarities between the two, it seems appropriate to conclude the discussion of Cavendish's early prefaces by returning to her dual self-presentations: *the first English poet of her Sex* and *the first English poet who ever wrote this way*. As I have tried to illustrate, most modern critical attention has focused on the former, and this is not surprising given that these two strains of rhetoric often seem identical or at least complementary. Unfortunately, when the ideological stances of these two representations clash, a traditional approach only allows for limited explanations, usually reading them as anti-feminist statements. My reading of these statements as pro-laureate rather than necessarily anti-feminist might be difficult for modern readers to accept, but Cavendish's contemporaries were able to recognize Cavendish's two distinct campaigns.¹⁸ George Etherege acknowledges this understanding in "To the most Illustrious and most Excellent Princess, The Marchioness of NEW-CASTLE. After the reading of her Incomparable POEMS":

¹⁸ That Cavendish's contemporaries recognized her as a pioneer for what we would call women's rights is evidenced in a letter from Thomas Lockey, the Keeper of the Public Library, dated May 20, 1663: "For (as your Excellency hath observed) men do assign to your Sex nothing but vanities, and Trifles for their Portion, and under colour of Courtship do confine them in their Education only to some inferiour Qualities, and so in effect but to a kind of delicate Barbarism: But herein your Excellency hath shew'd great Courage in breaking through that Obstruction, and by a Female and unusual Chevalry have rescued your whole Nation and Sex from oppression and injury in this point, and of that great Giant, the World" (*Letters and Poems* 134). Benoist's reception also tells us something about Cavendish's representations. In a letter dated September 4, 1662, he writes, "As every man is not capable of so extraordinary Productions, so is not every Woman; but that Women are naturally as capable of it as Men, if not more, may easily be proved by making an exact comparison of both their Temperaments and Organs, which would be a discourse too long to be inserted in a Letter, and your Excellence hath so clearly decided that Question by your unimitable Works, that it saves sufficiently that trouble" (*Letters and Poems* 80).

Your Sexes Glory, and our Sexes Pride,
 Are joyn'd in you, and all to you submit,
 The brightest Beauty, and the sharpest Wit;
 No Faction here, or fiercer Envy swayes,
 They give you Mirtle, while we offer Bayes;
 What Mortal dares dispute those Wreath's with you?

(*Letters and Poems* 153-54)

In this poem, Etherege articulates Cavendish's right to no less than two trophies, one for the first English poet of her Sex and one for the first English poet who ever wrote this way. When we extend the examination of Cavendish's prefatory self-representations of herself to her frontispieces, we find that she has already authorized the dramatization of the coronation.¹⁹ The frontispiece to *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655) depicts the diligent Cavendish suspending her studies long enough to receive her accolades from several angelic beings in a private ceremony (fig. 2).

¹⁹ Discussions of Cavendish's frontispieces by Abraham van Diepenbeke, an Antwerp artist, can be found in Grant (142-43, 152), Jones (14, 128), Mendelson (19-20), Gallagher ("Embracing" 30), and Masten (164). For a discussion of the frontispieces to works by several seventeenth-century men, including Shakespeare, Jonson, Donne, Drayton, Herrick, and Milton, see Marcus *Unediting the Renaissance*, especially pages 194-205. In addition to the pieces in *Letters and Poems*, several resources are available for those interested in Cavendish's contemporary reception. See Rogers for a discussion of Edmund Waller's response to the 1663 edition of *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (210), and for what may be Cavendish's counter-response, see *Sociable Letters* (226-27). For an explanation of the "recognisable portraits of the Duchess" in the drama of Pope, Arbuthnot, Gay, Wright, Charles Johnson, and Cibber, see Jones (178). Henry More's disparaging letter to Lady Conway and John Stainsy's misogynistic verse parody of her epitaph can both be found in Grant, as can the commendatory verse by Mildmay Fane, Earl of Westmoreland on the fly-leaf of his copy of *Poems, and Fancies* (203, 199, 129-30). For similarly flattering depictions of her intellect, see the dedications to her that preface Shadwell's *The Humourists* (1671) and Richard Flecknoe's *A Farrago of Several Pieces* (1666). The ballad that John Evelyn, usually a friend of the Cavendish family, wrote to commemorate Cavendish's visit to the Royal Society, can be pieced together from the quotations in Grant (24-26). It is addressed to Sir Joseph Williamson, who was a Fellow of the Society and the former Secretary of State. The holograph is in the Public Record Office (SPD 29/450).



Fig. 2. Margaret Cavendish. Frontispiece to *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655). By Abraham van Diepenbeke. Engraved by Peter van Schuppen. It is also reproduced in Grant, after page 166.

Significantly, the cherubs hold in their hands two trophies: a laurel wreath and myrtle branches.

Works and Playes: Cavendish's Middle Prefaces

Most of the themes, tropes, and representations that Cavendish establishes in her early prefaces remain consistent throughout her entire career. In all of her middle and later prefaces, Cavendish continues to imagine herself as the misunderstood and exemplarily virtuous Poet-Philosopher against the world and to represent her works as original productions of her natural genius. More than anything else, what is significant about Cavendish's middle prefaces is the way in which they register her rejection of the amateur stance toward writing.

In his discussion of Marguerite de Navarre's prefatory rhetoric, Kevin Dunn points out that during the Renaissance "no clear *limen* existed through which a noble woman might pass into a textual center" (*Prefatory Rhetoric in the Renaissance* 44). I have argued that Margaret Cavendish's response to this dilemma was to locate a space for a writing career in between the expectations of her gender and her class. In the previous section, I discussed the difficulties that Cavendish's gender posed to her adoption of the laureate stance, but her rank also posed problems.²⁰ As an aristocrat, Cavendish was

²⁰ That Cavendish felt it was necessary as a writer to explain both her gender and her rank is evident in her many references to her "sex and breeding." Significantly, these appear most often in her addresses to the universities, to the men who held the precious education which she lacked, but it also surfaces in the Induction to *Playes* (1662). In this scene, one of the three men, Tom, refuses to go see Cavendish's play because of the author's gender and her social station: "A woman write a Play! Out upon it, out upon it, it cannot be good, besides you say she is a lady, which is the likelier to make the Play worse, a woman and a Lady to write a Play; fye, fye" (sig. Br). A letter to Margaret Cavendish from Trinity College, dated October 5, 1668, remarks upon her gender and rank as potential barriers to laureate status: "though a Woman, yet [you] hath merited the Diadem of Learning before Men; though a Courtier, yet before the Academicks" (*Letters and Poems* 150).

supposed to subscribe to the amateur's philosophy of writing that her husband, brothers, brothers-in-law, and daughters-in-law advocated.

Unlike the amateurs and the professionals who regarded writing as play, for the serious-minded laureates, writing was work, and their texts were referred to as "Works" (Helgerson 37).²¹ Helgerson finds the most appropriate definition of "the laureate's task" in George Chapman's dedication to *Seven Books of the Iliads of Homer* in which Chapman expresses his desire "to make of a gentleman's toy something of unspeakable profit" (qtd. in Helgerson 21). Cavendish forwards the laureate's philosophy of poetry in an especially poignant way in the preface to the autobiography which she attached to the first edition of *Nature's Pictures*:

And for poetry, most laugh at it as a ridiculous thing, especially grave statist, severe moralists, zealous priesthood, wrangling lawyers, covetous hounders, or purloiners, or those that have mechanick natures, and many more, which for the most part account poetry a *toy*, and condemn it for a vanity, an *idle employment*; nor have they so much phancy of their own, as to conceive the poetical phancies of others; for if they did, they must needs love poetry: for poetry is so *powerfull*, and hath such an attractive *beauty*, that those that can but view her perfectly could not but be enamoured, *her charms do so force affection*. But surely those that delight not in poetry or musick, have no divine souls, nor harmonious thoughts. (Rhys 183-84--italics mine)

²¹ Consider, for example, these lines from Suckling's "Sessions of the Poets": "plainly [Jonson] deserved the bays, / For his were called *Works*, where others' were but plays" (qtd. in Helgerson 37).

This is a particularly rich passage, for it participates in the laureate discourse in a number of ways at once in that it establishes the separation, superiority, and power of both the poet and the poetry. What I find especially noteworthy about this passage is Cavendish's representation of the amateur's agenda. Both amateurs and laureates subscribed to the ideal of what Helgerson calls "civic humanism," a kind of humanism that was initiated in self-improvement in youth but moved outward in adulthood to make a significant contribution to public improvement. However, in contrast to the laureates who regarded writing as the lifelong occupation that made the most substantial contribution to the good of the public, the amateurs represented their youthful dabbling in poetry as a vehicle to help them display their abilities and to thereby procure a "real" public office in the state, church, university, or courthouse (Helgerson 48). In Cavendish's representation, however, the amateur men who have attained important offices in the state, church, university and court are reduced to men of base and "mechanick natures," because they consider poetry to be a "toy" and writing to be an "idle imployment," and they do not share the laureate's appreciation of both the beauty and the persuasive power, or the utility, of poetry.²²

This particular anti-amateur statement was published in 1656, but it is by no means characteristic of Cavendish's early prefatory rhetoric. If anything, rather than a decidedly laureate or amateur position, the early prefaces record the tension between the two, specifically in regard to the distinction between

²² Commenting upon Cavendish's approach to writing, Dale Spender writes, "[U]nlike any other woman before her (as far as I can determine) [Cavendish] . . . looked on writing as her full-time employment" (35). On at least one occasion, Cavendish characterized a diligent work ethic as particularly female: "men are like flies bred out of a dunghill buzzing idle about. . . when women are like industrious ants. . . always employed to the benefit of their families" ("The Discreet Virgin").

writing as work and writing as play. On the one hand, Cavendish always refers to her books as works, and as I have already explained, her prefaces show evidence of her devotion to the laureate's serious, studious, centered self. On the other hand, she occasionally appears to undervalue her writing, making such dismissive claims as the one that appears in "To Naturall Philosophers," one of the prefaces to *Poems, and Fancies*: "I had nothing to do when I wrot it, and I suppose those have nothing, or little else to do, that read it" (sig. [A6]r). *Natures Pictures*, the very same book that contains the preface that equates amateurs with mechanics, is actually dedicated to Pastime:

To Pastime I do dedicate this Book,
When idle, then my Readers in't may look,
And yet be idle still. . .

Only three lines into the poem, however, the amateur's nonchalance begins to give way to the laureate's didacticism:

. . . yet wish they may
Never mispend their time, or wast the day
Worse or more idly; since it may concern
My Readers all, in every piece to learn
Something to lay up still in mem'ries Treasure;
Thus for your sakes mix Profit with your Pleasure.

It is interesting that the poem contains a reference to mixtures, for the poem's concluding lines are themselves a peculiar blend of the amateur's value of

play and the laureate's very serious enterprise.

I hope you'll like it, if not, I'm still the same,
Careless, since Truth will vindicate my Fame.

("The Dedication" sig. [a]r)

According to Helgerson, feigned apathy and modesty, even to the point of self-deprecation, was characteristic of would-be laureates, who often began their careers by stressing their similarities to amateurs:

So firm was the amateurs' hold on the name of poet that the laureates could not wholly reject amateur attitudes. Nor could they wholly accept them. Thus, as a role-preserving compromise, they selected certain works, usually those written in the minor genres most practiced by the amateurs, and presented them with the familiar amateur self-disparagement. (29)

Rarely, however, does this amateur trivialization of herself and her works appear in Cavendish's prefaces without being tempered by a healthy dose of laureate confidence. It is not surprising, then, to find Cavendish's statement prefaced to *Poems, and Fancies* that she "had nothing to do when [she] wrot it, and [she] suppose[s] those have nothing, or little else to do, that read it" followed by a passage that suggests that her intentions are considerably more complicated:

And the Reason why I write it in Verse, is, because I thought
Errours might better passe there, then in Prose; since Poets write

most Fiction, and Fiction is not given for Truth, but Pastime; and I feare my Atomes will be as small Pastime, as themselves: for nothing can be lesse then an Atome. But my desire that they should please the Readers, is as big as the World they make; and my Feares are of the same bulk; yet my Hopes fall to a single Atome agen: and so shall I remaine as unsettled Atome, or a confus'd heape, till I heare my Censure. If I be prais'd it fixes them; but if I am condemn'd, I shall be Annihilated to nothing: but my Ambition is such, as I would either be a World, or nothing. ("To Naturall Philosophers" sig. A6r)

The metaphor at work here, while being quite clever, does not manage to cover the author's "unsettled" agenda. If writing is to be treated as nothing but Pastime, why would she "feare" that her poems on atoms would be small, why would she "feare" her readers' displeasure? Because, the passage suggests, her laureate ambition desires her praises to be fixed.

Cavendish is never entirely comfortable approaching her writing as play, and this is particularly evident in her middle prefaces. In fact, the term "work," which appears in various constructions no less than sixty times in Cavendish's early prefaces, appears twice as often in her middle prefaces. On the other hand, in all of Cavendish's prefaces there are less than a dozen references to "play," and many of these appear in the prefaces authored by her husband. When William Cavendish uses the term, it is synonymous with leisure, as when he writes about the "Gallants" who "play" with "Sweet pretty Ladies" in one of the introductory poems to *Natures Pictures* entitled "A Copy of Verses to the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle, of all her works, which are now all printed, excepted her Tragedies and Comedies, which will shortly

come out" (sig. b2r-v).²³ In contrast, Maraget Cavendish uses the term (as a verb, in reference to the activity of musicians, as a noun, in reference to her plays themselves) to represent the activities and products of one's employment. Cavendish's appropriation of the amateur vocabulary, an appropriation by which "play" becomes synonymous with "work," is symbolic of her devotion to the laureate sense of vocation.²⁴

Cavendish's appreciation of and dedication to the laureate's task of turning the amateur's play into profitable work is especially evident in one of the prefaces to her first folio of *Playes* (1662), entitled "A General Prologue to all my Playes."²⁵ The prologue begins,

Noble Spectators, do not think to see
Such Playes, that's like Ben. Jonsons Alchymie,
Nor Fox, nor Silent Woman: for those Playes
Did Crown the Author with exceeding praise;
They were his Master-pieces, and were wrought
By Wits invention, and his labouring thought,

²³ See also "To the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle, on her Book of Tales" (*Natures Pictures* sig. bv) for another of William Cavendish's references to ladies and gallants at "play."

²⁴ Cavendish refers to the musicians in "To the Reader" in *The World's Olio* (sig. [A6]r). Additionally, *Philosophical Fancies* contains a prefatory reference to play as the thoughtless action of "Amorous Ladies, which doe dance, and play, / Casting their Modesty, and Fame away" ("A Request to Time" sig. [A3]v).

²⁵ Cavendish's dramatic folios are extremely important for they are not only, as Nancy Cotton points out, the first published collection of plays by a woman (42), they are the first printed folios by any living author—regardless of gender—that are comprised solely of plays. This is an important step in the historical rise of the literary worth of drama. Additionally, the *Playes* are significant because we know a little bit about the story of their production. Grant says that the manuscript of Cavendish's first folio of plays was "lost when the ship carrying it to England to be printed foundered. Margaret was prudent enough to keep copies of her 'poor labours' until after they had appeared in print, when she burnt the copies, but the loss postponed publication of her plays until after her return to England" (159-60). Evidently, the plays should've been published in or soon after 1656 (they were advertised in the prefatory material to *Natures Pictures*). They were not published until 1662.

And his Experience brought Material store,
His reading several Authors brought much more:
What length of time he took those Plays to write,
I cannot guess, not knowing his Wits flight.

At first this depiction of the self-crowned laureate seems complimentary, but Cavendish's tone quickly turns to mocking sarcasm:

But I have heard, Ben. Johnsons *Playes* came forth,
To the Worlds view as things of a great worth;
Like Forein Emperors, which do appear
Unto their Subjects, not 'bove once a year;
So did Ben. Johnsons *Playes* so rarely pass,
As one might think they long a writing was.

In addition to the satiric depiction of Jonson as a self-important yet poetically slow writer, I find one aspect of this passage to be of monumental significance: Margaret Cavendish twice refers to the dramatic writings of Ben Jonson, which had been published as his *Workes* in 1616, as "Playes." What's going on here? What interest would Cavendish have in trivializing the writing of another self-crowned laureate?²⁶ And what interest would she have in trivializing the importance of her own texts, something she appears

²⁶ I disagree with Julie Sanders's argument that in her prefaces Cavendish stresses her *similarity* to Ben Jonson in order to "authenticate. . . her own projects" (297). It is true the Cavendish models her self-crowned laureate enterprise after Jonson's. For example, Cavendish's "Epigraph to the Theme of Love," in which she complains "O love, how thou art tired out with rhyme! / Thou art a tree whereon all poets climb," is reminiscent of Jonson's stance in the poem "Why I Write Not of Love." However, even though several of Cavendish's contemporaries compare or prefer her to Jonson, including her husband, none of Cavendish's prefaces point out the similarities between the two writers. Instead, Cavendish always writes herself *in contrast* to Jonson.

to do in the following section of the prologue:

. . . my Playes have not such store of wit,
Nor subtil plots, they were so quickly writ,
So quickly writ, that I did almost cry
For want of work, my time for to imploy:
Sometime for want of work, I'm forc'd to play,
And idley to cast my time away:
Like as poor Labourers, all they desire
Is, to have so much work, it might them tire:

If Cavendish's plays aren't entitled "Works," she suggests, it is not because they lack importance but because it was so easy to write them. She contrasts her approach to writing with that of male playwrights, laureate, amateur, and professional alike, pointing out that there is

Such difference betwixt each several brain,
Some labour hard, and offer life to gain;
Some lazie lye, and pampred are with ease,
And some industrious are, the world to please.

(sig. A7r)

She goes on to characterize these "brains," these men that is, as writers who either "steal" from others, cannot chose a "subject," or focus too much on craft and "designs." Her plays are different, she claims, from those that "Johnson, Shakespear, Beaumont, Fletcher writ," for her plays do not possess

evidence of "Learning, Reading, Language, Wit" (sig. A7v).²⁷ But, as before, Cavendish writes her lack of education and experience to her advantage: Her supposed deficiencies function as proof of that her plays are original productions that her "own poor brain did make" (sig. A7v).

The theme of self-sufficient labor drives the latter half of the poem. Cavendish introduces the image of a cottage and its owner, a metaphor for the writer and her works.²⁸ She represents the house as the product of the owner's sole "labour," a word that appears repeatedly in this section of the poem (sig. A7v).²⁹ In building the house, and in contrast to Cavendish's depiction of the male playwrights, the owner rejects any mercenary

²⁷ One of the characters in *Sociable Letters* writes criticism on Shakespeare (258).

²⁸ On the image of the house in Dryden's "Preface to the *Fables*," in which the author "plays the architect," see Dunn's *Pretexts of Authority* (140-45). For more on the metaphor of the cottage in Cavendish's scientific work, see Rogers, who argues that "the dominant conceptual paradigm for the Cavendishean theory of motion is architectural" (210). It may be useful to consider here that Cavendish is drawn to architectural metaphors in part because of what happened to the homes that she and her husband lived in. For a description of Ruben's Antwerp mansion, her home during her exile, see Jones (71-72). An account of the parliamentary militia's initial attack on the Lucas's property can be found in Jones (16-21). For an account of the deaths of Mary Killigrew (Margaret's eldest sister), Elizabeth Lucas (her mother), and Sir Charles Lucas (her brother), the siege of St. John's Abbey, and the exhumation and the defilement of the undecomposed bodies of the Lucas family in St. Giles Church, see Grant (98-101) and Jones (68-70). One section from Jones's biography is especially poignant: "Margaret had suffered much more than her husband through the Civil War. While he lost only property and income, some of which he eventually recovered, his family remained unscathed. Margaret's losses were irrecoverable. She had lost her home" (70).

²⁹ Remarking on this passage, Rosenthal points out that Cavendish "collapses distinctions between Jonsonian imitation, Shakespearean intertextuality, and plagiarism" (*Playwrights* 67). Cavendish's strategy was at least partially successful. Commenting on Margaret Cavendish's plays in 1691, Gerald Langbaine wrote, "I know there are some that have but a mean Opinion of her Plays; but if it be consider'd that both the Language and the Plots of them are all her own: I think she ought with Justice to be preferr'd to others of her Sex, which have built their Fame on other People's Foundations: sure I am, that whoever will consider well the several Epistles before her Books, and the General Prologue to all her Plays, if he have any spark of Generosity, or Good Breeding, will be favourable in his Censure" (391). Dryden repeated the theme of stolen labor in his prologue to *Albuzar* originally printed in 1668, and reprinted in the *Covent Garden Drollery* (1672): "But this our age such Authors does afford, / As make whole Playes, and yet scarce write a word: / Who in this Anarchy or witt, rob all, / And what's their Plunder, their Possession call" (CGD 87).

“Carpenters” or “Masons” and prefers to use the lumber on his own grounds instead of “Materials” taken “from forein parts” or stolen from his “Neighbour”:

[He] lives contentedly of his own *labour*;
And by his *labour*, he may thrive, and live
To be an old rich man, and then may leave
His Wealth, to build a Monument of Fame,
Which may for ever keep alive his name.

It is significant that at the point where Cavendish introduces the industrious Owner/ Writer, she stops referring to her plays and begins referring to her works:

Just so, I hope, the *works* that I have writ,
Which are the buildings of my natural wit;
My own inheritance, as Natures child. . . .

(sig. A7v)

The prologue concludes:

But all that I desire when as I dye,
My memory in my own *Works* may lye:
.....
I care not where my dust, or bones remain,
So my *Works* live, the *labour* of my brain.
I covet not a stately, cut, carv'd Tomb,

But that my *Works*, in Fames house may have room:
Thus I my poor built Cottage am content,
When that I dye, may be my Monument.

(sig. [A7b]r--italics mine)

By the end of the piece, then, Cavendish ends up sounding very familiar to the laureate whose works are "wrought / By Wits invention" and "labouring thought." Significantly, however, while the prologue records the transformation of her plays into works, none of her predecessors' plays metamorphose along with hers. All of the male playwrights that are mentioned at the beginning of the poem, laureate, amateur, and professional alike, are left in the dust, including poor Ben Jonson. Cavendish appropriates play into work, but, importantly, she does not allow the consummate laureate patriarch that same right. Jonson's plays, however laboriously he might have worked on them, are still plays. Cavendish emerges as the new poet, the natural laureate. And, as she establishes in the epistle to the "Worthy Readers," only one person deserves credit for her work: "me the worker" ("To the Readers" sig. [A5b]v).³⁰

If the "General Prologue" records Cavendish's appropriation of the amateur stance as well as her natural superiority to her laureate predecessor,

³⁰ Cavendish uses the same language when she speaks of "Nature the worker" in "An Epistle" which prefaces "A True Relation" in *Natures Pictures* (1656) and again in "The Opinion, or Religion of the Old Philosophers," one of the prefaces to *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655) (sig. [a4]r). Masten argues that in the prefaces to *Playes* Cavendish appropriates the homoerotic prefatory discourse of male-male collaboration and "reproduces it within the newly emergent discourse of companionate marriage" in an effort to present her work as the product of "male-female collaboration" (158). At the same time, Masten points out, the prefaces illustrate "the careful regulation of textual property within the paradigm of singular authorship" (158). Based upon my reading of the laureate stance as necessarily anti-collaboration, I find the latter half of Masten's argument more convincing than the former. Interestingly, in a poem entitled "Nature's Dessert," Cavendish creates the image of "Sweet Marmalade of Kisses newly gather'd/Preserved Children, which were never Father'd" (*Poems and Fancies* 192).

the fourth preface "To the Readers" is remarkable for Cavendish's attempt to distinguish herself from the professionals.³¹ In it, she criticizes the "Players" who act in public theatres, not because they are public actors, but because they are *professional* actors, "mercenaries" who act only for "the lucre of Gain."³² Everyone involved with Theatre does work, Cavendish points out, but those who "make it a work of labour and not of delight, or pleasure, or honour" miss the possible importance of Theatre as "a shorter way of education": "for Poets teach them more in one Play, both of the Nature of the World and Mankind. . . than they can learn in any School, or in any Country or Kingdome in a year; but to conclude, a Poet is the best Tutor, and a Theatre is the best School that is for Youth to be educated by or in" (sig. [A4b|r]).

In this preface, Cavendish expresses a concern for the "pleasure" and "delight" of both herself and her readers, two words that often appear in tandem in many of Cavendish's prefaces. But Cavendishian delight and pleasure, it is important to point out, are always reconciled to virtue. In fact, on a number of occasions Cavendish admits that some of her books were not enjoyable to write; they are works of honour rather than works of delight. *Natures Pictures* was written as a sort of exercise, Cavendish claims, of her ability to write fiction as well as her beloved poetry, a genre to which her "Naturall Genius" and "Naturall inclinations and affections" were inclined. Such a task was not easy; it was one that required her to "strive" and

³¹ Susan Wiseman points out that Cavendish's plays "draw on codes of both public and private, aristocratic and commercial theatre" that the 1650s brought together, especially in Davenant's work ("Gender" 169).

³² On the prefaces about public theatre, Tomlinson remarks, "These passages are important because together they reveal that Cavendish did fantasize her plays as being performed, outside the theatre of her mind" (Tomlinson 141). Rosenthal suggests that Cavendish "may even have seen or hoped to see these plays performed by the women at court" (*Playwrights* 87). For a considerably more narrow view, see Jones, who argues that the plays "were never intended to be performed on the stage" (130).

“endeavour” contrary to her inherent talents at her disposal (“To the Readers” sig. c3v). For Margaret Cavendish, writing is a serious activity. This attitude toward writing is characteristic of the laureate stance. According to Helgerson, “For the amateur and the professional, rhetoric was primarily a source of pleasure; for the laureate, it was rather (and of necessity) an instrument of persuasion” (41). Not surprisingly, Cavendish claims that *Natures Pictures* is written to “perswade to that which is good and best” (sig. c3r).

Similarly, *Orations of Divers Sorts* (1662) is written in order to illustrate Cavendish’s ability to persuade.³³ In the prefatory materials to *The World’s Olio*, Cavendish had forwarded the idea that “Women can never have so strong Judgment, nor clear Understanding, nor so perfect Rhetoric, as to speak Orations with that Eloquence, nor to Perswade so forcibly, to Command so powerfully, to Entice so subtilly, and to Insinuate so gently and softly into the Souls of Men” (“The Preface to the Reader” sig. A4v). In *Orations*, however, she sets out to do just that: “I have Indeavoured in this Book to Express Perfect Orators, that Speak Perfect Orations, as to Cause their Auditors to Act, or Believe, according to the Orators Opinion, Judgement, Design, or Desire” (“To the Readers of My Works” sig. a3r). The ultimate goal of persuasion, Cavendish says, has guided her writing process even to the point of determining the length of the speeches:

’Tis Probable had I been a Learned Scholar, I might have Written
my Orations more Short than I have done, but yet some of them

³³ A letter from Charleton, dated May 3, 1663, suggests that Cavendish’s interest in rhetoric was transparent in her scientific and philosophic writings as well: “they who read your Books with design to be informed in points of Philosophy, find themselves at the same time introduced also in Rhetorique” (*Letter and Poems* 93).

are so short, that had they been shorter, they would not have been of Force to Perswade, whereas the Intention of an Orator, or Use of Orations, is to Perswade the Auditors to be of the Orators Opinions of Belief, and it is not Probable, that Forcible Arguments of Perswasions can be Contain'd in two or three Lines of Words.

(sig. a2v)

In one of the introductions, Cavendish herself steps up to the soap box and delivers a "A Praefactory Oration" to her "Worthy Country-men." But even given the playful possibilities of such a pose, the language suggests that the author's intentions are no laughing matter. She distinguishes between two kinds of speeches: "The one sort requires Rational perswasions, the other only Eloquent expressions" (sig. Br). Cavendish's orations, she explains, belong in the former category, not only because of the particular rhetorical adeptness required to write them but also because of the magnitude of the topics, for the "Subjects" of Cavendish's speeches are "the most serious and most concernable actions and accidents amongst Mankind" (sig. Br). Given this, it is not surprising to find Cavendish claiming that this particular book was written "rather to benefit my Auditors, than to delight them" (sig. Br). Cavendish represents both *Natures Pictures* and *Orations of Divers Sorts*, then, as works written with the readers' edification in mind.

But the reader is not the only one who stands to benefit from these rhetorical exercises. Cavendish herself benefits because she demonstrates her ability to write in a number and variety of genres, disciplines, and styles. In all of her prefaces, Cavendish represents the desire to establish her diversity as one of the factors that drives her writing forward. These pointed displays of her rhetorical diversity did not go unnoticed by her contemporaries.

Oxfordian Jasper Mayne, in a letter dated May 20, 1663, wrote to Cavendish, "[T]ruly Madam when I consider the various Subjects you have past through, it would pose me something to find a proper place in any Library for your Works to stand in, whether among Orators, Poets, Philosophers, States-men, or Politicians, since every one of these may be ambitious to stand next you" (*Letters and Poems* 94). Mark Anthony Benoist, who tutored Newcastle's sons, congratulated Margaret Cavendish for similar reasons:

it is truly a *very rare thing* to be a great Scholar without being acquainted with the Universities, and Learned without the help of Teachers. As there is variety of Sciences, so there are several sorts of Capacities to acquire them, some proving excellent in one kind, some in another; but to be *capable of all*, as well Philosophy as Playes, and Poems as Orations, belongs to very few, whose Statues should be erected in all the eminent Places in the World, for their Glory, and our Admiration. (*Letters and Poems* 81--italics mine)

The compulsion to prove herself "capable of all" and to be accounted "a very rare thing" motivates Cavendish's literary ventures throughout her entire career. It is not surprising, then, to find Cavendish advertising her prolific accomplishments in one of the prefaces to *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy and New Blazing World* (1666). In "A Catalogue of All the Works Hitherto Published by the Authoress," Cavendish explains, "Since it is the fashion to declare what Books one has put forth to publick view, I thought it not amiss to follow the Mode, and set down the Number of all the Writings of mine which hitherto have been Printed" (sig. q5r). By anyone's standards,

the list is impressive indeed:

1. *Poems* in Fol. Printed twice, whereof the last Impression is much mended.
2. *Natures Pictures; or Tales in Verse and Prose*, in Fol.
3. *A Little Tract of Philosophy*, in 8^o
4. *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, in Fol.
5. The same much Enlarged and Altered, in Fol.
6. *Philosophical Letters*, in Fol.
7. *The Worlds Olio*, now to be reprinted.
8. *Playes* in Fol.
9. *Orationes* in Fol.
10. *Sociable Letters* in Fol.

Cavendish, in true laureate style, concludes her list with a promise for the future: "There are some others that never were Printed yet, which shall, if God grant me Life and Health, be Published ere long" (sig. q5r). It is to these works that we turn next.

Self-Crowned Laureatess: Cavendish's Later Prefaces

Unlike most amateur writers, or at least the pre-war amateur, Margaret Cavendish shared one trait with the professional and the laureate: a very real economic need. In their prefaces, professional writers often appealed to the public, presenting their writings as wares to be hawked, commodities advertised for purchase by anyone who can pay. On the other hand, laureate

writers whitewashed the act of selling their writings by imagining the relationship between poet and patron as reciprocal and equal. In writing about this economy of exchange in the prefaces and dedications, they often employed the discourse of mutual friendship. They named their “patrons” very carefully, choosing to dedicate their works to those whose past encouragement of them merited public gratitude and attention as well as those patrons from whom they hoped to profit in the future. Ben Jonson’s dedicatees, for example, include his former teacher William Camden, his lawyer-friend Richard Martin, and his occasional host Lord Aubigny--people who had provided him intellectual, legal and financial support in times of need, people to whom he owed a symbolic debt. In 1653, the year of her publishing debut, Margaret and William Cavendish were heavily indebted, in every sense of the word, to a number of people.

In her husband’s biography, *The Life of the Duke* (1667), Cavendish carefully records the economics of their exile during the Interregnum. The list of William Cavendish’s creditors is too vast to mention in its entirety; it includes Francis Topp (a wealthy English merchant,) the Duartes, the exiled Queen Mother, a score of miscellaneous Antwerpians, and William Cavendish’s sons, daughters, and brother Charles. At the same time that Margaret Cavendish carefully charts her husband’s debts in *The Life of the Duke*, she also provides a record of the favors that she personally incurred during the duke’s exile. For example, she tells the story of how when they were living in Paris in the late 1640s, her husband approached her one day and announced that they would not be able to afford their next meal unless she sold her clothes. Unwilling to do so, Margaret Cavendish asked her waiting woman, Elizabeth Chaplain, eventually Elizabeth Topp, to “pawn some small toys, which I had formerly given her, which she willingly did”

(64). By the end of the day, the duke had borrowed more money from his creditors, and the “toys that were pawned” were returned to their rightful owner. Elizabeth was then immediately sent to England, to ask Margaret Cavendish’s brother for the remaining portion of her dowry (64).

Although the Cavendishes were able to procure enough credit to move to Antwerp and live out William Cavendish’s exile in Van Ruben’s home, they were perpetually in debt. As Jones explains, “By 1652 the exiles had been living on credit and the generosity of friends for eight years and their financial situation was desperate” (75). In the same year, William Cavendish sent his wife to England to petition for the return of his lands. His brother Charles Cavendish accompanied her. According to the duchess, “We had so small a provision of money when we set forth our journey for England, that it was hardly able to carry us to London” (*Life of the Duke* 76). Charles Cavendish pawned his watch to pay for their food and lodging and borrowed money from several initially reluctant people. “[H]aving in the mean time nothing to live on,” the pair were concerned that they might “of necessity have been starved” (76). *The Life of the Duke* contains a six-page long calculation of his losses as a result of the war, which the duchess ultimately estimates to be more than £941,303. It takes time to compensate for these losses, Margaret Cavendish suggests, and although the duke has been able to repay “some of his debts,” there remain, “a great many to pay yet” (97).

As Cavendish explains “To Naturall Philosophers,” “[T]hose that are poor have nothing but their labour to bestow” (*Poems and Fancies* sig. [A6]v). Unable to offer her benefactors money, knighthoods, or displays of amazing horsemanship, as her husband did, Margaret Cavendish repays her debts in the prefaces to her books.³⁴ In particular, the dedications to fame and fortune

³⁴ Cavendish rewarded Francis Topp by making him a knight (Jones 141).

that preface Cavendish's early work stand in stark contrast to the dedications to her brother-in-law. In *Poems, and Fancies* (1653) she thanks Charles for his "bounty" and "charity" and remarks upon his courage: "such a Courage, as you dare not onely look Misfortunes in the Face, but grapple with them in the defence of our Freind; and your kindnesse hath been such, as you have neglected your selfe, even in the ordinary Accoutrements, to maintaine the distressed" ("The Epistle Dedicatory: To Sir Charles Cavendish, My Noble Brother-in-Law" sig. A2v). In a preface to *Philosophical Fancies* (1653), Margaret Cavendish imagines Charles as her lifelong patron:

Sir,

To forget to divulge your noble Favours to me, in any of my Works, were to murther GRATITUDE; which I will never be guilty of: And though I am your Slave, being manacl'd with Chaines of Obligation, yet my Chaines feelee softer then Silke, and my Bondage is pleasanter then Freedome; because I am bound to your self, who are a Person so full of Generosity, as you delight in Bounty, and take pleasure to relieve the necessitated Conditions of your Friends; and what is freely given, is comfortably receiv'd, and a satisfaction to the minde. ("To Sir Charles Cavendish, My Noble Brother-in-Law" sig. B4r-v)

Charles died before the publication of *The World's Olio* (1655). Nevertheless, Cavendish includes an epistle to him entitled "An Epistle that was writ before the death of the noble Sir Charls Cavendish, my most noble Brother-in-Law." She thanks him for his continued "Favours," "Generosity," and "Bounty," and hopes that her "payment of Praiers [would] be justly returned to [him], in

Blessings from Heaven" (sig. A3r).

Importantly, Cavendish figures all of her exchanges according to the laureate's economy. Just as Ben Jonson did in the prefaces to his *Workes* (1616), Cavendish gives "thanks for favors rendered rather than. . . pleas for patronage" (Herendeen 56). The laureate discourse of exchange was not, as I have already suggested, the only discourse available to a writer. In some of the prefaces that William writes, for example, he presents his wife's books as a professional might. Of *The World's Olio* (1655) he jokes, "Censure your worst, so you the Book will buy" ("To the Lady of Newcastle, upon her Book intituled, The World's Olio" sig. [A6]v). Similarly, he begins his preface to *Natures Pictures* (1656) by posing as a hawker: "Gallants and Ladies, what do ye lack? pray buy. . . . Will you not buy, because they teach not Vice?" ("To the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle, on her Book of Tales" sig. br). "What do you lack?" he jokes again halfway through the poem, and present his wife's work as "the Shop of Wit" (sig. br). Hawking the products of one's genius, even in jest, is unthinkable to a laureate's mind. Margaret Cavendish's response to the professional's economy of trade is to dismiss it as an exchange of material property rather than intellectual property. The books may belong to the purchaser, but the ideas are forever the possessions of the author: "Now some may say, they are become [the buyer's] own, since he bought them, it is true they are so to keep them, or make use of them, or to sell, and traffick with them, by imparting them to pettie Maerchants, which are young students and Scholars, but otherwise they are no more his, then when they were in the Authors head" (*The World's Olio* 6). In the 1671 edition of *The World's Olio*, the references to purchasing the book have been edited out of William Cavendish's verses, and in the 1671 edition of *Natures Pictures* his entire poem has been deleted and replaced by a poem by Margaret Cavendish,

who represents her book as a gift for her family and friends, "learned men," "the best of poets," and "The poorest Guess [Guest], though they no birth inherit, / To entertain according to their merit" (Untitled poem sig. C2r). Interestingly, in contrast to the severe editing that the duke's prefaces undergo in subsequent editions, his wife's dedication to Sir Charles Cavendish remains intact even in the third and final edition of *Poems, and Fancies* (1668).

Following Charles' death, we might expect Cavendish to begin dedicating her works to her husband. But she doesn't. Beginning with *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655) she dedicates the majority of her work to the universities. Although "The Two Universities" are frequent recipients, Cavendish doesn't limit her bounty to Oxford and Cambridge. *Sociable Letters* (1664) is dedicated "To All Professors of Learning and Art," and the only preface to *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (1668) is the dedication "To all the Universities in Europe."³⁵

Cavendish forwards her rationale for not dedicating her works to her husband in one of the prefaces to *The World's Olio* (1655). "The Reason why I have not dedicated any of my particular Books to your Lordship is, that when I have writ all I mean to print, I intend, if live, to Dedicate the whole summe of my Works unto you, and not by Parcells; for indeed you are my

³⁵ Nor should we suppose that her recipients viewed Cavendish's gifts as impositions, if the correspondence in *Letters and Poems* is any indication. Joseph Glanvill, for example, requested copies of her works for the library in Bath, writing: "I know, Madam, your Grace hath alwayes writ out of a Principle of Noble Generosity, and Charity towards Mankind" (103). Thomas Barlow's thank you letters are especially charming, and they inform us of Cavendish's practice of sending two gift copies: one for the college library and one for the school's representative. David Morton writes of his intention to pass down Margaret Cavendish's works as a family heirloom (73). A letter from the Duartes, the family in Antwerp who loaned the Cavendishes great sums of money, testifies to their having received "the Noble gift of five several Books together, of your Graces last Edition" (132). There is also some suggestion that in return for dedicating *The Humorists* to the duchess, Thomas Shadwell received a gift copy of one of the duchess's works rather than a more traditional form of payment (130).

Wits Patron" (sig. A2r). Interestingly, however, Cavendish uses this same language when, in a preface to *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655), published in the very same year, she writes "To the Two Universities": "I Here present the *sum of my works*" (sig. B2v--italics mine). Indeed, even though the letter to the duke with which Cavendish prefaces her first folio of *Playes* (1662) is entitled "The Epistle Dedicatory," it reads like a non-dedication: "My Lord," she writes, "My Resolution was, that when I had done writing, to have dedicated all my works in gross to your Lordship; and I did verily believe that this would have been my last work: but I finde it will not, unless I dye before I have writ my other intended piece" (sig. A3r). The duke is edged out by the competition, and Cavendish's book is dedicated to "those that do delight in Scenes and wit" (sig. A2r). Even though in *Orations of Divers Sorts* (1662), Cavendish says, "I have Dedicated my Self and all my Actions to your Lordship," she protests, "I think it not fit I should Dedicate unto your Lordship the Single parts of my Works, before I dedicate all the parts in the Whole" (sig. ar), and she continues in her dedications to the universities.

Perhaps, then, *The Life of the Duke* is, as Grant suggests, Margaret Cavendish's "way of repaying her debt" to her husband (188). Perhaps the biography of her husband is the "piece" she always "intended" to write before her death that she refers to in the 1662 dedication of *Playes*. Hobby argues that "she actually wrote nothing new after her presentation of herself in the *Life of the Duke* as an entirely submissive wife," and goes on to explain:

In this book, she is not present as the controlling author figure in the same way that she is in her other works, and when she

narrates her journey to England to plead for a share of Newcastle's sequestered estate, she does not even mention her writing and publishing when there, which she does describe in the parallel account in her autobiography. She also presents herself as writing not for fame, and from her own inspiration, but firmly directed by her husband. He had dictated what should be included and what omitted, she says in the preface, describing her 'submission to his Lordship's desire, from whom I have learned patience to overcome my passions, and discretion to yield to his prudence.' The contradictions between fame and honour had become so great that silence resulted, and she is absorbed into the non-identity of the femme covert, the married woman. (84)

However, a letter to Newcastle from the Vice-Chancellor and Senate of Cambridge, dated May 22, 1669, suggests that rather than read her as the duly submissive wife, Cavendish's contemporaries took a different approach to her self-presentation in *The Life of the Duke*: "your Actions are registred by an unparralled Princess, who yet hath not so transcribed your image, as not therein to interline, and insert a very legible Portraiture of her own Wit, and Parts" (*Letters and Poems* 64).³⁶

It is difficult to imagine how Cavendish's prefatory epistle to the duke, in which Hobby finds evidence of acquiescence, can be read as anything but the abbreviated autobiography of Margaret Cavendish's rise to Authorship.

³⁶ In regards to the Cavendish's marriage, Pearson portrays Margaret Cavendish as "[h]appily married to a sympathetic husband she hero-worshipped" (*Prostituted* 130), Grant guesses that "Margaret was fated to fall in love with Newcastle" (73), B. G. MacCarthy believes that "the Newcastles left a memory of faithful love" (76), and even Virginia Woolf admits that "there can be no doubt that they were perfectly happy" ("Duchess" 83). I believe that the legend of the Cavendish's marriage underlies readings such as those offered by Hobby and Masten.

After all, most of the epistle to her husband is, as most of her prefaces to her husband are, about Margaret Cavendish. In this one, she credits her own "Poetical and Philosophical Genius" (sig. Bv), refers to herself as "a Student even from [her] Childhood" (sig. B3v), and gives a lengthy account of her writing vocation, including her poetic ventures as a child, while in exile, and now in her husband's retirement as she continues studying and publishing.³⁷ She highlights both her husband's and her own "Loyal, Noble, and Heroick Actions," explaining, "yours have been of War and Fighting, mine of Contemplating and Writing" (sig. B4r), and concludes by expressing her expectance of the divinely ordained preservation of "both [their] Fames to after-Ages" (sig. B4v). When Cavendish writes her supposed submission in the subsequent text, "The Preface," she does so in reference to her approach to the composition of the biography rather than her approach to marriage. Even this submission, however, is a pose. Cavendish stages for the reader the history of the duke by presenting a conversation between herself and her husband. In this scenario, Cavendish expresses her desire to write a rhetorically perfect book. Her husband denies her request. As a result, she is "forced by his Graces Commands, to write this History in [her] own plain style" rather than rely on rhetoric (sig. Cv). The entire scene, of course, is a piece of rhetoric, for Cavendish has been championing her preference for her own plain style throughout her entire career.

Margaret Cavendish's own impressive self-presentation continues throughout the text itself. The contents of the Fourth Book, for example, are presented as "Several Essays and Discourses Gathered From the Mouth of My Noble Lord and Husband, With some few Notes of mine own" (149). These are unequivocally presented as *Margaret Cavendish's selections* of her

³⁷ Page numbers are taken from the 1675 edition of *The Life of the Duke*.

husband's ideas on foreign relations and international trade, national defense policies, the education of youth, public economy and taxation, effective uses of legislation and adjudication, and theories of government. The words "prince," "monarch," "commonwealth," and "state" appear in almost every note. Importantly, the book actually concludes with no less than seventeen of Cavendish's own philosophies, her husband's life functioning as the preface to her own observations. Many of the ideas that are included in the duke's section contain conversations between the Newcastles, as in the following note: "Asking My Lord one time, whether it was easie or difficult to govern a state or kingdom? He answered me, that most states were governed by secret policy, and so with difficulty; for those that govern, are (at least, should be) wiser then the state of commonwealth they govern" (166). As the note concludes, the duke has the last word, but not before his wife expresses her own theory of government: "I replied, that in my opinion, a state was easily governed, if their government was like unto God's; that is to say, if governours did reward and punish according to the desert" (166). It is important to point out that while William Cavendish is the subject of the book, he is not the dedicatee. Margaret Cavendish dedicates the biography, her final work, to the King of England, in a remarkably unpanegyric preface that suggests that the duke's allegiance to the crown has not been adequately rewarded ("To His most Sacred Majesty Charles the II, By the Grace of God, of England, Scotland, France and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, & c" sig. A3).

In at least one of Cavendish's works, she creates as a fictional character a woman writer who gives to the monarch advice on matters of state. The character's name is "The Duchess of Newcastle," and she appears in Cavendish's generically hybrid book *The Blazing World* (1666, 1668) as the

Empress's "spiritual scribe" (180). When the Empress is looking for an assistant to help her write a Cabbala, the spirits advise her to reject Aristotle, Pythagoras, Plato, Epicurus, Galileo, Gassendus, Descartes, Helmont, Hobbes, and Henry More as applicants for the position because they are too opinionated to be scribes, they are self-conceited, and they are sexist (180). Instead, the spirits promote "the Duchess of Newcastle," who will be "ready to do you all the service she can" (181). But when the Empress asks for her "counsel" on a number of occasions, the Duchess proves to be quite opinionated herself (182). In addition to encouraging the Empress's interest in writing fictional worlds of utopian "frame, order and government" (188), the Duchess gives her "advice concerning the government of the Blazing World" (200). The Duchess of Newcastle's counsel proves so impressive that when the Empress needs assistance in developing her martial strategy, the Emperor (whose advice is pointedly rejected) recommends that she consult with the Duchess: "I wish with all my soul I could advise any manner or way, that you might be able to assist it; but you having told me of your dear Platonic friend the Duchess of Newcastle, and of her good and profitable counsels, I would desire you to send for her soul, and confer with her about this business" (204). The book concludes with the Emperor asking the Duchess "advice how to set up a theatre for plays," and the Duchess promising "[T]he next time I come to visit Your Majesty, I shall endeavour to order Your Majesty's theater, to present such plays as my wit is capable to make" (220). The function the Duchess plays in relationship to the Empress and the Emperor, then, is that of counselor, advisor, teacher, poet, playwright, and masque-maker at once. In this way, *The Blazing World* is a

representation of the ideal relationship between monarch and laureate.³⁸

Helgerson explains the laureate poet's "search for royal favor" as the necessary catalyst of his career (48), for while as a Stoic the laureate's "mind was kingdom enough," his devotion to civic humanism required the writer to dutiful action and office (48). As Ben Jonson, remarked, "Sovereignty needs counsel." Who better to give it than the laureate, the "annointed spokesman of the nation"? (Helgerson 7). Margaret Cavendish's devotion to the laureate enterprise was enough to prompt the woman who promised never to write of state matters to dedicate her final book, *Life of the Duke*, to the king.

We do not know how the king received Cavendish's work. On the other hand, the fictional Duchess of Newcastle's advice meets with the Empress's concern that accepting the laureate's wisdom will result in the monarch's embarrassment:

she thought it would be an eternal disgrace to her, to alter her own decrees, acts and law. To which the Duchess answered, that it was so far from a disgrace, as it would rather be for her Majesty's eternal honour, to return from a worse to a better, and would express and declare her to be more than ordinary wise and good; so

³⁸ I disagree with Gallagher's assertion, "Of the two available political positions, subject and monarch, monarch is the only one Cavendish can image a woman occupying. . . . Even in her fantasy worlds, Cavendish keeps recreating these all-or-nothing political alternatives for women" ("Embracing" 27). Only one woman, the Empress, has absolute power in Cavendish's fiction. While the Duchess expresses her desire to be an empress, she only achieves this power fictively. At the same time that I respect the notion that both the Empress and the Duchess are in some ways representations of Cavendish and might have been written as vehicles for Cavendish's fantastic wish fulfillment (certainly, the Empress' factious native world ESFI and her country E are strikingly similar to Europe and England), my point is that Cavendish consistently represents the characters of the Empress and the Duchess of Newcastle as two separate entities, a distinction that is maintained within the text and throughout the author's epilogue.

wise, as to perceive her own errors, and so good, as not to persist in them, which few did; for which, said she, you will get a glorious fame in this world, and an eternal glory hereafter; and I shall pray for it as long as I live. (202)

The Empress is wise enough to accept the Duchess's advice. In return for the Duchess's sage counsel and friendship, the Empress promises that if there "could a passage be found out of the Blazing World into the world whence you came, and I would willingly give you as much riches as your desired" (217). Cavendish writes her monarch as one who understands the importance of rewarding those who merit royal favor. In this way, the Duchess's relationship with the Empress in *The Blazing World* is the antithesis of the duke's relationship to the king in *The Life of the Duke*.

The Life of the Duke is not actually, as Hobby argues, the last new "thing" that Cavendish wrote. In 1668, when she separated *Blazing World* from *Observations* and republished them, *Blazing World* included a newly written preface that redirected the text away from the 1666 audience of men toward a reading audience of women, in effect virtually bookending Cavendish's career with works prefaced to women. In "To all Noble and Worthy Ladies," she explains,

This present Description of a New World, was made as an Appendix to my Observations upon Experimental Philosophy; and having some Sympathy and Coherence with each other, were joyned together as Two several Worlds, at their Two Poles. But, by reason most Ladies take no delight in Philosophical Arguments, I separated some from the mentioned Observations, and caused

them to go out by themselves, that I might express my Respects, in presenting to Them such Fancies as my Contemplations did afford.
(sig. n. pag.)

She offers to these ladies the reward that the fictive Duchess of Newcastle is promised in return for her good counsel to the Empress: "As for the Rocks of Diamonds, I wish, with all my Soul, they might be shared amongst my Noble Female Friends" (sig. n. pag.). This symbolic gesture, appearing as it does in one of Cavendish's final public self-presentations, suggests Cavendish's return to the dual presentation of herself as *the first English poet of her sex* and *the first English poet that ever wrote this way*.

Why all this preface, then? Because in Renaissance and seventeenth-century England, the preface was the self-crowned laureate's primary means of authorial representation. Commenting on the self-fashioning of poet laureate John Dryden, Jonathan Swift joked, "Our great Dryden. . . has often said to me in confidence that the world would have never suspect him to be so great a poem if he had not assured them so frequently in his preface that is was impossible they could ever doubt or forget it" (*Tale of a Tub* 444). Just like Dryden, and Jonson before him, in her prefaces, Margaret Cavendish attempts to establish her greatness so that the world will never forget it.

CHAPTER FOUR
A MOVEABLE PREFACE:
APHRA BEHN AND THE COVENT GARDEN DROLLERY

In her 1928 biography of Aphra Behn, *The Incomparable Astrea*, Vita Sackville-West distinguishes between the three women of this study, Katherine Philips, Margaret Cavendish, and Aphra Behn, arguing that the “importance of” Behn is her *professional* status: “she was the first woman in England to earn her living by her pen” (16). Sackville-West goes on to explain that even though Philips and Cavendish wrote and were published years before Behn, their amateurism renders them less important figures in literary history:

True, the matchless Orinda had preceded the incomparable Astrea; but Orinda was not a professional writer; she had not her living to earn; she was neither a novelist nor a playwright; she was only a prosperous amateur dabbling in poetry, the apostle of friendship, the hostess of a literary salon. There had been the Duchess of Newcastle, but the Duchess of Newcastle was a great if eccentric lady, who, though she wrote, and wrote frantically, for fame, could in no sense of the word be called a competitor in the jostling world of literary jealousies. Mrs. Behn, on the other hand, entered the open lists. She was an inhabitant of Grub Street with the best of them; she claimed equal rights with the men; she was a

phenomenon never before seen, and, when seen, furiously resented. The anger of her critics and rivals was equalled only by her own anger at not being dispassionately judged. Well aware of her own position as a pioneer, and confident in her own powers to carry through the task she had undertaken, her tongue and her pen grew tart under the injustice of organised attacks. (Sackville-West 16-17)

One year later, in *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf makes a similar claim for Behn as the first woman "to make her living by her wits" and, consequently, the first woman writer "to work on equal terms with men" (64). Like Sackville-West, Woolf argues that the importance of Behn's professionalism "outweighs anything that she actually wrote." Woolf imagines Behn as what she certainly must have been to Woolf herself: a hero, a pioneer, and an exemplar for little girls who wanted to grow up to be writers: "For now that Aphra Behn had done it, girls would go to their parents and say, you need not give me an allowance; I can make money by my pen" (Woolf 64).¹

Surely Woolf and Sackville-West base their version of Behn on the statements she makes in some of her prefaces. In her preface to *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), for example, Behn wears her professionalism like a badge, characterizing herself as one "who is forced to write for Bread and not ashamed to owne it." She writes these epistles, Behn says, not to flatter her

¹ This trend continues throughout the twentieth century. Rosamund Gilder credits Behn as "England's First Professional Woman Playwright." In *The Incomparable Aphra* (1948), George Woodcock argues that Behn established "once and for all the right of women to make a vocation of literature." See also Angeline Goreau, who claims that "Mrs. Behn imposed herself upon history without precedent: she was the first woman to become a professional writer" (3), Sara Mendelson (183), and Montague Summers, who calls Behn "our first professional authoress" (1: xiii).

readers but to “vindicate” her plays, which she claims are overly criticized simply because they were written by a woman: “The Play had no other Misfortune but that of coming out for a Womans: had it been owned by a Man, though the most Dull Unthinking Rascally Scribler in Town, it had been a most admirable Play” (Summers 4: 7; Todd 6: 5). The accusation that her plays are poorly received simply because they were written by a woman resurfaces in several of Behn’s prefaces. In the “Epistle to the Readers” which prefaces *The Dutch Lover* (1673), Behn complains about “a long, lithe, phlegmatick, white, ill-favour’d, wretched Fop” who at the first production of *The Dutch Lover* announced to the other members of the pit “that they were to expect a woful Play” simply because “it was a womans.” Behn curses at the “sorry Animal,” the “thing,” the “Smelt” that criticized her play. Behn sounds hopping mad (at everyone, but especially at men) about the unequal treatment she and her plays receive because of her gender. “God damn him,” she says, in print (Summers 1: 224; Todd 5: 162). It’s no wonder that Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West admired this woman.²

On the other hand, the same Behn who used the space of the preface to lobby for her rights as a professional woman writer also allowed the first two issues of *The Rover* (1677) to be published with the statement “written by a man” appearing on the title page before substituting her name on the title page of the third issue.³ Even given Katherine Philips’s inclination toward the covert preface and Margaret Cavendish’s prefatory tributes to her husband’s influence, neither Philips nor Cavendish ever resorted to

² For a discussion of the tendency for twentieth-century scholars, especially Virginia Woolf, to prioritize the writing of “angry” early modern women, see Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women’s Literary History* (39-65).

³ The author is identified as a “he” again in the prologues to *The Town-Fop* (1676) and *The Rover* (1677) (Todd 5: 323, line13).

assuming a male pseudonym or identity in print. Yet, on at least one occasion, in her "Preface" to *The Lucky Chance*, Behn characterizes her heroic, poetic self as her "Masculine Part." Behn concludes the preface by threatening to retire: "I value Fame as much as if I had been born a Hero; and if you rob me of that, I can retire from the ungrateful World, and scorn its fickle Favours" (Summers 3: 186-87; Todd 7: 216-17). But Behn couldn't retire; she had a living to earn. She was a professional writer.

And Behn's multifarious prefaces reflect the conditions of her professionalism: the demands of the market, the interests of her patrons, the changing political climate, and her personal financial situation. Unlike Cavendish's consistently brazen, self-authorized prefatorial proclamations and unlike Philips's consistently self-protective prefatorial veils, Behn's pretexts cannot be confined to one category or described in any one way. Her very professionalization, which might have motivated the feisty independence, the defiant and angry tone and the protofeminist interest in equal treatment for women writers that Woolf and Sackville-West admired, also dictated Behn's dependence. While Behn's prefaces are sometimes manifestoes, sometimes critical treatises, and sometimes stories, they are also sometimes dedications which seem so fulsome that some critics remark upon them with disgust and others contend that surely she must be joking.⁴

As Jessica Munns points out, since "prefatory remarks must please, flatter, intrigue, and excite the reader/dedicatee," the speaker always assumes a position of subordination: "Despite claims to authority, the supplicatory and submissive posture of the writer of forewords, who exhibits wares and sues

⁴ Samuel Johnson wrote that at least one of Behn's dedications was even more obsequious than Dryden's: "in the meanness and servility of hyperbolic adulation I know not whether since the days in which the Roman Emperors were deified he [Dryden] has been ever equalled except by Afra Behn in an address to Eleanor Gwyn" (qtd. in Wheatley 120).

for readers and favors, can never be entirely erased" ("Foreplay in Forewords" 55). Because their occupations, their very existences, depended upon their ability to please their patrons and audiences, playwrights were similar, in at least one way, to the prostitutes. A number of male playwrights' prefaces published during the period suggest that anxiety about their professional status underlined the transactions between playwright and patron. But in Aphra Behn's case, the equation of the playwright and the prostitute was doubly complicated by the fact that she was a woman, and as an outspoken, published woman, she was linked to the other professional women of the time: prostitutes and actresses.

In the past two decades, Aphra Behn's manipulation of the image of the whore has been a focal point of scholarly attention.⁵ In 1988, an essay by Catherine Gallagher entitled "Who was That Masked Woman? The Prostitute and the Playwright in the Comedies of Aphra Behn" quickly became "one of the most quoted and reprinted essays on Behn" (Todd *Critical Fortunes* 89). Based upon her readings of several of Behn's pretextual statements against the heroines in her own comedies, Gallagher argued that rather than attempting to ignore the similarities between the playwright, who sells the products of her imagination, and the prostitute, who publishes her

⁵ Eric A. Nicholson writes about the powerful female prostitutes in Behn's plays and the many "scenes of sexual role reversal, in which women actively court and enchant the men they desire" (313), referring to these scenes as "one theatrical realization of [Behn's] alternative vision of eros" (313). Ros Ballaster concentrates on Behn's *Love-Letters*, pointing out the similarities between Behn herself and the fictional Sylvia, a heroine who "gains sexual and economic power by a tantalizing process of narcissistic display and identity concealment, moving between gender at the boundaries of difference, exploiting myths of seduction to her own ends" ("Seizing the Means" 100). In *The Sign of Angellica* Janet Todd points out the similarities between Aphra Behn the playwright and Angellica Bianca the prostitute in Behn's *The Rover*. According to Todd, "the first woman writer in England known to have earned a reasonable living through creative writing, associated herself with her prostitute, whose initials she shares" (1). And Munns has focused on the rhetoric of seduction that Behn employs in her prefaces, in which the speech act is rendered equivalent to sexual foreplay. Particularly in her prefaces to *The Dutch Lover* and *The Lucky Chance*, Aphra Behn appropriates what Munns calls "the language of the boudoir" ("Foreplay in Forewords" 44).

body, Aphra Behn appropriated the image of the prostitute to her advantage. By creating the persona of “the professional woman writer as new-fangled whore” (24), Behn “capitalized on her supposed handicap” (29). More recently, Behn scholars have begun to develop what might be called the anti-prostitute reading of Behn’s prefaces. Ros Ballaster, for example, argues that while professional women, actresses, prostitutes, and playwrights all “display their talents for material profit,” women playwrights like Behn were more inclined to distinguish themselves from prostitutes and actresses. In the prologue to *The Forc’d Marriage*, then, “The association between prostitute, actress and playwright is only invoked to be disentangled through the key factor of the playwright’s ‘wit.’” Behn “identifies the woman playwright as *exceeding* both the prostitute and the actress in her strategies of securing power” (Ballaster “First Female Dramatists” 286-87--italics mine). While I agree with Ballaster that the prologue to *The Forc’d Marriage* attempts to dissassociate the female playwright and the prostitute, I do not agree that Behn portrays the woman playwright as superseding the actress. Instead, I would argue that Behn’s prologues and epilogues illustrate her interest in cultivating the association between women playwrights and actresses.

The tone of defiance that Sackville-West and Woolf found so appealing in some of Behn’s prefaces can also be found in several of what Autrey Nell Wiley has termed “female prologues and epilogues.” Spoken by the leading actresses of the day, these paratexts were so prevalent during the Restoration that between 1667 and 1686 “at least seventy-five plays” included them (1063).⁶ Wiley reasons that the popularity of women’s addresses to the audience was due to the method of persuasion employed by most of the

⁶ According to Wiley, of “more than 1100 plays written before 1714” approximately “two hundred” of them, or twenty percent, included female prologues and epilogues (1060-61).

actresses: coquetry (1065). And yet the particular brand of coquetry was not ingratiating or flattering. According to Wiley, "the almost habitual manner of the female prologues and epilogues after 1660. . . was defiant, challenging, and commanding. The speaker cocked her eye, announced herself the poet's champion at the outset, and thereupon defied the critics" (1073-74).⁷

Behn's first play, *The Forc'd Marriage* (1670), includes both a female prologue and a female epilogue. More specifically, *The Forc'd Marriage* begins with a male prologue which is interrupted by and turns into a female prologue, a dramatization of the woman usurping the man's pride of place.⁸ This device had been used earlier in the century when Thomas Randolph's *Amyntas* (1638) opened with representatives of either sex battling for prominence:

Nymph: Ile speak the Prologue.

Shepherd: Then you do mee wrong.

Nymph: Why, dare your Sexe compare with ours for Tongue:

Shepherd: A Female Prologue!

Nymph: Yes, as well as Male.

Shepherd: That's a new trick;

⁷ Munns also points out that Behn's prologues "employ strategies of seduction. A prologue must soften up and please the audience, and coquettish insults—whether written by a man or a woman—as much as lavish flattery, are undoubtedly typical of the mode" ("Foreplay in Forewords" 49).

⁸ To my mind, probably the greatest difficulty in working with early modern women writers is the lack of evidence. In this instance, for example, we do not absolutely know who authored the prologue to *The Forc'd Marriage*. While most scholars assume that Behn is the author, Mendelson suggests that given his tendency to address prologues to the gallants in the audience, Edward Ravenscraft is probably the author (13). Todd credits Behn with the prologue, although she notes the similarities of Ravenscraft's and Behn's addresses to the audience (5: 241).

Nymph: And t'other is as stale.

(qtd. in Wiley 1061)

But there are very real differences between Randolph's and Behn's prologues. For one, the Nymph's threats to upstage the Shepherd are tempered by the fact that the person playing the Nymph is a man. Randolph's prologue, after all, is only a dramatic device; there is no real possibility that the audience members will see a woman displace a man. Second, the Nymph aspires to *share* the stage with the male prologue: a female prologue "as well as Male." In Behn's prologue, sharing is not an option. The stage directions read, "Enter an ACTRESS who speaks," and after she begins to speak, the male prologue is never heard from again. "Pointing to the Ladies" in the audience, the female prologue asks her male counterpart, "Can any see that glorious sight, and say, / A Woman shall not Victor prove to day" (Todd 5: 8, lines 43-44). Surely the women's victory comes as no surprise to the male prologue, who had been warning the "gallants" in the audience against this from the start, encouraging them to "arm" themselves "against a common Foe" (Todd 5: 7, line 5):

Women, those charming victors, in whose eyes,
Lay all their Arts, and their Artilleries;
Not being contented with the wounds they made,
Would by new Stratagems our Light invade.
Beauty alone goes now at too cheap rates,
And therefore they like Wise and Politick states,
Court a new power that may the old supply,
And keep as well as gain the victory.

They'le joyne the Force of Wit to Beauty now,
And so maintain the right they have in you;
If the vain Sex this priviledge should boast,
Past cure of a declining face we're lost.

(lines 7-18)

Even after a woman's "Beauty fades," then, a woman's wit has power to keep even the randiest gallant from straying. The men who enjoy their sexual liberty are encouraged to reject the play, the "first attempt" of a "poetess" who is "one of their party," that is, one of the women who have joined together to keep men constant through means of their wit as well as their beauty (lines 24, 28). The male prologue characterizes these women as prostitutes, suggesting that the masked women in the audience are Behn's spies (line 28). However, when the actress enters, she is quick to disassociate herself and her "whole Cabal" from the vizard-masked prostitutes (Todd 5: 8, line 50). Prostitutes are interested in money and the temporary use of men, they "pillage ye, then gladly let you go," the actress explains to the gallants (line 54). The playwright, the actresses, and the ladies in the audience, on the other hand, "scorn the petty spoils, and do prefer,/The Glory, not the Interest of the War" (lines 55-56). The cabal of beautiful, witty ladies is interested in "nought but constancie in love" and is unwilling to "sacrifice it all to pleasure you" until they are assured of the men's fidelity (lines 58-60).⁹ Unlike the prologue to *Amyntas*, then, the prologue to *The Forc'd Marriage* forwards the possibility of real women usurping real men onstage. The threat that the prologue to *The Forc'd Marriage* forwards, however, is reversed after the end

⁹ Nancy Cotton has called this "a flirtatious prologue that traded on sex as an advertisement" (71). On the contrary, I read it as a statement which suggests that women will abstain from sex until their male partners acknowledge their superior wit and vow to be loyal.

of the play. In the Epilogue, also spoken "By a Woman," the actress concedes that "'Tis Beauty only can our Power maintain" (Todd 5: 81, line 10) and suggests that "equal treatment" might be the best solution to the battle of the sexes: "For neither Conquer, since we both submit;/ You, to our Beauty, bow; We, to your Wit" (lines 17-18). But though the female epilogue (and by association, the female playwright) had lost the day on her first "venture out" (Todd 5: 7, line 23), it would not be the only time that female prologues and epilogues would be used to forward the idea of women usurping men on the stage and in the theatre.

* * *

Throughout the course of literary history there have been periods during which the preface is imagined not only as a pretext but also as a text in its own right. The second half of the seventeenth century is such a time. Prefaces expand in size and length, a trend which Jonathan Swift satirizes in his *Tale of a Tub* (written 1696, published 1704), complaining about the practice of "extending" prefaces into "the Size now in Vogue, which by Rule ought to be large in proportion as the subsequent Volume is small," a practice that results in prefaces that are "over forty or fifty Pages," a length that, Swift gripes, "is the usual Modern Stint" (389, 444). To Swift's mind, the primary culprit of infractions upon the rules of spatial decorum in the genre of the preface is John Dryden, and Dryden himself worries that his "Dedication of the *Aeneis*," more than seventy-five page in length, might make the reader suspect that he is trying to "swell [his] Preface into a volume" (2: 214).¹⁰ In addition to outgrowing the size of the texts that they accompany, pretexts

¹⁰ Interestingly, in "An ACCOUNT of the Life of the Incomparable Mrs. BEHN," which prefates her posthumous play *The Younger Brother* (1689), the author uses the same language: "To give the Reader a view of Her, or her Works, as they both require, would swell into a Volume. . ." (Todd 7: 363, lines 58-59).

began to be distributed as texts, circulating without the text-proper that they were written to accompany. Occasionally, pretexts circulated even before the text itself was written, as in the case of William Davenant's *Preface to Gondibert* (1650), which was published a year before the text.¹¹

The interest in pretexts as texts is nowhere more prevalent than in late seventeenth-century drama. Restoration prologues and epilogues were so popular that one dramatist wrote, "Our next new Play, if this Mode hold in vogue,/ Shall be half Prologue, and half Epilogue" ("Epilogue" to an untitled play in *Covent Garden Drollery* 34). James Sutherland explains that by 1670, the prologue's and epilogue's "emancipation" from the play itself was "complete." If a play's prologue and epilogue "had no connection whatsoever with the play, nobody cared--nobody even noticed" (Sutherland 44). Prologues and epilogues began to circulate as broadsides and in miscellanies, their manner of print distribution reinforcing the notion of their separation from the plays for which they were originally written.¹² One of these miscellanies, the *Covent Garden Drollery*, published in 1672 and reissued two more times that same year, contains no less than twenty-one prologues and epilogues, most of them published for the first time.¹³ In that it includes such a large number of texts that were originally written as pretexts, the

¹¹ Swift was not the only writer to regard the massive size and the increased mobility of the new preface with skepticism. The author of "On the Preface to *Gondibert*" writes, "A Preface to no Book, a Porch to no house: Here is the Mountain, but where is the Mouse" (*Merry Drollery* 101). In Lady Chudleigh's *The Ladies Defence*, Melissa evokes the same image in her response to the Parson's exorbitant explanation of the uses of religious rhetoric in producing obedient, submissive women: "A Mouse the labouring Mountain does disclose," Melissa responds. "With mighty Pomp you your Harange begun, / And with big Words my fixt Attention won" (*The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh* 29, lines 474, 476-77).

¹² One of the first was by Sir John Denham. "The Prologue to his Majesty at the first Play presented at the Cock-pit in Whitehall" was performed for Charles on November 19, 1660 and thereafter circulated as a broadside (Jose 37).

¹³ The collection also contains fifty-four songs and poems.

Covent Garden Drollery is unique. The editor of the *Holborn Drollery* remarked upon the “moveable Scenes” that miscellanies included and claimed that “two or three *Prologues*, and as many *Epilogues*, with some few *Stanza’s Venerable* for their Antiquity” were the “Ingredients” of most drolleries (sig. A3v—italics in original). However, other than *Wit and Drollery*, which begins with “*The Preface to that most elaborate piece of Poetry Entituled Penelope Ulisles*” (1-9), and the *London Drollery*, which contains three prologues and epilogues, drolleries do not include pieces that were formerly pretexts. In comparison, the editor of the *Covent Garden Drollery* makes frequent use of the moveable preface.

The authorship of the *Covent Garden Drollery* has been a matter for discussion. On the title page of the first issue, “R. B.” is credited with the collection; however, on the title page of the second issue, published in the same year, and on all other issues and editions, the miscellany is attributed to “A. B.”¹⁴ Formerly the collection was ascribed to Richard Brome (by Hazlitt) and then to Alexander Brome. In the introduction to his 1928 edition of the *Covent Garden Drollery*, George Thorn-Drury disproved both of these suggestions, arguing that since Richard Brome died in 1653 and Alexander Brome died in 1666, their authorship of the miscellany (which includes selections from plays produced as late as January 1672) was untenable (Thorn-Drury xv-xvii).

At the same time, Thorn-Drury was the first to make a case for Aphra Behn’s authorship. As evidence, he cited the attention that the collection pays to women: “the prominence which is given to those [prologues] with which women alone were concerned must not be overlooked” (xviii).

¹⁴ The second issue of the *Covent Garden Drollery* was advertised in *The Term Catalogue*, which was licensed 21 November 1672 (Summers 89; Thorn-Drury x).

Thorn-Drury also pointed out Behn's affiliation with the theatre and the fact that four of her poems appear in consecutive order in the collection, which struck him as a very editorial move. He further supported his argument by citing the reference to Behn as the editor of the *Covent Garden Drollery* by her contemporary Mr. N. C., the author of *Bristol Drollery*.¹⁵ Thorn-Drury might also have pointed out that the printer of the *Covent Garden Drollery*, James Magnes, also printed several of Behn's early plays: *The Forc'd Marriage* (1670), *The Amorous Prince* (1671), *The Town Fop* (1677), and *Abdelazer* (1677). Given the amount of evidence in favor of Behn, modern scholars seem to take for granted her authorship of the miscellany. She is credited as the compiler of the *Covent Garden Drollery* by Susan Wiseman (*Aphra Behn* 11), Germaine Greer and R. Little (*Works* 3: 121 n. 1), Mary Ann O'Donnell (347), Janet Todd (*Secret Life* 156-8), and Sara Mendelson (126). And yet the drollery has received very little critical attention from Behn scholars, presumably because the attribution is not indisputable. A thorough study of the drollery in relationship to other pretexts by Behn might help the case for or against her authorship. However, even given the possibility that it might have been compiled by someone other than Behn, the *Covent Garden Drollery* is still important to the history of the preface and to the study of gender and textual presentation. If only because of the ways in which the drollery participates in and contributes to ideas about pretexts and about women, it warrants a thorough discursive analysis.

In her biography of Behn, Todd offers a three-page explanation of the drollery's history and of the author's intentions. Todd suggests that the drollery came into being when Behn, in financial need, "approached

¹⁵ In his address "To the Young Gallants, & c.," Mr. N. C. advises his book, should she be ridiculed by the gallants, "Humbly to cast herself on Madam Bhen" (*Bristol Drollery* A4).

Killigrew" and "one or both came up with the idea of compiling a theatrical anthology, which would consist primarily of unpublished songs, prologues, and epilogues" (156). While "the collection in general breathed of easy morals," Todd explains, "Behn also included chaste fare, such as the prologue to Katherine Philips's unfinished *Horace*, spoken at court – perhaps a tribute to Philips or perhaps simply an opportunistic taking of a free poem, the writer of which was dead" (157). Both Montague and Thorn-Drury, the two modern editors of the *Covent Garden Drollery*, have commented upon the remarkable number of mistakes in all of the issues of the drollery, and in proposing that Behn's motives were financial rather than artistic, Todd echoes their suggestion that the *Covent Garden Drollery* was haphazardly compiled. However, closer study suggests rather that the collection was deliberately structured.

In order to better understand the structure of the *Covent Garden Drollery*, it might be useful to examine the organizational schemes of several other Restoration drolleries: *Wit and Drollery* (1661), *Merry Drollery* (1670), *Westminster Drollery* (1671), *Oxford Drollery* (1671), *Windsor Drollery* (1672), *Norfolk Drollery* (1673), *Holborn Drollery* (1673), *London Drollery* (1673), and *Bristol Drollery* (1674). All of these drolleries follow an indentifiable pattern. The *Westminster Drollery*, for example, opens with "The first Song in the Ball at Court," followed by "The second Song in the Ball at Court"(1-3). Even though the poems included in any drollery are miscellaneous in nature, the introductory and concluding pieces usually indicate the text's major theme or unifying principle. For instance, the *London Drollery* begins with "A New Song," in which the poet tells how he "broke" with Phillis in order to pursue his interest in Iris, followed by the second "A New Song," on the subject of his "Love so true" for Phillis, followed by the third "A New Song," in which

the poet expresses his interest in Clelia, his third most recent girlfriend (1-3). The *London Drollery* concludes with "Another Song"; this one to Phillis. It appears that Phillis has married another man who is "fine" and titled, and the poet delivers a diatribe against marriage, complaining that "Marriage and Love are but Bargain and Sale" (232). Given that the poet had previously claimed that he ended his affair with Phillis in order to pursue Iris, though, it would seem that Iris is the one who is being sold the bill of goods in the drollery's opening poem. In this way, the opening and concluding pieces underscore the theme of the drollery.

In the *Covent Garden Drollery*, the first and final pieces help to construct a rhetorical version of the Restoration theatre. One of the reasons that Behn's rhetorical re-creation of the theatre was necessary in late 1672 was because the real theatre at Bridges Street in Covent Garden, later called the Theatre Royal, had been destroyed in a fire earlier that same year. On January 25, 1672, the King's Company lost the playhouse that had been their home since their opening on May 7, 1663. At its simplest level, then, Behn's *Covent Garden Drollery* functions as a tribute to the Theatre Royal and as a record of the losses that Killigrew and his company sustained in the fire, losses that included an actor's life. The seventh piece in Behn's collection is the prologue to the King's Company's production of *Julius Caesar*, originally spoken by Richard Bell, the actor who had played the title character. Bell had perished in the fire that destroyed the theatre (Summers 106).

Having lost their playhouse, the King's Company temporarily moved into the theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields until their new theatre, the Drury Lane theatre, was erected. It opened on March 26, 1674. For more than two years, the King's Company was in a sort of forced exile at Lincoln's Inn Fields. To add insult to injury, Lincoln's Inn Fields had only recently been vacated by

their rivals, the Duke's Company. In 1672, the latter was thriving, having moved into the brand new, centrally located Wren theatre in Dorset Gardens, which was "more accessible and frequented by the citizens" (Thorn-Drury 118). Several of the pieces in Behn's *Covent Garden Drollery* allude to the growing competition between the companies. In the fifth piece in the miscellany, "Prologue to Marriage A la mode, by Mr. Heart," Dryden laments the lack of attendance at the King's Company's productions: "Our City Friends, so far will hardly roame, / They can take up with pleasures nearer home" (CGD 7).¹⁶ In contrast to the Duke's Company, then, the King's Company was despondent. They opened their first season at Lincoln's Inn Fields with a revival of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Wit Without Money*, an apt description of their situation. Dryden supplied the prologue (Summers CGD 107). In Behn's drollery, the prologue appears after the prologue to *Julius Caesar*. It is entitled "The Prologue to Witt without money: being the first Play acted after the Fire." Dryden imagines the member of the King's Company as "shipwrack't Passengers," survivors of a natural disaster, who have found themselves washed up on to a deserted shore:

So look they, when on bare Beach they stand,
Dripping and cold; and their first fear scarce o're,
Expecting Famine from a desert Shore;
From that hard Climate, we must wait for Bread,
Whence even the Native forc't by hunger fled.
Our Stage does humane chance present to view,
But ne're before was seen so sadly true,
You are chang'd to, and your pretence to see

¹⁶ Citations are from the first edition, first issue of the *Covent Garden Drollery*.

Is but a nobler name of charity.
Your own provisions furnish out our Feasts
Whilst you the Founders make yourselves our guests.
*Of all mankind besides Fate had some care,
But for poor Wit no portion did prepare,
'Tis left a rent-charge to the brave and fair.*
You cherish it, and now its fall you mourn,
Which blind unmanner'd Zealots make their scorn,
Who think the Fire a judgement on the Stage,
Which spar'd not *Temples* in its furious rage.
*But as our new-built City rises higher,
So from old Theaters may new aspire,
Since Fate contrives magnificence by fire.*

(CGD 11--italics in original)

In Dryden's prologue, the King's Men are portrayed as having suffered the same misfortunes as the exiled royal court during the Interregnum: forced across the sea to preside at "Feasts" provided by their "guests." The prologue is also royalist both in its anti-puritan tone, the reference to blind unmanner'd Zealots reminding the audience members that the Puritans were interested in subverting the stage *and* the crown, and in its conclusion, which suggests the restoration of the monarchy, the city, and the theatre at once.

This royalist sentiment runs throughout the entire collection. The tenth piece in the *Covent Garden Drollery*, the "Prologue to Richard the third," points to the villanous usurper as an object lesson in loyalty to the crown. "This day we Act a Tyrant," the actor warns, and the prologue concludes by advising the audience to "Ne're serve Usurpers, fix to Loyalty"

because “lawful Monarchs are preserv’d by Heaven” (13-14). In its royalistic stance, the *Covent Garden Drollery* was not unusual. Drolleries, as Todd and Thorn-Drury have pointed out, were associated with the royalist party. During the Interrugnum drolleries became a “form of protest in print” (Thorn-Drury vi). Both *Choice Drollery* (1656) and *Wit and Drollery* (1656) were burnt by order of the Protector’s council, and the compiler of the latter was imprisoned in the tower by Cromwell, who thought that the collection was “too kind to the Royal Partie” (qtd. in Thorn-Drury vi). Behn’s choice to include the prologue to *Richard the Third* in her drollery was in itself a royalist move. Royalists often regarded Richard Cromwell as “Richard the Fourth” (Jose 7), so that any public denouncement of the tyrannical Richard III included Cromwell (and his father, Oliver) by implied association. The twentieth piece in the *Covent Garden Drollery*, described simply as a “SONG,” similarly cautions against “a Fanatick knave” who would “kill his King, to preserve his cause” (CGD 29).

But Behn’s *Covent Garden Drollery* is more than just a money-making scheme, a tribute to the King’s Company, or a royalist move. The selection of the pieces and their placement in the collection suggest that Behn is using the drollery to re-order and re-imagine the Restoration theatre as an institution. She does not simply record the theatre; she re-creates it. One of the most significant results of Behn’s editorial process is the repositioning of women in the theatre. Behn’s drollery begins with six female prologues and epilogues to *The Maiden Queen*, *The Parson’s Wedding*, and *Philaster*. In early 1672, the same year in which the drollery was published, during their exile at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, the King’s Company had revised these plays with casts comprised

entirely of women, as they had done previously in 1664, 1667, and 1668.¹⁷ Importantly, in selecting materials to include in her drollery, Behn chose the paratexts from the all-female productions rather than adding or substituting prologues and epilogues that accompanied previous, mixed-cast productions of the play. The prologues and epilogues that Behn included feature the leading actresses of the King's Company: Mrs. Boutell, who according to contemporary accounts was extremely beautiful, and who had joined the King's Company as a young girl and had been a company member from their opening in 1663, often playing breeches parts and coquettes; Anne Reeves, widely supposed to be Dryden's mistress; and the Marshall sisters, Anne and Rebecca (Summers CGD 89-101).¹⁸ The female prologues and epilogues to plays by all-women casts receive prominence in the drollery because the sentiments and philosophies expressed in them are vital to Behn's ideas

¹⁷ John Dryden's *The Secret Love, or The Maiden Queen* was advertised as "acted by the Women only" in what Thorn-Drury calls "a *bonne bouche* to attract the town" (113). It opened on March 2, 1667. It was printed in 1668 with two prologues by Dryden and an epilogue "Written by a Person of Honor." The prologue and epilogue which Behn selected to appear in the drollery are not the ones from Dryden's 1668 print edition but, rather, the ones which were delivered when the play was performed by the all-female cast. They appear in the *Covent Garden Drollery* for the first time; they were never ascribed to Dryden during his lifetime (Thorn-Drury 113). *The Parson's Wedding* was first performed by an all women cast in 1664. When it was revived at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1672, it featured all women again. During the Restoration, *Philaster* was the first revived play, produced at the Theatre Royal on November 13, 1660. Yet another revision was produced on May 30, 1668 (Summers CGD 111). Gerald Langbaine tells us that *Philaster* was also "[o]ne of those that were represented at the old theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields when the women acted alone" (213).

¹⁸ Gilder claims that it was Anne Marshall, the eldest of the Marshall sisters, who delivered the prologues and epilogues to *The Parson's Wedding* and *Philaster* (170). Chances are that she and Behn were acquainted long before the time that Behn's drollery was published. In *Oroonoko*, Behn claims that she donated to the King's Company an exotic dress, comprised of feathers, which she had bartered for in Surinam. Anne Marshall was the first actress to wear this remarkable costume when she played the title role in Dryden's *The Indian Queen* (1664). Anne Marshall eventually became Anne Gwin. She delivered Behn's epilogue to *Sir Patient Fancy* in 1678 after she had joined the Duke's Company. For a discussion of this epilogue, see pages 206-09 of this chapter. Anne Reeves eventually left the stage to join a foreign convent. In 1672, the year the drollery was published, Reeves played Philotis in *Marriage a la Mode* and Ascanio, the male page, in *The Assignment* (Summers CGD 98).

about the importance of women in the Restoration theatre. Behn's assertion of women's place in the theatre has three aspects: a defense of women's acting; a theory of the role of theatre in relation to sexuality; and a history of women's involvement in court and professional productions. These aspects culminate in an argument for the establishment of a female playhouse.

At the beginning of the first piece in the drollery, the "Prologue, Spoken by Mrs. Boutell to the *Maiden Queen*, in man's cloathes," Boutell worries that actresses who play breeches parts, or "Women like us (passing for men)," will not be well received. Unable to suspend their disbelief, the gallants will be eager to disclose publicly the intimate knowledge of the actresses' bodies that they "pretend" to have. Boutell bargains with the men, promising that if they keep the actresses' secrets, they will be just as pleased with the end result:

Then make no words on't, Gallants tis e'ne true,
We are condemn'd to look, and strut, like you.
Accept us these bad times in any dress.
You'l find the sweet on't, now old Pantaloons,
Will go as far, as formerly new Gowns,
And from your own cast Wigs, expect no frowns.

(CGD 1)

Interestingly enough, Boutell's worry about the female members of the audience is not that they will be disinclined to accept the actresses as men but, rather, that they will too easily suspend their disbelief and will expect the actresses to satisfy them as any gallant would:

The Ladies we shall not so easily please.

They'l say what impudent bold things are these.
That dare provoke, yet cannot do us right,
Like men with huffing looks, that dare not fight.
But this reproach our courage must not daunt,
The Bravest Souldier may a Weapon want,
Let Her that doubts us, still send Her Gallant.

(1)

The rest of the prologue is devoted to the question of how to solve the implausibility of women pleasing women. Boutell concludes by suggesting that the ladies in the audience use the play as a form of foreplay, by pretending that the actresses are young and beautiful gallants:

Ladies in us, you'l Youth and Beauty find,
All things but one, according to your mind.
And when your Eyes and Ears are feasted here,
Rise up and make out the short Meal elsewhere.

(2)¹⁹

Whereas Boutell's address suggests that the actresses themselves are displeased or uncomfortable with cross-dressing, that they are "condemn'd" during these "bad times" to act like silly men, the epilogue to the same play, delivered by Anne Reeves, shows no signs of resistance.

¹⁹ David Roberts's argument that "[t]he female prologue, so enthralling to the male audience, did little to arouse the female" (29) shows no confidence in the audience ladies' imaginative abilities and dismisses the possibility that sometimes the ladies might have been attracted to the actresses without having to pretend that they were men.

What think you Sirs, was't not all well enough,
Will you not grant that we can strut, and huff.
Men may be proud, but faith for ought I see,
They neither walk, nor cock, so well as we.
And for the fighting Part we may in time,
Grow up to swagger in heroick Rhime.
For though we cannot boast of equal force,
Yet at some Weapon's men have still the worse.

(2)

Reeves's next line rings through the *Covent Garden Drollery* as it must have rang through the theatre when she delivered it. Given the actresses' ability to portray cross-gender roles more convincingly than the old, impotent, useless actors in the company, she reasons,

Why should not then we Women act alone,
Or whence are men so necessary grown,
Our's are so old, they are as good as none
Some who have tri'd em if you'l take their Oaths,
Swear they're as arrant tinsell as their Cloaths.
Imagine us but what we represent,
And we could e'ne, give you as good content.
Our faces, shapes all's better than [that?] you see,
And for the rest they want as much as we.

(2-3)

In the conclusion of the epilogue, Reeves forwards the notion of a playhouse

comprised entirely of women, and she outlines the benefits of her proposal in what sounds like a direct request for a sponsoring patron:

Oh would the higher Powers be kind to us,
And grant us to set up a female house.
Wee'l make our selves to please both Sexes then,
To the Men Women, to the Women Men.
Here we presume, our Legs are no ill sight,
And they would give you no ill Dreams at night.
In Dream's both Sexes may their passions ease,
You make us then as civil as you please.

(3)

Behn follows the prologue and epilogue to *The Maiden Queen* with the paratexts to *The Parsons Wedding*. In the prologue, Mrs. Marshall explains that so many 1672 productions featured all-women casts because of in-fighting among the men of the King's Company:

After so many sad complaints to us,
The painful labouring Women of this house.
We with our Poet have prevail'd again,
To give us our Revenge upon the men.
Our tricks, our jelting hath been often told,
They nere were tax'd for impotent, and old.
Twas not our crime, the house so long lay still,
Where e're we play not, 'tis against our will.
We could have acted, could but they have joyn'd,

You know the fault lies seldom in our kind,
Poor Sinners their best parts are worn away,
And now they quarrel, when they cannot play.
'Twas somewhat better when they did agree,
'Twas old but 'twas a willing company.

(3-4)

It would seem, then, that the plays which were acted entirely by women while the King's Company was in residence at Lincoln's Inn Fields were not simply, as Summers and Thorn-Drury have supposed, "bonnes bouches" meant "to attract the town" (Summers *CGD* 96; Thorn-Drury 113) The prologues and epilogues in the *Covent Garden Drollery* suggest that for a time, while the older men of the company were squabbling and contemplating a union with the Duke's company, these women of the King's Company *were* the King's Company. Their plays were serious business. The "painful labouring Women" actresses were concerned with making enough "profit" to keep their theatre company in business. Marshall's prologue encourages the audience members to continue to patronize their theatre, and join in solidarity with the actresses:

We hope you will not let us act alone,
The House, the Scenes, and all things [here] are free,
While this play lasts 'tis ours, and you, and we
Can joyn and make an abler Company.
For so much every Woman here assures,
The Profit ours, the Pleasure shall be yours.

(4)

In the epilogue to *The Maiden Queen*, Reeves proposes that an all-female playhouse, even one that is struggling financially, is preferable to a united company:

This [a women's theatre] would prevent the houses joyning two,
At which we are as much displeas'd as you.
For all our Women most devoutly swear,
Each would be rather a poor Actress here,
Then to be made a Mamamouchi there.

(3)²⁰

The female prologues and epilogues in the *Covent Garden Drollery* characterize the men in the King's Company as old, impotent, quarrelsome fools—and bad actors to boot. In the “Epilogue spoken by Mrs. Marshall to Philaster,” the actress accuses of the men of abandonment:

Though change all times, both practice and allow,
Women were never left as we are now.
We blame the Inconstant Gallants of the Age,
But yet the Pit is nothing to the Stage.
You leave us one; by one; they, all at once,
And unprovok'd, our company Renounce.
We put e'm to no Charge, no House i' th' Fields,
No damask Coach, which the last Guinnie, yields.
And yet they left us; had they been like you,

²⁰ Mamamouchi is the name of the character who imagines himself to be a turkish dignitary in *The Citizen turn'd Gentleman*, a play by Edward Ravenscraft that was produced by the Duke's Company in 1672.

We had kept e'm sure, till they, or we, got new.

(19)

Marshall reminds the audience members that unisex acting companies are certainly not without precedent:

**Gallants; your Fathers with one sex made shift,
Sure our's of pleasing; has the better gift.
A bearded Princess their concern could move,
Why may not now a beardless Prince make Love.**

(20)

In the "Epilogue to the Parson's Wedding," however, Marshall offers a different explanation for the actors' absence. The men have not abandoned the women but, rather, the women have banished their men from the stage, and not because of the men's quarrels or their refusal to perform but, rather, in a definite campaign to create an all-female company, one which counterbalances the effects of the all-male plays of the Renaissance:

**When boys play'd women's parts, you'd think the Stage,
Was innocent in that untempting Age.
No: for your amorous Father then, like you
Amongst those Boys had Play-house Misses too:
They set those bearded Beauties on their laps,
Men gave 'em Kisses, and the Ladies claps.
But they, poor hearts, could not supply our room;
They went but Females to the Tying-room:**

When we, in kindness to our selves, and you,
Can hold out Women to our Lodgings too.
Now, to oppose the humour of that Age,
We have this day, expell'd our Men the Stage.

(5)

Marshall goes on to suggest that the actresses will not be accepted in men's parts because the ladies in the audience will "find the cheat in th'empty Pantaloon" and miss not being able to "steal" into the "young Actors chambers" (5). But in Behn's *Covent Garden Drollery*, the concerns that Marshall raises in her epilogue have already been addressed by Boutell's and Reeves's addresses, in which they argue that nothing is impossible, as long as the women in the audience use their imaginations: "Imagine us but what we represent,/ And we could e'ne, give you as good content" (3).

After opening the *Covent Garden Drollery* with paratexts which celebrate the possibility of a theatre run entirely by women, Behn goes on to suggest why a female company is appropriate by producing prologues and epilogues which establish the history of women's involvement in Restoration theatre. Behn includes, for example, the prologue and epilogue to *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, which had been delivered by Nell Gwyn before she retired from the stage in 1671. In the prologue, Gwyn hints that the production will include a burlesque of a contemporary poet's play: "For in our vertuous Age, / Not only every wit, Lampoons his brother, / But men are all burlesque to one another" (78). She advises the audience members to "laugh on, and rally all you can,/ For ther's no fop like to your absent man" (79). From the epilogue, we learn that the absent man was John Dryden and that the subject of the lampoon was his play *The Maiden Queen*. Gwyn

explains that it was necessary to keep the parody a secret because the “Fop, who writ” *The Maiden Queen* would not have “giv’n consent” (79). Much like the prologue to Behn’s *The Forc’d Marriage*, which staged the female prologue’s usurpation of the male prologue, Gwyn’s epilogue explores the leading lady’s power over the playwright. “[O]ur poor Poet” Dryden might have “scap’d to day,” Gwyn tells the audience,

But from the heard I singled out his Play.

Then Heigh along with me-----

Both great and small you Poets of the Town,

And Nell will love you, or to run him down.

(79)

This prologue and epilogue, spoken by a woman who was one of the leading actresses of the day as well as one of the king’s mistresses, also act as a bridge into the next batch of prologues and epilogues in the *Covent Garden Drollery*. Having taken the reader from the days of Mrs. Boutell, Anne Reeves, and Mrs. Marshall at the theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields to the days of Nell Gwynn at the Theatre Royal before her retirement in 1671, Behn steps further back in time and into the court theatre.

The next piece in the drollery is the prologue to Katherine Philips’s translation of *Horace*, as it was performed at court on February 4, 1667-8. Delivered by Anne Scott, Duchess of Monmouth, an accomplished amateur actress who played in Dryden’s heroic tragedy *The Indian Emperour* as well as in *Horace*, the “Prologue to Horace, spoken by the Dutches of Munmouth, at Court,” as it is entitled in the drollery, celebrates the theatrical collaboration of women amateurs. Although John Denham had completed the translation of

Corneille's tragedy which Philips left unfinished at her death, there is no mention of the male amateur poet in the prologue. Instead, the Duchess gives sole credit to Philips:

Orinda's matchless Muse to Britain brought,
And Forreign Verse, our English Accents taught;
So soft that to our shame, we understand,
They could not fall, but from a Ladies hand.
Thus while a Woman, Horace did translate,
Horace did rise above a Roman Fate.

(80)

The Duchess concludes by stressing the abilities and the beauty of the amateur actresses, particularly those who play the roles of Sabina and Camilla:

And by our Ladies he mounts higher yet,
While he is spoke above what he is writ.
But his tryumphant Honours are to come
When, mighty Prince, he must receive your Doom;
From all besides our Actors have no fear,
Censure, and Wit, are beauties Vassals here:
And should they with Rebellion tempt their rage,
Our Basilisks, could shont 'em from the Stage!
But that their Fate, would be two [too?] great to dye,
By bright Sabina's, or Camilla's Eye.

(81)

The sixty-first piece in the drollery is the epilogue to the production of *The Faithful Shepherdess* that, according to Langbaine, was acted by the young ladies of the court “before their Majesties at Sommerset House on Twelfth-Night 1663” (qtd. in Summers CDG 121). Spoken by the Lady Mary Mordant, the epilogue suggests that the actresses had been warned by the courtiers that the king would not approve of the play. Mordant presents herself as the diplomatic representative of the amateur troupe:

When Princes in distress, would peace implore,
They first take care to chose th’Ambassador.
And think him fittest for a charge so great,
Who best can please that King with whom they treat.
Our Play they threaten’d with a tragique Fate,
I, Sir, am chose for this affair of State.
And, hope, what ever errors we confess,
You’l pardon to the young Ambadress.

(CGD 86)

Mordant looks forward to the time when the actresses will have matured enough to repay the men of the court for not supporting their play:

If not though now these little Ladies are,
In no condition, to maintain a Warr:
Their beauties will in time grow up so strong,
That on your Court, they may revenge the wrong.

(86)

Given the prominence of materials which highlight the contributions of women to Restoration theatre, it seems clear that Behn did not include the prologue to Katherine Philips's *Horace* as "chaste fare" to counterbalance the "salacious materials" in the rest of the drollery or as an "opportunistic taking of a free poem, the writer of which was dead" (Todd *Secret Life* 157). In addition to functioning as a tribute to the Philips, the prologue works, just as the epilogue to *The Faithful Shepherdess* does, as evidence for the legitimacy of a female playhouse with plays produced entirely by actresses. Deborah C. Payne argues that rather than "'actress as whore' or 'actress as object'" most Restoration prologues and epilogues usually figure the "woman as suppliant" on behalf of the playwright ("Restoration Actress" 27). However, in Behn's drollery, any solicitation by the actress is made on behalf of herself and her fellow actresses. Nell Gwyn's prologue and epilogue certainly do not treat Dryden with any sympathy. And in the prologue to Philips's *Horace*, there is no suggestion that supplication might be necessary. The prologues and epilogues in Behn's drollery do not represent the actress as whore or object or suppliant. They represent the actress as *actress*.

True, the actresses who speak these prologues and epilogues did not write them. William Davenant probably wrote the epilogue to *The Faithful Shepherdess*, the prologue to *The Parsons Wedding* should probably be ascribed to Thomas Killigrew, and several of the prologues and epilogues have been attributed to John Dryden. But these men's names do not appear in the *Covent Garden Drollery*. No playwright's names appear. Instead, we have the "Prologue, Spoken by Mrs. Boutell to the Maiden Queen," the "Epilogue, Spoken by Mrs. Reeves to the Maiden Queen," the prologue and epilogue to *The Parsons Wedding*, "spoken by M. Marshall," the prologue and epilogue "spoken by Mrs. Marshall, to Philaster," the "Prologue to

Horace, spoken by the Dutches of Munmouth, at Court," and the "Epilogue, spoken by the Lady Mary Mordont, before the King and Queen, at Court, to the faithfull Shepheardess." The title page may refer to the playwrights as "the refined'st Witts of the Age," but they are not given credit by name for their individual pieces. At another time in history, this would be unthinkable. But, as the "Prologue to Albumazar," the sixty-second piece in the drollery, explains,

. . . this our age such Authors does afford,
As make whole Playes, and yet scarce write a word:
Who in this Anarchy of witt, rob all,
And what's their Plunder, their Possession call.
.....
Or as a Rhyming Authour would have sed,
Joyn the dead living to the living dead.

(CGD 87-88)

Written before the copyright laws of 1714, the tone in the prologue is good natured toward the plagiarists, not scolding. These "Poets, not of the head, but of the hand," according to the prologue, "have the License" to steal from other's plays, and may even "claim some part" in "Poetry" (88). The deciding vote belongs to the audience members. If the writer who inherits or steals the texts tells a better story than the first writer, then the readers may decide to "wink" at the theft (88). In her creation of the *Covent Garden Drollery*, Behn makes use of this philosophy of the mobile, multiple ownership of texts, and in particular the moveable preface, to create her own story or play, the subject of which is the Restoration theatre. Once the prologues, epilogues, songs, and

poems have been collected and reordered, they no longer belong to their original composers but, rather, to the compiler and to her readers.²¹ In the prologue to *The Parson's Wedding* Mrs. Marshall proposed a similar approach to literary property: "While this Play lasts 'tis ours, and you, and we / Can joyn and make an abler Company" (4).

For whatever reason, perhaps to compensate for stealing from what according to the title page are "the refined'st Witts of the Age" in compiling the drollery, or perhaps to demonstrate her direct claim to poetry, or perhaps as a stamp of her authorship of the drollery, the "Prologue to Albumazar" is followed by four poems by Behn. Just as the King's Company's actresses promised their audiences they would provide a "feast" for the "eyes" and "ears" of both men and women, Behn displays her ability to please both sexes. In "A Song to a Schotish tune," Behn speaks as a young maid who has lost her "finest Swain" to the war, but in "A Song to a Scotish tune," Behn cross-dresses as Amintas and attempts to persuade Philis to "Declare [her] youth and fire" (95). In "Damon being asked a reason for Loveing," Damon responds to Phillis's query as to why he courts "no other Nymph" with "womens answers" (96). "Am I not youthful, and as gay a Swain,/ As ere appear'd upon the Plain," the young shepherd asks (97). As if to illustrate her mutability, Behn's song "I led my Silvia to a Grove" is delivered by a lover of indecipherable gender.²² Echoing Boutell's suggestion that the actresses in

²¹ For Behn's views on textual borrowing, see the "Post-Script" to *The Rover* (Todd 5.521) as well as Laura J. Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996).

²² In Behn's subsequent versions of the poem, however, the speaker's sex is made clear. "Amyntas led me to a Grove" later appeared in *The Dutch Lovers* and was reprinted in the *London Drollery* along with "The second Song in the Dutch Lovers," which begins, "Ah false Amyntas!" (13). The "I" of the poem, then, refers to Amyntas, which further suggests that in the *Covent Garden Drollery* poem Behn is testing her ability to play a man.

breeches could sexually arouse the ladies in the audience so that after the play the ladies could “make out the short Meal elsewhere” (2), the singer demonstrates his / her ability “to play” and make Silvia “willing to receive:/ That which I dare not name” (92). Behn’s poetic contributions to the *Covent Garden Drollery* align her with the Restoration actresses who promised: “Wee’l make our selves to please both Sexes then,/To the Men Women, to the Women Men” (3).

In 1672 Behn certainly had good reason to celebrate the possibilities for professional women in the theatre. Not only were the actresses in the King’s Company interested in establishing a separate, female playhouse, but the administrative manager of the Duke’s Company was a woman. Lady Henrietta-Marie de Tremblay Davenant, William Davenant’s wife, had taken over the Duke’s Playhouse from his death on April 7, 1668 until the time when their son Charles was old enough to accept his theatrical inheritance (Leacroft 85). During Lady Davenant’s tenure, Thomas Betterton was the “manager of the acting and the ‘keeper’ of the playhouse” and, therefore, was in charge of the “artistic side” of the company (Leacroft 86; Summers *Playhouse* 106); however, Lady Davenant “controlled the business activities of the company” (Summers *Playhouse* 106). She did not rest on her husband’s laurels. In 1671, Lady Davenant was responsible for overseeing the establishment of the new theatre in Dorset Gardens and for launching a nursery theatre in the Barbican (Leacroft 85-86, 88; Summers *Playhouse* 119).²³

Aphra Behn’s *The Dutch Lover* was performed at Dorset Garden in

²³ When William Davenant was still alive, at least four of the Duke’s Company’s actresses, including Mary Saunderson Betterton, lived with the Davenants and were trained in the house that adjoined Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre (Gilder 152). Mary Saunderson Betterton was the voice and acting coach to young Lady Mary and Lady Anne, future queens of England, when they played in Thomas Crowne’s *Calisto*, presented at court in 1674. This suggests that even actresses who didn’t become royal mistresses could influence the fashioning of the monarch.

February 1673.²⁴ In June 1673, Charles took over from his mother the reins of the management of the Duke's Company. At the same time, Aphra Behn stopped writing plays for approximately three years. The last thing she wrote before her sabbatical was the epistle to the readers before *The Dutch Lover*, in which she forwarded her first public complaint about unfair treatment as a woman playwright, cursing at the foppish "thing" who criticized her play simply because it was written by a woman. Perhaps Behn's temporary retirement from the stage was in some way related to the diminishing possibility of a women's playhouse to which her use of the female prologue and epilogue suggest she was committed.

* * *

In order to appreciate Behn's use of the moveable paratext, especially the female prologue and epilogue, in her compilation of the *Covent Garden Drollery*, it might be useful to examine the contents of several other Restoration drolleries. Although Behn's drollery and contemporary drolleries are structured similarly, with the introductory and concluding pieces pointing out the main topic of text, they differ thematically, particularly in their treatment of the female subject. The ills of marriage and the benefits of bachelorhood are common themes in Restoration drolleries (e.g. "Advice to Batchelors" *Bristol Drollery* 342-47; "The Batchelors Song" *Westminster Drollery* 121), and there are several poems in praise of chocolate, tobacco, money, wine, ale, canary, sack, and wormwood-beer as well as several poems against the Scotch, Dutch, Quakers, and English rebels. But without a doubt the topic that receives the most attention in every drollery is the female

²⁴ *The Dutch Lover* is Behn's first play to feature a female character who cross-dresses. For Behn's use of breeches parts in this and other plays, see Frances M. Kavenik, "Aphra Behn: The Playwrights as 'Breeches Part,'" in *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660-1820*, eds. Mary Ann Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio UP, 1991) 177-92.

subject. In the *Oxford Drollery* and the *Westminster Drollery* the woman is treated with something close to admiration (although there are several blazons, and the *Oxford Drollery* includes numerous catches about women to be sung to the tune of "My Dog and I"); however, in most drollery poems, women are treated with contempt.²⁵

The Merry Drollery contains "A merry Song," which tells the story of a poor man who, in order to support his wife and seven daughters, accepts the devil's challenge to bring him an unidentifiable beast in exchange for prosperity. The wife suggests that her husband present her to the devil, and so the husband

... wrap[s] his wife in Feathers and Lime,
Till no place of her [is] bare,
He tie[s] a stings about her hams,
And le[ads] her for chapmens ware.

(20)

When the husband presents his wife's vagina to the devil as the beasts "mouth," the devil is puzzled, and, based upon the size of the beast and its "wondrous strong" "breath," wonders if it might not be "some Whale fish" (21). Upon learning that the poor man has seven "more of this kind" at home, the devil takes himself out of the contest: "Thou hast beasts enough to scare both me, / And all the devils in hell" (21). This misogynistic tone continues throughout the not-so-merry drollery. In "The Production of the Female Kind," the poet offers a secular version of the creation of the female

²⁵ There are a few exceptions to the rule. *London Drollery* contains a poem in celebration of Queen Elizabeth (79-81), and the *Holborn Drollery* includes a poem "In Commendation of a Female-POET" (69).

sex:

There is a certain idle kind of Creature,
By a foolish name, we call a woman;
A pox upon this little old whore Nature;
That e're she brought this Monster to undo man.

(152)

The poem goes on to explain how, after celebrating the birth of "man, her son and heir," Nature's husband, Lenus, goes to bed drunk and "in the fit / He got the second child, this female Chit" (152).

The drolleries are replete with messages of violence against women, hatred of women, and anxiety about women's power. *Wit and Drollery* includes a curious series of three poems which celebrate women injuring themselves in various ways: "On the print of a Ladies foot, cut on the Leads of Kings Colledge Chappel, where before she had fallen" (134-35), "To a Lady on a fall, in which she had almost discovered more then all the World besides could shew" (137-38), and "On a Knife that cut a Ladies finger" (139). When the female body isn't being mutilated, it's being violated. Mr. C., author of the *Bristol Drollery*, dedicates his work "To the young Gallants, & c.," imagining the text as "a fresh Country Muse" and inviting the men to receive the feminized drollery in the same way that they would receive a flesh and blood girl:

Shou'd a fresh Girl come up, cou'd scarce speak sense,
So she cou'd doe in figure, mood, and tense,
I'le warrant her, she ne'er wou'd be refus'd,

Her two leaves wou'd be open'd, and perus'd.

(sig. A3r)

In the *Holborn Drollery*, the analogy between women's naked bodies and the book is made even more explicit. Drawing upon the amateuristic tradition of presenting the text as a wanton woman and granting the male reader entrance to the feminized book's secret, private parts, the title page presents the text as the *Holborn-DROLLERY. OR, The Beautiful CHLORET SURPRIZED IN THE SHEETS: . . . To which is Annexed, FLORA'S Cabinet Unlocked*. The image of the naked nymph is absent in the address to "The Ladies of Quality," which is signed by "Your humblest Admirer." However, the second epistle, "To the Gentlemen," is signed by Chloret herself, who happily displays the secrets of her "Cabinet," explaining to the men, "Your Complacence to our Sex is so great, that I have a little transgress the severer Rules of Modesty, to engage a servant, Appearing in the Sheets, that you may see the little Beauty I pretend to is so natural" (sig. [A7]r-v).

Even when the drolleries themselves aren't presented as female objects, the songs in the drolleries objectify women. In "A SONG of his Mistress," one of the pieces in *Wit and Drollery*, the poet compares his mistress to a shuttlecock, tennis ball, owl, moon, warship, tobacco pipe, nettle, and finally a nightingale, who "in the night and darkness thick / . . . longs to leane against a prick," before deciding that the most appropriate analogy is to "[s]ay but this and say no more / Shee is a wanton and a hay ho" (30). Hay ho indeed. This song appears in *The Merry Drollery* with the final lines revised to read, "But to commend, I'll say no more, / My Mistris is an arrant ----" (62), the cadence and rhyme suggesting that the missing word is "whore."

Whores are the subject of several drollery poems. In *Westminster Drollery*, "The last Song at the Kings House" indirectly celebrates court

mistresses. "A Wife I do hate," claims the singer:

When Parents are slaves,
The Brats cannot be any other,
Great wits, and great Braves,
Have always a Punk to their Mother.

(6)

But apart from the heroic treatment that the royal punks receive in the *Westminster Drollery*, most drollery whores do not fare well. *Wit and Drollery* includes an epigram "On Luce Morgan a Common Whore" (30), a poem "To his Whore, who askt money of him" (159-60), and "An Epitaph on a Whore," in which the poet's memory of his favorite whore arouses such a "superstitious Lust" that his thoughts turn to necrophilia, or "fumbling with her dust" (31). *London Drollery* contains a poem which instructs "all men" on how to "judge" a punk ("On a Punk" 96). The *Holborn Drollery* concludes with a disturbing poem entitled "Rome's Original." In the passage on the Roman men's rape of the Sabine women, the poet describes the women's experience in the following terms:

At first indeed they cry'd out much,
But nothing when they came to th' touch,
Pleading they never dreamt such joys,
They felt now, ravish'd by such Boys.

(96)

These women, not the men who raped them, are held accountable for the

“shameful lustful rise” of Rome, and the poem concludes with a reference connecting the women to the development of the Catholic church, “the Great Whore of BABYLON” (96). While a number of drolleries end with jingoistic poems, such as the *Oxford Drollery*, which concludes with a eulogy “On King James’s Death” that at once gives “Tribute to his ever glorious Urn” and at the same time points to Charles I, “the new Sun rising in the east” (172), more often than not, drollery royalism is written against women, and specifically against women’s bodies. In another *Wit and Drollery* poem, the poet suggests to an “old woman (whorish)” who has taken to calling herself “the Phoenix” that given her ugly body, a more appropriate animal designation would be a “Bear” or “foule mishapen Cow” (49). The seventeenth-century reader would have understood that the poet’s disgust was motivated in part by the woman’s choice of animal; the phoenix was frequently associated with Charles II as a symbol of his restorative power, and to appropriate the image for oneself would have been disrespectful. The woman is “whorish” in her lack of reverence for her king.

In addition to the *Holborn Drollery*, most drolleries conclude with poems about women. “A Mock Song,” the final poem in the *Merry Drollery*, celebrates the craft of the male poet to trick women into believing he loves them. “Thus can I prove / I am in love, / And thus I make ye fools,” boasts the male speaker, who evidently hasn’t thought how his confession might affect the success of his future attempts at courtship (350). In contrast, the conclusion of the *Windsor Drollery* warns against women’s ability to manipulate a man’s “foolish heart,” and warns against “women’s vain words” and “her tongue” and “their crafts” (“In answer to give o’re foolish heart” 158). The conclusion of the *Bristol Drollery* is also dubious in its approach to women’s rhetorical power. The second to the last poem, an ode

"On her writing some Verses," begins with the male poet praising Phillis's "wit in Verse" and "Beauty." The poem concludes,

**He's an ill bird that do's defile his nest;
If we give praise, it is where praise is due,
That is, Madam, only to such as you,
That are the Virtuous, Fair, Ingenious Few.**

(101)

Although the commendation delineates the good woman poet as the exception to the rule, the appearance of an English "female wit" seems to be cause for celebration by everyone except the ill bird man of the poem. However, in the next poem, the final poem of the drollery, the poet's sympathies shift, and he laments the sad occasion of "the Death of a Black bird." In this poem, a male bird who has flown out of cage in an effort to "Seek his long lost Liberty" is seized by "Puss," a female cat that silences the bird's song. The bird remains "Pensive, drooping, and in pain" and sits "a while with silent throat, / Uttering not one merry note" before he ultimately dies, "To cruel Puss a sacrifice" (102). Another poem that registers the male poet's anxiety of being silenced by women appears in both the *Holborn Drollery* and the *Windsor Drollery*:

**Know CELIA since thou art so proud,
'Twas I that gave thee thy renown,
Thou hadst in the forgotten crowd
Of common beauties liv'd unknown:
Had not my Verse exhal'd thy name,**

And with it imp'd the wings of fame.

(C3)

"That killing power is none of thine," the male poet tells the female, "I gave it to thy voice and eyes" (C3).²⁶ A similar anxiety over women's power motivates the concluding poem in Matthew Stevenson's *Norfolk Drollery* (1673). In "The Woman's Warre; Or, the DUTCH beat to Dirt by the Frowes," Stevenson laments the "daring height" that Dutchwomen have grown to in the government of their households and businesses and worries that "[n]ext News will be a Woman Parliament" (124-25):

What then? you must a second *Chaos* see,
Of all things in the Female Anarchie.
The servile Sex the nobler will decrest;
And turn *Low Country* Amazons at least.

(125--italics in original)

Stevenson is concerned that Englishwomen will begin to assume such positions:

What can expected be, where Females sway,

²⁶ Song 81 in the *Windsor Drollery*. In the *Holborn Drollery* the poem is entitled "Song":

Know Lady, since you are so proud,
'Twas I that gave you your renown,
Or else you had i' th' common croud
Of meaner beauties liv'd unknown.
Had not my verse extol'd your name,
And impt it in the wings of fame.
That killing power now of thine,
I gave it to thy cheeks and eyes (22).

Where they have sworn, and ought too, to obey
Men, that should be the *head*, must be the *taile*,
When *Petticoats* put on the *Coat of Male*.

(126--italics mine)

At the tail end of his *Norfolk Drollery*, then, Stevenson, who prefaced the drollery with a huge picture of his own head (fig. 3), concludes with a warning of the dangers of cross-dressing women. The poem ends with an epigram out of Martial, "*Haec jam feminea vidimus acta mann*," or, "We have already seen these things done by a feminine hand"—a reference to the busy, violent hands of the Dutch women in the poem, but also perhaps a reference to the feminine hand which had in 1672, one year before Stevenson's drollery was published, already compiled a drollery in favor of women's freedom to cross-dress, the hand of Aphra Behn.²⁷

Commenting on Behn's prefatory epistles, especially the "Preface" to *The Lucky Chance*, Katharine Rogers claims that "'The poet in Behn' was indeed masculine: her consciousness of herself as a woman appears almost entirely in these explicit defenses of the woman author, which are in no way integrated into her creative works. These show values and perceptions hardly distinguishable from those of the male writers with whom she competed" (58). But in Behn's *Covent Garden Drollery*, the integrated pretexts *are* the creative work. Moreover, the values and perceptions of women that are represented in Behn's drollery are remarkably different from those forwarded in contemporary drolleries by men. Most Restoration rollerries focus on royalism and women, but Behn's treatment of these subjects in the *Covent Garden Drollery* is radically different. Rather than

²⁷ Thanks to Dominic Rainsford for providing the English translation of the Martial epigram.



Fig. 3. Matthew Stevenson. Frontispiece to *Norfolk Drollery* (1673).

writing royalism against women, Behn's drollery shows the connections between the two. Those scholars who see Behn as cultivating the association between the whore and the actress or the whore and the woman writer will find little evidence in Behn's drollery to support their arguments. There simply are no poems about whores in Behn's drollery, a fact which is striking considering the frequency with which whores and punks appear in men's drolleries. Instead, Behn includes prologues and epilogues delivered by Restoration actresses, both professionals and court amateurs. And rather than attempting to silence these women, Behn celebrates their rhetorical and theatrical ability and the power of their beauty and wit.

* * *

The cabal-like relationship between women playwrights and actresses that Behn promotes in the prologue to *The Forc'd Marriage* and in the *Covent Garden Drollery* is one that Behn continues to support throughout her career. We know, for example, that actresses delivered the prologues and epilogues to at least ten of the sixteen plays that were performed during Behn's lifetime.²⁸ The prologue to *The Forc'd Marriage* refers to Behn as "one of" the actresses' "party," and, on more than one occasion, Behn depended upon the leading ladies to make political statements on her behalf. In 1681, Behn entrusted an actress, Elizabeth Barry, with the epilogue to *The Second*

²⁸The epilogue to *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678) was spoken by Anne [Marshall] Gwin. Elizabeth Curren delivered the prologue to *The Feign'd Curtezans* (1679) (Todd 6: 89-90). Elizabeth Barry is credited with the epilogue to *The False Count* (1682) (Todd 6: 355-5), the epilogue to *The Second Part of the Rover* (1681) (Todd 6: 297-8), and the prologue to *The City Heiress* (1682) (Todd 7: 9-10). Charlotte Boteler gave the epilogue to *The City Heiress* (Todd 7: 76-7). Mrs. Cooke spoke the epilogue to *The Emperour of the Moon* (1687) (Todd 7: 206-7). The epilogue to *The Amorous Prince* (1671) (Todd 5: 155) and the prologue to *The Debauchee; Or, the Credulous Cuckold* (1677) (Todd 5: 391-2) were spoken by actresses who are not identified in the print texts. These prologues and epilogues were custom made to fit each particular actress's persuasive ability. In the epilogue to *Abdelazer* (1676), "Written by a Friend," the young actress "little Mis. Ariell" "intercedes" for "our Poetess" and speaks on behalf of her "Sex's Cause" (5: 315, lines 5,16), whereas in the epilogue to *The Roundheads* (1682), the actress who plays Lady Desbro addresses the audience "in a Preaching tone" (Todd 6: 423).

Part of the Rover, a versified statement of her royalist outrage at Dryden for writing *The Spanish Friar*.²⁹ Barry's address characterizes Dryden and another playwright, Elkanah Settle, as poets who "write against their Consciences" (Todd 6: 297, line 12). She charges the audience to remember that "There was a time, when Loyally by you, / True Wit and Sense receiv'd Allegiance due" (lines 41-42), and concludes by exclaiming,

Oh let it not be said of English Men,
Who have to Wit so just and noble been,
They should their Loyal Principles recant,
And let their glorious Monarch of it want.

(lines 46-50)

In another case, Behn's relentlessly royalist prologue and epilogue to *Romulus*, spoken by Mrs. Butler and published as a broadside, landed both the playwright and the actress in jail.

Given Behn's commitment to the crown as well as to Restoration actresses, it seems appropriate that the first dedication she wrote, to *The Feign'd Courtezans* (1679), is addressed to Nell Gwyn.³⁰ In addressing the royal mistress and actress, Behn emphasizes the fact that she is writing her first dedication and that where before she had not found a subject with the

²⁹ Mendelson regards this event as the turning point in Behn's career (147). Behn demonstrated her royalism by dedicating *The Second Part of the Rover* to James, Duke of York, later James II (Todd 6: 22829). For the parallels between James and the roving Willmore, see Todd (*Secret Life* 269-72).

³⁰ Contemporary scholars and Restoration audiences alike have been drawn to Behn's *The Rover*. However, writing in 1691, Langbaine called *The Feign'd Courtezans* "one of the best [plays] she has written" (20). Langbaine's preference of *The Feign'd Courtezans* over *The Rover* plays was based upon the amount of textual borrowing in each. Langbaine's evaluation, then, suggests that *The Feign'd Courtezans* was regarded as one of Behn's most original plays.

“power to have reduc’t [her] to the true worship,” she now looks back on her “past Ignorance” (Todd 6: 86, lines 4-5). Behn makes it clear that her changed outlook is the result of Gwyn’s “permission” for Behn to address a dedication to her. Proud that her request for patronage has already been encouraged by Gwyn, Behn goes on to distinguish herself from those playwrights who willfully address Gwyn without permission: “the Offerings made to you ought to be worthy of you, whilst they accept the will alone; and how Madam, would your Altars be loaded, if like heaven you gave permission to all that had a will and desire to approach ‘em” (lines 10-12).³¹ But Gwyn hasn’t given permission to all, just to Behn, and this factor allows Behn to exalt herself above the rabble of dedicators “who now at distance can only wish and admire, which all mankind agree to do” (lines 12-13). Behn looks to Gwyn as her entrance into court patronage, and hopes that “under so Gracious an Influence my tender Lawrells may thrive, till they become fit Wreaths to offer to the Rays that improve their Growth” (Todd 6:87, lines 64-66). However, although Behn addresses Gwyn as the royal mistress, her value is not merely decorative.³² Behn praises not only Gwyn’s “Powers of the Illustrious Beauty” but also the “Charms of that tongue, and the greatness of that minde, who has subdu’d the most powerfull and Glorious Monarch of the world” (lines 46-47). In praising the persuasive power of her dedicatee’s beauty and wit to conquer even the best of men, Behn echoes the agenda that was forwarded in the prologue to *The Forc’d Marriage*. In that piece, the actress had proposed that a cabal of women would “Court a new power” and “joyne

³¹ Thomas Duffett had dedicated *The Spanish Rogue* to Nell Gwyn in 1673.

³² Interestingly, the last dedication Behn published during her career, to *The History of the Nun* (1689), was addressed to another of Charles’s mistresses, Hortense Mancini, Duchess of Mazarine (Todd 3: 165-66). According to Todd, contemporary accounts describe her as a bisexual Amazon (*Secret Life* 393-94).

the Force of Wit to Beauty" in order to "keep as well as gain the victory" over men (Todd 5: 7, lines 7-9). Indeed, the particular brand of female wit for which Behn praises Gwyn relate directly to her abilities as an actress:

[Y]ou never appear but you glad the hearts of all that have the happy fortune to see you, as if you were made on purpose to put the whole world into good Humour, whenever you look abroad, and when you speak, men crowd to listen with that awful reverence as to Holy Oracles or Divine Prophecies, and bear away the precious words to tell at home to all the attentive family, the Gracefull things you utter'd and cry. (Todd 6: 86-87, lines 32-37)³³

Behn explains that it is Gwyn's power of persuasive speech "that ought to make your Sex vain enough to despise the malicious world that will allow a woman no wit, and bless our selves for living in an Age that can produce so wondrous an argument as your undeniable self, to shame those boasting talkers who are Judges of nothing but faults" (lines 39-42).

The wit of theatre women is also the subject of Behn's epilogue to *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678). It seems appropriate that this epilogue was delivered by Anne Gwin, formerly Anne Marshall, because she shares connections to both Aphra Behn and Nell Gwyn. In July 1677, Gwin had created the role of "Astrea" in the anonymous play *The Constant Nymph: Or, The Rambling*

³³ For Gwyn's use of her talents as a comedian to procure and then maintain her position with the king, see Richards (16-23) and Gilder (162-65). Additional sources on Nell Gwyn and other Restoration actresses include Thomas A. King, "'As if (she) were made on purpose to put the whole world into good Humour': Reconstructing the First English Actresses," *Drama Review* 36 (1992): 78-102; Katharine Eisaman Maus, "'Playhouse Flesh and Blood': Sexual Ideology and the Restoration Actress," *ELH* 46 (1979): 595-617; Laura J. Rosenthal, "'Counterfeit Scrubbado': Women Actors in the Restoration," *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 34 (1993): 3-22; and John Harold Wilson, *All the King's Ladies: Actresses of the Restoration* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1958).

Shepherd at Dorset Garden (Summers *Playhouse* 421-22). Astrea was Behn's poetic nom de plume, retained from her days as a royalist spy. Moreover, Anne Gwin's and Nell Gwyn's names were so similar that the two actresses were often confused with each other (vii).³⁴ In fact, a 1779 portrait rendition of the epilogue to *Sir Patient Fancy* imagines that the address was delivered by "Mrs. Ellyn Guyn Mistress of King Charles IId." Surely these congruences were not lost on Dorset Garden audiences, when, after the conclusion of the *Sir Patient Fancy*, Anne Gwin, who had played Lady Knowell, "An Affected Learned Woman," in the play, stepped forward to deliver the kind of epilogue that Nell Gwyn had made famous.³⁵ Just as in Behn's dedication Nell Gwyn is characterized as "looking abroad" at the men in the audience, the stage directions of the quarto of the play indicate that Anne Gwin delivered the first lines of the epilogue "Looking about." To the men who had crowded to listen, Gwin uttered and cried Behn's precious words, her divine prophecy that women could write plays as well as men:

I here, and there, o'reheard a Coxcomb Cry
 Ah, Rott it—— 'tis a Womans Comedy,
 One, who because she lately chanc't to please us,
 With her Damn'd stuff will never cease to tease us.
 What has poor Woman done that she must be,
 Debar'd from Sense and Sacred Poetrie?

³⁴ Indeed, they still are. In *Reconstructing Aphra*, Goreau argues that the epilogue was spoken by Nell Gwyn (134-35).

³⁵ Gwyn was renowned for performing innovative prologues and epilogues. As Valeria in Dryden's *Tyrannick Love* (1669), she died onstage of a self-inflicted stab wound. When the bearers attempted to carry off her body, Gwynn resisted them, and spoke as "the Ghost of poor departed Nelly": "Hold, are you mad? you damn'd confounded Dog, / I am to rise, and speak the Epilogue" (qtd. in Wiley 1077).

Why in this Age has Heaven allow'd you more,
And Women less of Wit than heretofore?
We once were fam'd in Story, and cou'd write
Equall to men; cou'd Govern, nay cou'd Fight.
We still have passive Valour, and can show
Wou'd Custom give us leave the Active too,
Since we no provocations want from you.
For who but we, cou'd your Dull Fopperies bear,
Your Saucy Love, and your brisk Nonsense hear;
Indure your worse then womanish affectation,
Which renders you the Nuisance of the Nation;
Scorn'd even by all the Misses of the Town,
A jest to Vizard Mask, the Pitt-Buffer;
A Glass by which th'admiring Country Fool
May learn to dress himself in Ridicule:
Both striving who shall most Ingenious grow
In Lewdness, Foppery, Nonsense, Noise and Show.
And yet to these fine things we must submit
Our Reason, Arms, our Laurels, and our Wit.
Because we do not Laugh at you when Lewd,
And scorn and cudgell ye when you are Rude;
That we have Nobler Souls than you, we prove,
By how much more we're sensible of Love;
Quickest in finding all the subtlest waies
To make your Joys: why not to make you Plays?
We best can find your Feables, know our own,
And Gilt and Cuckolds now best please the Town;

Your way of writing's out of Fashion grown.
Method, and Rule—you only understand,
Pursue that way of Fooling, and be Damn'd.
Your Learned Cant of Action, Time, and Place,
Must all give way to the unlabour'd farce.
To all the Men of Witt we will subscribe:
But for you half Wits, you unthinking Tribe,
We'll let you see, what e're besides we doe,
How Artfully we Copy some of you
And if you're drawn to th' life, pray tell me then
Why Women should not write as well as Men.

(Todd 6: 79-80, lines1-44)

The arguments for a woman's natural ability to write plays that are made in Behn's epilogue are the same as the arguments for a woman's ability to act that are made in Behn's drollery. In both cases, women base their right to "make plays" on two points: their ability to please, or "make" the audiences' "Joys," and their skillfulness at imitating, or "Artfully" copying, men. In fact, as the epilogue progresses, the woman playwright becomes indistinguishable from the actress: both demand that the men's "way of writing" "give way to the unlabour'd farce" to which women have title. Like the prologue to *The Forc'd Marriage*, the epilogue to *Sir Patient Fancy* stresses the conquering power of female wit.

In the context of the sentiments expressed in Behn's paratexts early in her career, her decision to publish the first issue of the *The Rover* in 1677 as if it had been "written by a man" is suggestive. First, it indicates that Behn is testing her theory that an author's gender is in itself a paratext that

contributes to the reception a play receives. Since the existence of a gender-biased reception would influence Behn's commercial success, it must have been important to Behn as the first professional woman playwright to prove or disprove her theory. But the male paratext on the front page of *The Rover* also suggests that Behn is showing off her ability to write like a man, just like the actresses in the *Covent Garden Drollery* who stressed their ability to play men's parts with such conviction that the audience would accept the disguise.³⁶ Regarding Behn's prefatory rhetoric, Payne has pointed out the division in Behn's career, arguing that in the second half of her career, as she meets with more commercial success and attention from patrons, Behn abandons the plucky preface for the decorous dedication ("Restoration Dramatic Dedication" 33; "Behn and Patronage" 116). But in the "Preface" to *The Lucky Chance*, published in 1687 toward the end of her career, Behn's arguments in favor of fair treatment for women in theatre resurface. Behn repeats the challenge that she had made in her earlier prefaces: "had the Plays I have writ come forth under any Mans Name, and neer known to have been mine; I appeal to all unbyast Judges of Sense, if they had not said that Person had made as many good Comedies, as any one Man that has writ in our Age; but a Devil on't the Woman damns the Poet" (Summers 3: 186-7; Todd 7.216-17). Munns reads this preface as an example of what she calls Behn's "double-dressing" ("Aphra Behn and Sexual Space" 194). In writing her preface as a woman at that same time that she asks to be granted the freedom to express her "masculine part," the "poet" in her, Munns argues, "Behn carries out her double act; she asserts both her femaleness and her maleness" (196). In a

³⁶ Mendelson says that "Whatever Aphra's true feelings about *The Rover*, she overcame her scruples during the middle of the press run, adding her name to the title page of the third issue. At the same time a feminist slant was added to the postscript directed at the critics 'who are naturally so kind to any that pretend to usurp their Dominion, especially of our sex'" (144).

similar way, after having published the Rover “written by a man,” Behn publishes her next play *Sir Patient Fancy* as “Written by Mrs. A. Behn, the Authour of the ROVER.” She reclaims her identity as a woman playwright at the same time that she associates her name with her ability to write as well as a male playwright. This is yet another act of Behn’s “double-dressing,” an artistic skill that, to Behn, distinguished both women playwrights and actresses in the Restoration.

In Aphra Behn’s paratexts, especially her epilogue to *Sir Patient Fancy*, her dedication to Gwyn, the prologue to *The Forc’d Marriage*, and her *Covent Garden Drollery*, she explores the possibility of the community of theatrical women in which the actresses and women poets mutually benefit by establishing the other’s wit. The concluding lines of the epilogue to *Sir Patient Fancy*, which Anne Gwin makes on behalf of women playwrights-- “pray tell me then/ Why Women should not write as well as Men” (Todd 6: 80, lines 43-44)--echo those which Behn reproduced in the *Covent Garden Drollery* on behalf of the Restoration actresses: “Why should not then we Women act alone” (3). The possibility of a female playhouse that Behn creates in the *Covent Garden Drollery* never became a material reality, but Behn’s interest in a cabal of theatrical women lived on throughout her career . . . in the space of the female prologue and epilogue.

CONCLUSION

Charles W. Eliot, the editor of *Prefaces and Prologues to Famous Books*, begins his argument for the importance of his anthology with this explanation:

No part of a book is so intimate as the Preface. Here, after the long labor of the work is over, the author descends from his platform, and speaks with his reader as man to man, disclosing his hopes and fears, seeking sympathy for his difficulties, offering defence or defiance, according to his temper, against the criticisms which he anticipates. ("Introductory Note" n. pag.)

Such a remark is characteristic of the longstanding critical tradition that tends to imagine the preface as an exchange between men.¹ At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Ben Jonson adopts a voice of authority by modifying the traditional humility trope and appealing to the reader as a sympathetic and

¹ Even some recent scholarship continues the tradition of the manly preface. In Dryden's prologue to *Don Sebastian* (1689), the Catholic, Tory, unemployed poet-laureate and historiographer-royal pleads for fair treatment in the changing world. The prologue is spoken by a woman, who bargains on behalf of the author, suggesting that she could bribe the audience with sexual favors, and asking them to "be kind" and let Dryden "pay his Taxes out, in Writing." In return, the actress says, Dryden promises "he'll ne'er again / The sacred Names of Fops and Beau's profane." Remarking on this passage, James Sutherland proclaims, with entire seriousness, "This is surely the manly Dryden" (51). In contrast, Catherine Gallagher writes of Behn's prefaces: "The authentic Behn in the epistles to her early plays. . . breaks with her comic persona only momentarily to reveal the self-pity in every woman who must sell herself. Unlike Dryden, she is not above her audience; their obligation to her stems not from her condescension but from her regrettable feminine dependence on their approval" (*Nobody's* 18). These examples suggest that the author's sex is just as much of a paratext for twentieth-century scholars as it was for Drury Lane playgoers in the seventeenth century.

intelligent friend. At the end of the seventeenth century, as Jessica Munns explains, John Dryden “invests the prefatory mode with a singular, confident, masculine presence,” and his “prefatory remarks move further away from the play texts to become quite separate critical essays” (“Foreplay in Forewords” 58). For instance, rather than being a traditional dedication, Dryden’s dedication of the *Rival Ladies* (1664) to Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery is a lengthy defence of English verse, which results in a series of prefatory exchanges between Dryden and Robert Howard, culminating in Dryden’s preface to the second edition of *The Indian Emperour* (1668), more commonly known as *A Defence of an Essay of Dramatick Poesy*. As Dryden explains in the conclusion of his lengthy preface,

I lay my observations at [Howard’s] feet, as I do my pen, which I have often employed willingly in his deserved commendations, and now most unwillingly against his judgment. . . . In my epistle dedicatory, before my *Rival Ladies*, I had said somewhat in behalf of verse, which he was pleased to answer in his preface to his plays: that occasioned my reply in my *Essay*; and that reply begot this rejoinder of his, in his preface to the *Duke of Lerma*. But as I was the last who took up arms, I will be the first to lay them down. (1: 133)

Women writers react in various ways to the rise of the critical, “manly preface.” Sometimes they engage in the process of writing manly epistles themselves, pointing out the constructedness of the discourse and their ability to impersonate it; sometimes they adapt the various “masculine” discourses to their own advantage; and sometimes they resist the tradition of

the “manly preface” altogether. For instance, in her prefatory commendation of Lady Mary Wortley’s *Embassy Letters* (published 1725), Mary Astell characterizes the critical bent of the masculine preface as the product of envy and hatred, and she proposes a kind of female preface that will act in contrast. “Let the Men malign one another, if they think fit, and strive to pul down Merit when they cannot equal it,” she says: “Let us be better Christians. . . . pleas’d that a Woman Triumphs, and proud to follow in her Train. Let us offer her the Palm which is justly her due, and if we pretend to any Laurels, lay them willingly at her Feet” (“To the Reader” Ferguson 199). Another tradition of women’s prefaces is to defend women’s writing based upon the success of other women. In her address “To the Reader” that prefaces *An almanack or prognostication for the year of our Lord 1658*, Sarah Jinner cites the examples set by Margaret Cavendish and Katherine Philips:

What rare Poets of our sex were of old: and now of late the Countess of Newcastle. And, I pray you, what a rare Poem hath one Mistres Katherine Philips near Cardigan writ, it is printed before Cartwrightes Poems, who, if her modesty would permit, her wit would put down many mens in a Masculine strain. (qtd. in Beals 153)

Almost fifty years later, Mary Astell included a similar tribute to Katherine Philips, characterizing her as a heroine, not just a poet, in her *Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694):

You may be as ambitious as you please, so you aspire to the best things. . . Remember, I pray you, the famous Women of former

Ages, the Orinda's of late, and the more Modern Heroins, and blush to think how much is now, and will hereafter be said of them, when you your selves (as great a Figure as you make) must be buried in silence and forgetfulness! (Ferguson 183).

In addition to the canonized reputation of Katherine Philips, women writers make use of the arguments of Margaret Cavendish and the boldness of Aphra Behn in their prefaces. In the dedication of her *Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen* (1673), for instance, Bathsua Pell Makin complains, in language similar to that employed by Cavendish, of "the Barbarous custom to breed Women low" that has, she says,

grown general amongst us, and hath prevailed so far, that it is verily believed (especially amongst a sort of debauched Sots) that Women are not endued with such Reason, as Men; nor capable of improvement by Education, as they are. . . . I verily think, Women were formerly Educated in the knowledge of Arts and Tongues, and by their Education, many did rise to a great height in Learning. Were Women thus Educated now, I am confident the advantage would be very great: The Women would have Honour and Pleasure, their Relations Profit, and the whole Nation Advantage. (Ferguson 129).

In "The Preface to the Reader" before *The Ladies Defence* (1696), Lady Chudleigh makes a similar argument: "That we are generally less Knowing, and less Rational than the Men, I cannot but acknowledge; but I think 'tis oftener owing to the illness of our Education, than the weakness of our

Capacities" (Ferguson 217). Astell's proposal of an all girls school bears a striking resemblance to the female academies in some of Cavendish's plays. And in her dedication of *The Platonick Lady*, Susannah Centlivre addresses "all the Generous Encouragers of Female Ingenuity" by asking the question, "And why this Wrath against the Womens Works? Perhaps you'll answer, because they meddle with things out of their Sphere; but I say, no; for since the Poet is born, why not a Woman as well as a Man?" Centlivre's brand of prefatory rhetoric is a blend of Behn's awareness of the effects of the female paratext on the reception of the professional woman playwright, Cavendish's interest as a self-crowned laureate in referring to her plays as works, and both writers' claim that Nature, not man, makes the poet.

In this dissertation, I have focused on three women writers' use of the prefatory discourses of the amateur, self-crowned laureate, and professional. While these categories of authorship provide a useful organizational tool for a study like this, it is also necessary to acknowledge the ways in which Philips, Cavendish, and Behn imagined themselves, and were imagined by others, across and outside of these categories. Even given Cavendish's use of the discourse of the self-crowned laureate, it is her contemporary Katherine Philips who, in spite of her amateur protestations, was referred to as the first English female laureate. In "On the Death of Mrs Katherine Philips," for instance, Abraham Cowley wrote: "*But if Apollo should design/ A Woman Laureat to make,/ Without dispute he would Orinda take*" (*Poems* sig. f2v--author's italics). And for all of Behn's concern for professional survival, her later works demonstrate a self-crowned laureate's desire for fame. Behn declares, in her preface to *The Lucky Chance*, "I am not content to write for a third day only. I value Fame as much as if I had been born a *Hero*" (Todd 7: 217, lines 127-28--author's italics), and in her edition of Cowley's Latin poem

Of Plants, Behn inserts a note that made plain her desire to be placed in the tradition of the female laureate. Writing “in her own Person,” Behn addresses the laurel tree in the following manner:

. . . after Monarchs, Poets claim a share
As the next worthy thy priz’d wreaths to wear.
Among that number, do not me disdain,
Me, the most humble of thy glorious Train.
Let me with Sappho and Orinda be
Oh ever sacred Nymph, adorn’d by thee;
And give my Verses Immortality.

(qtd. in Todd 1: xxvii)

Moreover, although both Philips and Cavendish consistently resisted the image of the professional writer, their economic circumstances suggest that the trade of their poetry and books was occasionally put to the kind of use that resulted in material benefit. And the prefaces to Cavendish’s plays and the conclusion of the *Blazing World* show her interest in managing, and perhaps even acting in, a kind of theatre that straddles the border between the space of the court and the professional theatre.

One fact that all of these women have in common is their indebtedness to their predecessors, including writers like Aemilia Lanyer. From Lanyer, Cavendish borrowed the conceit of the woman as the natural poet, Philips shared Lanyer’s interest in women’s friendship and community and constructed a network of associates and patrons that included several important noblewomen, and Lanyer’s prefatory discourse of the eroticized, yet virtuous, text is similar to the playful interest in delight and pleasure of the

reader/spectator that is evident in Behn's early prefaces. Even though Lanyer's and Behn's prefaces share a certain boldness, their prefaces are remarkably different in other ways. What happens between 1611 and 1687 to account for the changes in the prefaces of Aemilia Lanyer and Aphra Behn? Certainly their choices of genre and their own personalities and circumstances can account for much of the difference. But the differences in their prefaces also reflect the changes in the patronage system, the allowance of women in the professional theatre, and the development of new genres in the Restoration so that whereas Lanyer can only imagine a patronage system, Behn can market herself as a royalist poet, a novelist, and a professional dramatist. If Lanyer had lived during the civil war, she might have made use of the increased opportunities for social mobility and literary patronage, as Margaret Cavendish did when, as a maid in Henrietta Maria's exiled court in France, she met and married William Cavendish, or as Katherine Philips did when she exchanged her verses with aristocrats.

In order to answer fully the question of what happens to the preface between Aemilia Lanyer and Aphra Behn, and, indeed, what happens to the preface *after* Aphra Behn, one needs to trace the history of the preface through the seventeenth century, taking into account the prefaces to texts by women religious writers, by manuscript writers, by social reformists, and by the score of professional women dramatists that flourish from 1696 on through the eighteenth century. In choosing to limit my study to prefaces by, about, and akin to Katherine Philips, Margaret Cavendish, and Aphra Behn, I have had to forego an extended analysis of important prefaces by women like Mary Monck, Anne Killigrew, Mary Astell, Delariviere Manley, Catherine Trotter Cockburn, and Mary Pix. There is still important work to be done on the prefaces of early modern women, and subsequent scholarship

undoubtedly will add to the history of the preface, possibly complicating the arguments of those scholars who have only focused on prefaces to men's texts. The most recently published anthology of prefaces suggests a change in the tendency to ignore women's contributions to the history of the preface. Alasdair Gray's *Book of Prefaces* (2000) is quite different from Charles W. Eliot's *Prefaces and Prologues to Famous Books* in that Gray offers prefaces by Margery Kempe, Aphra Behn, Mary Shelley, Jane Austen, and the Brontes without explaining, apologizing for, or defending the inclusion of women's prefaces. It would seem, then, that anthologists are beginning to regard the preface as more than a place where serious men talked to serious men; however, until women's prefaces are included in studies of the preface, it is accurate to say that the history of the preface has yet to be written.

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