

**A companion to the Cavendishes writing, patronage, and material culture**

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# A COMPANION TO THE CAVENDISHES

Edited by

**LISA HOPKINS**

and **TOM RUTTER**





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# **A COMPANION TO THE CAVENDISHES**

Edited by  
**LISA HOPKINS and TOM RUTTER**

**ARC** HUMANITIES PRESS

*For Chris and Sam, and for Sophie, Caedmon, and Aphra*



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## PREFACE

**LIKE THE HERBERTS**, the Howards, and the Sidneys, the Cavendishes are remarkable among aristocratic families of the early modern period both as artistic patrons and as creative figures in their own right. Their enthusiasm for building shaped the landscape of the north Midlands of England, giving rise to prodigy houses such as Hardwick Hall, Bolsover Castle, and the great estate of Chatsworth. As well as the Smythson dynasty of architects, they patronized writers including Ben Jonson, painters such as Anthony van Dyck, and the philosopher Thomas Hobbes. However, family members would themselves produce literary and philosophical works of enduring interest and historical importance. William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Newcastle, was an amateur playwright who collaborated with James Shirley before the civil wars and with Thomas Shadwell after the Restoration, and his daughters Jane and Elizabeth were pioneering female dramatists. His second wife Margaret is a figure of particular significance as a poet, biographer, dramatist, scientist, and author of the science-fiction romance *The Blazing World*. More generally, members of the Devonshire and Newcastle dynasties that sprang from the marriage of Elizabeth Hardwick ("Bess of Hardwick") to Sir William Cavendish in 1547 would go on to play considerable roles in English history, including the 1st Duke (then Marquess), who commanded King Charles I's army in the north of England during the first Civil War, and the Earl (later Duke) of Devonshire, who was one of the signatories to the letter inviting William of Orange to invade in 1688. Arbella Stuart, granddaughter of Elizabeth and William, was the unwilling centre of plots against James VI and I and would become a tragic victim of Stuart succession politics after marrying the grandson of the Earl of Hertford in 1610.

There is already a considerable body of work on the Cavendishes (especially Margaret) in the form of biographies, editions, critical articles, monographs, and essay collections. However, this book attempts to do something new: to treat the Cavendishes as a collective, bringing together specially written essays on key literary figures such as Margaret Cavendish (or the Duchess of Newcastle, as she should properly be termed), her husband the 1st Duke, and the duke's daughters Jane and Elizabeth, as well as on relevant cultural practices such as patronage, horsemanship, and the building of houses and monuments. It also includes chapters on other members of the extended family, such as George Cavendish, the servant and biographer of Thomas Wolsey, and the musician Michael Cavendish. The order is, so far as possible, chronological, beginning with George and proceeding through to Margaret, followed by chapters on Cavendish buildings and funerary monuments.

The editors regret some omissions. We would have liked, for example, to have been able to include a chapter on Sir Charles Cavendish, younger brother of the 1st Duke of Newcastle, one of the foremost mathematicians of his day and the correspondent not

only of Hobbes and Walter Warner but of French luminaries such as Mersenne, Mydorge, and Roberval. However, we offer the book that follows not as the last word on the Cavendishes but as a stimulus to further scholarship: It has been important to us that as well as providing readers with an overview of work that has been done already, the contributions should represent new and ground-breaking research. We hope that their insights will encourage yet greater interest in this diverse and fascinating family.

## Chapter I

# INTRODUCTION: THE CAVENDISH FAMILY

Lisa Hopkins

THE WEALTH AND position of the Cavendish family date back to the marriage of Bess of Hardwick to Sir William Cavendish in 1547. It was a second marriage for both of them. Bess, who was probably aged 19 (just under half the age of the bridegroom),<sup>1</sup> had already been briefly married to Robert Barlow, a Derbyshire neighbour; the marriage had produced no children and had probably not been consummated. It was while married to William Cavendish that Bess produced all eight of her children, of whom six survived to adulthood. From those six children four ducal families sprang—Kingston, Newcastle, Devonshire, and Portland—and an area of Nottinghamshire became known as the Dukeries in consequence.

Bess's descendants owed their prosperity and advancement not to William Cavendish himself, who was detected in embezzlement and died in dire financial straits, but to her two subsequent marriages, first to Sir William St. Loe and finally to George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury. As Horace Walpole supposedly had it,

Four times the nuptial bed she warm'd,  
And ev'ry time so well perform'd,  
That when death spoiled each husband's billing,  
He left the widow every shilling.<sup>2</sup>

This is not strictly true—Sir William Cavendish had little but debts to leave—but the wealth settled on her by St. Loe and Shrewsbury was immense, and the Cavendish children benefited greatly from it.

Bess's surviving children were three sons and three daughters. Of the daughters, two, Frances and Mary, made good marriages, to Sir Henry Pierrepont and to Shrewsbury's second son Gilbert, who after the death of his elder brother became the heir to the earldom. The third made a marriage which on paper was more splendid than either of these, but it did not last long and was unhappy in its consequences: Elizabeth, the middle girl, married Charles Stuart, Earl of Lennox, who, through his mother Lady Margaret Douglas, had inherited a possible claim to both the English and Scottish thrones. (Lady Margaret was the mother-in-law of Mary, Queen of Scots, who was a prisoner in the Shrewsbury household for sixteen years.) Both Elizabeth and Charles died young and

---

<sup>1</sup> For discussion of Bess's date of birth, see Alan Bryson, "Bess of Hardwick: A Life," in *Bess of Hardwick: New Perspectives*, ed. Lisa Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 18–35.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in I. Shenker and L. Yerkes, "Bess of Hardwick Was a Woman to Be Reckoned With," *Smithsonian* 22 (1992): 69.

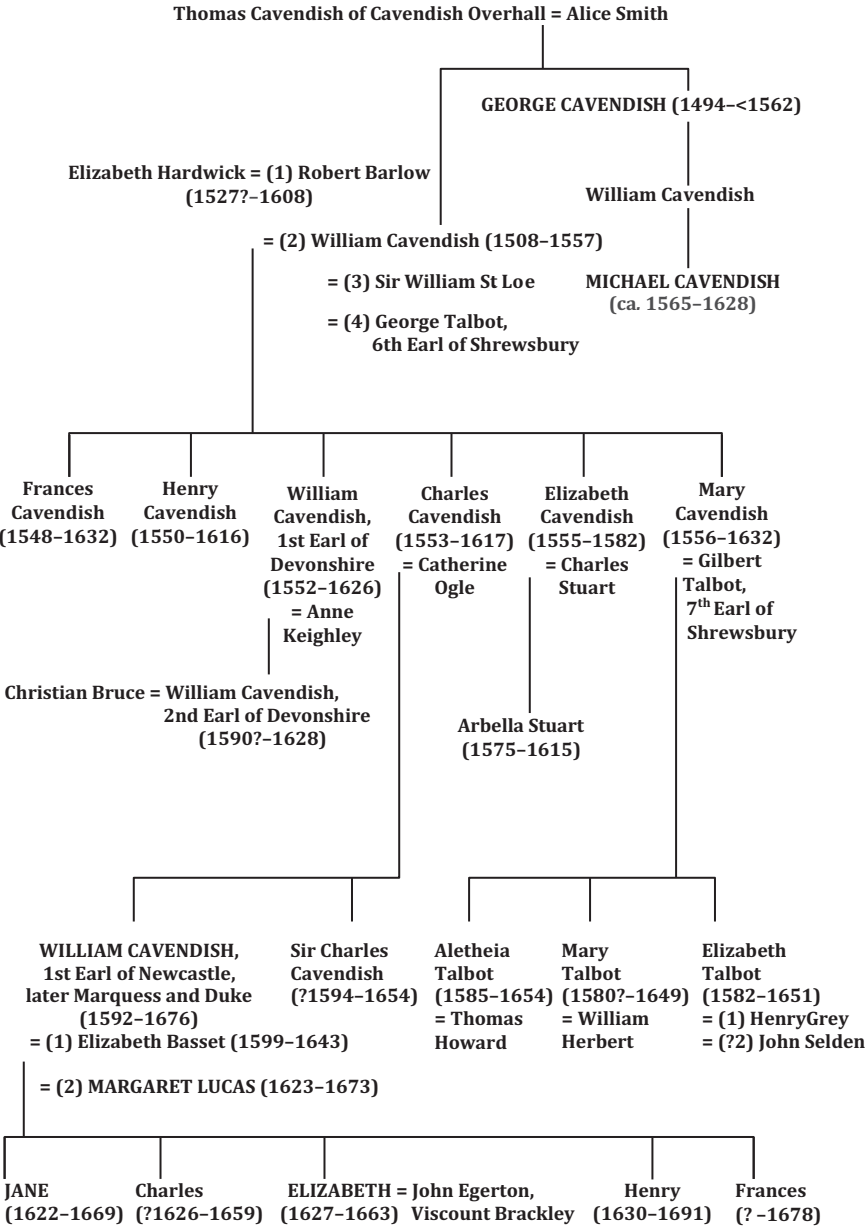


Figure 1.1. Simplified family tree of the Cavendish family; names in capitals are those of writers discussed in this book.

their only child was a daughter, Lady Arbella Stuart, who might have been named Queen Elizabeth's heir but in fact ended her life in the Tower, childless and insane. Arbella was, though, instrumental in the elevation of the Cavendish family because it was she who procured a barony for Bess's favourite son.

Bess had three sons: Henry, William, and Charles. Although Henry was the eldest, he displeased his mother by paying no attention to the wife she had arranged for him, Shrewsbury's daughter Grace, and devoting himself to womanizing on a scale which earned him the soubriquet of "the common bull of Derbyshire," though his mother termed him more simply "My bad son Henry." (He had some interesting travels, though, visiting Constantinople and also having his presence recorded in Iasi, in Romania.<sup>3</sup>) Charles, the youngest, enjoyed his mother's favour for some time, but he eventually offended her by his closeness to his brother-in-law Gilbert Talbot, with whom she fell out bitterly in her final years. William, though, she adored, and it was for him that Arbella obtained the patent of nobility that elevated him and his descendants to the ranks of the aristocracy and would eventually see them ensconced as Dukes of Devonshire in Bess's beloved Chatsworth. Writing in the mid-seventeenth century, Bess's great-granddaughter Jane Cavendish accused her of backing the wrong horse by preferring William to his younger brother Charles. In a poem entitled "On my honourable Grandmother Elizabeth Countess of Shrewsbury," Jane apostrophizes Bess:

Madam  
 You were the very Magazine of rich  
 With spirit such & wisdom wh<sup>ch</sup> did reach  
 All that opprest you, for your wealth did teach  
 Our Englands law, soe Lawyers durst not preach  
 Soe was your golden actions, this is true  
 As euer will you liue in perfect veiue  
 Your beauty great & yo<sup>r</sup> the very life  
 And onely Pattern of a wise, good, wife  
 But this your wisdom, was too short to see  
 Of your three sonns to tell who great should bee  
 Your eldest sonn your riches had for life  
 'Caus Henry wench'es lou'd more then his wife  
 Your second children had, soe you did thinke  
 On him your great ambition fast to linke  
 Soe William you did make before your Charles to goe  
 Yet Charles his actions haue bene soe  
 Before your Williams sonn doth goe before  
 Thus your great howse, is now become the lower  
 And I doe hope the world shall euer see  
 The howse of Charles before your Willi<sup>ams</sup> bee  
 For Charles his Willi<sup>m</sup> hath it thus soe chang'd  
 As William Conquerer hee may well bee named

---

**3** Noel Malcolm, *Agents of Empire: Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean World* [2015] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2016), 338.

And it is true, his sword hath made him great  
Thus his wise acts will ever him full speak<sup>4</sup>

For Jane, her grandfather Charles Cavendish is the hero of a classic younger son narrative, rising from nothing to outstrip his more favoured brother, and Charles's son William is more splendid still, a figure to rank with the Conqueror. (As it happened, the first person to build a castle at Bolsover had been William Peveril, who was sometimes said to have been a bastard son of William the Conqueror.)

Jane's poem displays some fundamental characteristics of the literary culture of the Cavendish family.<sup>5</sup> In the first place, it would strike modern readers as not very well written in a number of respects. The first line's "Magazine of rich" would make better sense if it were "Magazine of riches," and the two final rhymes of "chang'd" with "named" and of "great" with "speak" do not really work. This is because Jane and her sisters were never formally taught in the way that their brothers were or sent to Cambridge as their father had been. The same was true too of their stepmother Margaret, who, despite being the most famous writer of the family, believed that it was against nature for a woman to be able to spell (though male writers of the period might also have unusual notions of orthography). Moreover, her publishers' attempts to provide the punctuation Margaret herself omitted are often unhelpful, to the point that Katie Whitaker suggests that "Sometimes the best way to follow a section of her text is to read it as if it had no punctuation, ignoring all the marks put in by printers."<sup>6</sup> This too is an aspect of Cavendish literary culture that can be traced back to Bess of Hardwick: Alison Wiggins notes that Bess "was exposed to many different personal spelling systems through her extensive reading of a wide range of letters from correspondents across the social and educational scale";<sup>7</sup> ultimately she spelled, as she did most things, as she pleased. However, eccentricities of orthography and grammar do not obscure the liveliness and vigour of these women's writing.

The second feature of Jane's poem that is typical of Cavendish family writing is that it is not only *by* a member of the family but also *about* the family, and that it sees Jane's father, William Cavendish, as being the most important member of that family. William Cavendish was born in 1593, in his uncle Gilbert Talbot's manor of Handsworth, making him old enough to remember the late Elizabethan period and to have known

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<sup>4</sup> Jane Cavendish, *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, ed. Alexandra G. Bennett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 73.

<sup>5</sup> For the claim that there was a distinctive familial discourse at work within the Cavendish family, see Marion Wynne-Davies, *Women Writers and Familial Discourse in the English Renaissance: Relative Values* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), chap. 7, "Desire, Chastity and Rape in the Cavendish Familial Discourse", 140–69.

<sup>6</sup> Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Royalist, Writer and Romantic* (London: Vintage, 2004), 177; see also 251 on the kinds of errors to be found in her printed texts.

<sup>7</sup> Alison Wiggins, *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: Language, Materiality and Early Modern Epistolary Culture* (London: Routledge, 2017), 113.

his formidable grandmother well. (She died in 1608.) He was sent to Cambridge, as his Cavendish uncles had been, and also trained in the Royal Mews, becoming close to Prince Henry, at whose investiture he was created a Knight of the Bath. His first experience of travel overseas came as a member of the train of Sir Henry Wotton, who was sent to Savoy in 1612 to discuss a possible marriage for Prince Henry. The prince's death in 1612 was a blow for William; he was less close to the future Charles I, who was both younger and temperamentally very different. Nevertheless, he became MP for East Retford in 1614, Viscount Mansfield in October 1620, and Earl of Newcastle upon Tyne in March 1628, and he entertained the king and queen at Bolsover in 1633 and Welbeck in 1634, with Ben Jonson writing entertainments for both events. He was also made Governor of Charles II, whom he taught to ride, although he never achieved his ambition of becoming Master of the Horse despite his acknowledged excellence in the saddle and the several books he wrote on the art of riding, as Elaine Walker's chapter discusses.

Despite Jane's reproaches to her great-grandmother, William's father Charles had not been left with quite nothing: although Bess cut him out of her will at the same time as Arbella, he bought Bolsover Castle and Welbeck Abbey from his brother-in-law and friend Gilbert Talbot and set about transforming Bolsover into a chivalric fantasy castle. When he died in 1617, work on the castle was continued by William, who grew into an increasingly important local magnate. He was particularly proud of holding the lord lieutenancies of both Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, and he took his duties very seriously, raising 120 knights and gentlemen in 1638 in case they were required to fight against the Scots. This launched him into a military role that saw him created Marquess of Newcastle in 1643 and eventually culminated in his appointment as Commander-in-Chief of Charles I's Northern Army, with "powers equivalent to those of a viceroy,"<sup>8</sup> though this came to an ignominious end at the Battle of Marston Moor in 1644. He might have returned to action in 1650, when Charles II made him a Knight of the Garter and intended him to command the men whom Charles hoped would rise in his favour in the north of England, but the Scots who were the king's principal backers would have nothing to do with Newcastle, who was thereby spared the fiasco of the Battle of Worcester. Instead he remained on the Continent until the Restoration, when he hoped that his loyalty would be richly rewarded. Instead, Charles II turned to other advisers, leaving William feeling frozen out and increasingly happier at Welbeck than at court. Not until 1665, after an unflatteringly long delay, was his service to the crown recognized by his creation as Duke of Newcastle.

As Richard Wood's and Matthew Steggle's chapters explore, William also wrote both plays (some of which were performed in London theatres) and poems. Probably no one nowadays thinks William's writings the most interesting of those produced by the family, not least because it was less extraordinary for an aristocratic man to write than for an aristocratic woman to do so. William was, though, hugely important both as a pioneer

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**8** Elspeth Graham, "‘An After-Game of Reputation’: Systems of Representation, William Cavendish and the Battle of Marston Moor," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Peter Edwards and Elspeth Graham (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 83–110, 84.

of Cavendish literary culture and as facilitator and defender of his womenfolk's right to write. Victoria E. Burke and Marie-Louise Coolahan, noting "the type of literary milieu created at Newcastle's country seats, a milieu which fostered the writing of his daughters, and later his second wife, as well as himself," suggest that "It is perhaps Newcastle himself who should be praised for being unique in his unstinting support of the literary endeavours of the women in his family."<sup>9</sup> While he gave permission and support to his wife and daughters, no one else was in a position to attack them. It is also worth noting that while many seventeenth-century siblings were at odds over questions such as property, William and his younger brother Sir Charles Cavendish loved each other, and throughout their lives they did everything possible to help each other. Sir Charles was a small man (he may have suffered from some form of disability or deformity)<sup>10</sup> with a large intellect: he knew and corresponded with some of the foremost scientific minds of Europe, including Descartes, Hobbes, Gassendi, Fermat, and Mersenne.<sup>11</sup> He was interested in mathematics, in optics, in atomism, in attempts to develop a copying machine, and in myriad other topics, and he also displayed the family taste for acquiring houses by using a legacy from his mother to buy Slingsby Castle in North Yorkshire. In all of these interests, he was joined and helped by William, who may have been scorned as a general and marginalized at court but gave his wives, daughters, and brother nothing to complain of.

William married twice. His first wife was Elizabeth Basset, widow of the Earl of Suffolk's son Thomas, by whom he had two sons, Henry and Charles, and three daughters, Jane, Elizabeth, and Frances. Neither of the sons features much in this volume; in a family of writers, thinkers, builders, and fighters, neither did anything to distinguish himself, and it seems prophetic that as a child the elder of the two should have sent his father a letter which says simply, "My Lord. I can not tel what to wright. Charles Mansfeild."<sup>12</sup> The two elder daughters, though, collaborated on a play and a pastoral, as discussed in Daniel Cadman's and Sara Mueller's chapters, and Jane also wrote poetry, while the younger, Elizabeth, married Thomas Brackley, Viscount Egerton, who had played the Elder Brother in Milton's *Comus*; she was thus doubly connected to literature. The daughters were originally intended to have dowries of £10,000 each, but the Civil War put paid to that,<sup>13</sup> and Jane did not marry until 1654, over a decade after her younger sister Elizabeth had already done so; her husband was Charles Cheyne, merely a gentleman but a Royalist one, and their house in Chelsea gave its name to Cheyne Walk, later

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<sup>9</sup> Victoria E. Burke and Marie-Louise Coolahan, "The Literary Contexts of William Cavendish and His Family," in *Society, Religion, and Culture in Seventeenth-Century Nottinghamshire*, ed. Martyn Bennett (Lampeter: Mellen, 2005), 115–41, 118, 141.

<sup>10</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 84.

<sup>11</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 95–97. See also Jean Jacquot, "Sir Charles Cavendish and His Learned Friends," *Annals of Science* 8 (March 1952): 13–27 and (June 1952): 175–91.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a Seventeenth-Century Playboy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 78.

<sup>13</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 80n.

to be famous as the address of Bram Stoker, J. M. W. Turner, and many other fashionable and public figures. Having married later than Elizabeth, Jane produced only three children to her sister's nine, but three of Elizabeth's brood died young and she herself died in childbirth in 1663, aged only 37.

The member of the family who is most famous today is, though, undoubtedly William's second wife, Margaret Cavendish née Lucas. Born probably in 1623 in Colchester, the youngest of eight children of a wealthy gentry family, Margaret was by her own account a shy, gawky teenager whose family was afraid she would disgrace herself when she became a maid of honour to Queen Henrietta Maria, first in the displaced royal court at Oxford in 1643 and then from 1644 in Paris. In so doing, she was firmly in line with her family's committed loyalism; in 1642 the family's home, St. John's Abbey, was raided by Parliamentarians and members of the family intimidated and briefly imprisoned,<sup>14</sup> her brother Sir Charles Lucas was executed in 1648 after the siege of Colchester, and the corpses of her mother and sister were allegedly disinterred by Parliamentary troops.<sup>15</sup> Despite her gaucheness, she attracted the attention of the much older and suaver Newcastle, widowed in 1643, and married him in Paris in December 1645, to the apparent consternation of his children, who had not met her but seem not to have liked what they had heard (matters were probably not helped by the fact that the eldest child, Jane, was two years older than Margaret). In her own time, Margaret was famous as an oddly dressed and oddly behaved woman who both fascinated and scandalized contemporaries (although Katie Whitaker has shown that the sobriquet "Mad Madge" was almost certainly invented in the nineteenth century);<sup>16</sup> in ours, she is remembered as a prolific author who experimented in a wide variety of genres and also interested herself in natural philosophy and historiography. It is for this reason that a third of the chapters in this book, including those by Andrew Duxfield, Hero Chalmers, Lisa Walters, Lisa Sarasohn, Line Cottegnies, Catie Gill, and Brandie Siegfried, are dedicated to Margaret and her work, but it would also be true to say that she would almost certainly not have achieved so much had she not married into a family with an existing literary culture and a tradition of independently minded women.

In 1648 Newcastle and Margaret moved to Antwerp, where they lived in the Rubenshuis, as explored in James Fitzmaurice's chapter. In 1651 Margaret returned to England with her brother-in-law Sir Charles Cavendish to "compound" for Newcastle's estates; she was unsuccessful on the grounds that she had known Newcastle was a "malignant" when she married him, but Charles, whose physical frailty had precluded him from fighting, bought back Bolsover and Welbeck. It was in 1653 that Margaret began to publish her writing, an unusual and provocative act for a seventeenth-century woman. Katie Whitaker thinks that "Margaret knew she was heading for trouble" and

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<sup>14</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 40–42.

<sup>15</sup> Though see Frances E. Dolan, "Scattered Remains and Paper Bodies: Margaret Cavendish and the Siege of Colchester," *Postmedieval* 4 (Winter 2013): 452–64 for discussion of the apparent anomaly that Margaret herself never mentions this incident.

<sup>16</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 362.

notes that a scornful epitaph produced after her death in 1673 terms her “Welbeck’s illustrious whore,” a title for which there was no evidence but which the author would presumably have felt to have been sufficiently earned by her temerity in refusing to conform to traditional modes of behaviour.<sup>17</sup> Although Jane and Elizabeth also wrote, they did not write in the same way as Margaret did, because they did not publish their work. Elizabeth’s daughter, also named Elizabeth, wrote in a poem addressed to her mother, “Mongst ladies, let Newcastle wear the bays, / I only sue for pardon, not for praise,”<sup>18</sup> and Thomas Lawrence’s epitaph for Jane (who died in 1669, aged 48) declared of her poetry that “Her modesty alone could it excel / Which, by concealing, doubles her esteem.”<sup>19</sup>

Margaret was also singular in other ways. In 1667 she visited the Royal Society, though this fell a bit flat because, tongue-tied, she was reduced to repeated assurances that she was “all admiration,”<sup>20</sup> and on the same trip to London she also appalled London society by appearing at the theatre with bare breasts (Charles II, told by a visitor that he had met a woman who was very oddly dressed, nodded wisely and said that it was probably Lady Newcastle).<sup>21</sup> Perhaps most fundamentally, Margaret did not fulfill what many contemporaries saw as the central purpose of a woman. Although she was aware that Newcastle had married her partly because he desired more sons, she never bore a child, which made her the subject of intrusive and ineffective medical enquiry. It is notable that in the household book of William’s cousin Lady Arundel, daughter of his aunt Mary Cavendish, many of the remedies are focused on what might be generically termed women’s troubles: “Water of Centory” is said to be good for “Wormes in the womb” and “Water of Fumetory” for “the Maries”; “A precious Water for the Eyes, by my Lady Heyden” requires “womans milk of divers mens children,” implying a large household containing several nursing mothers and suggesting a fertile atmosphere for such folk beliefs to flourish in.<sup>22</sup> Lady Arundel’s book helps us see how aberrant Margaret’s childless state must have appeared, but actually the cause may well have been that Newcastle was impotent (his friend Sir Kenelm Digby’s proposed cure, which involved eating powdered vipers, may not have helped matters).<sup>23</sup>

Margaret was also on bad terms with her stepchildren, who never trusted her. William’s eldest son Charles died in June 1659, aged only 32, apparently of a stroke, leaving his younger brother Henry as the heir. William persuaded Henry to break the entail, but Henry and his wife (and cousin) Frances were deeply suspicious of the

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<sup>17</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 1, 355.

<sup>18</sup> H1 Ellesmere MS 8367.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 342.

<sup>20</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 304.

<sup>21</sup> Walter Scott, ed., *Memoirs of the Court of Charles the Second by Count Grammont* (London: Bohn, 1859), 135.

<sup>22</sup> [Aletheia Talbot, Countess of Arundel], *Natura Exenterata: Or Nature Unbowelled by the Most Exquisite Anatomizers of Her* (London: Twiford, Bedell, and Ekins, 1655), 55, 29, 47.

<sup>23</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 104. Digby specified that Newcastle must order some “in time for the viper season,” though it is hard to see how vipers could be seasonal.

intentions of Margaret in particular, viewing with alarm her attempts to increase her jointure by appropriating whatever lands and monies she could find that had been omitted from the agreement William and Henry had come to. Some of the Newcastle's servants were also perturbed by Margaret's increasingly careful scrutiny of their financial transactions, which removed the opportunity for peculation; they spread rumours that she was seeking to enrich herself for a second husband, as Bess of Hardwick had done, except more so because Margaret had allegedly said that "she was a Duchess, and consequently a greater person than a Countess, and would out-do [Bess] in that kind."<sup>24</sup> Some of the duke's servants went so far as to send William an anonymous letter accusing Margaret of scandalous behaviour (probably an alleged affair with Francis Topp, husband of her favourite lady-in-waiting Elizabeth), though the plot backfired when he refused to believe it. Henry was particularly appalled by her plans for large-scale tree-felling on Cavendish lands and also in Sherwood Forest, which she was determined to pursue even though it was not clear that it was legal to do so. By the time William was in his late seventies, both Henry and some of the Cavendish household were seriously alarmed about what would happen when he died, but in fact it was Margaret who died suddenly, aged only 50, perhaps of a stroke or a heart attack (though it is not entirely inconceivable that she was poisoned by someone who feared what she might do when she was widowed). Newcastle himself died three years later, on Christmas Day 1676, at the age of 84. A Cavendish to the core, his last thoughts were bent on exhorting his heir, Henry, to complete the restoration of Nottingham Castle. He had also devoted considerable effort to creating a suitable tomb for himself and Margaret in Westminster Abbey, following a tradition of Cavendish funerary monuments which is discussed in Eva-Maria Lauenstein's chapter.

As well as these four major figures, other members of the family are also of interest. The branch that settled at Chatsworth (descendants of Bess's second son William) made a major contribution to country house culture and included some very notable collectors. They deserve gratitude both for remodelling Chatsworth and for *not* remodelling Hardwick, and Susan Wiseman's essay here deservedly attends to them. George Cavendish, brother of Bess of Hardwick's second husband, wrote a life of his employer Cardinal Wolsey; he is discussed in Gavin Schwartz-Leeper's chapter. George's grandson, the composer Michael Cavendish, the subject of Keith Green's chapter, dedicated some of his work to his cousin Lady Arbella Stuart, Bess's granddaughter and William Cavendish's first cousin. There was also Arbella herself, whom William was old enough to have known and remembered. Arbella was not a Cavendish, but she was very close to her cousins on her Cavendish mother's side, particularly the three daughters of her favourite aunt, Mary Talbot, in whose household Newcastle was partly reared, and she was an important influence on the literary culture of the Cavendish family. Sara Jayne Steen notes of Arbella that "At court, she was acknowledged to be a fine writer, one whose words were read aloud in the king's Privy Council and commended"; she may have written poetry—Aemilia Lanyer seems to have thought so, and Steen notes

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24 Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 335.

that “Bathsua Makin in 1673 commended Stuart’s ‘great faculty in Poetry’ and several later writers echoed this point,” though no verse by her has ever been identified—but in any case her “political importance meant that in some cases even the drafts of her letters were filed as state papers.”<sup>25</sup> Steen suggests that in Arbella, “Extending to women Stephen Greenblatt’s thesis about male power to fashion a self, we can watch an intelligent and well-educated Renaissance woman fashion a self in prose.”<sup>26</sup> Arbella was also fashioned by others, sometimes in ways that bore directly on the literary cultures of the Cavendish family. Both during and after her life, her situation was understood in theatrical terms. In 1610 the Venetian ambassador reported that Arbella “complains that in a certain comedy the playwright introduced an allusion to her person and the part played by the prince of Moldavia,” since in 1610 there was talk of a marriage between Arbella and the Moldavian pretender Stephen Bogdan (Stephen Janiculo);<sup>27</sup> the unnamed play is usually supposed to have been Ben Jonson’s *Epicoene*, though it could conceivably have been *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.<sup>28</sup> There are also possible references to her in *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy*, *The Noble Gentleman*, and *Cymbeline*,<sup>29</sup> and I have argued that her story also finds a reflection in two plays by the Caroline playwright John Ford, *The Broken Heart* and *Perkin Warbeck*, the second of which Ford dedicated to Newcastle.<sup>30</sup> (Ford’s connections to the Cavendish circle are also discussed in the chapters by Richard Wood and Andrew Duxfield.) These allusions to Arbella contribute to the tradition of writing the identities of Cavendish women and also of connecting members of that family to the biggest political questions of the day.

This is one of a number of things that characterize Cavendish literary culture. Another was a strong element of coterie writing. Though the name was often (perhaps always) pronounced Candish, the family motto made use of those silenced letters: it was “Cavendo tutus”—be safe by being careful—and the family device of the nowed snake underlined the implication of cunning and wisdom. That device was seen often, for it was a regular feature of the houses which so many members of the family determinedly built, embellished, or restored, as recorded in a contemporary poem which begins,

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**25** Sara Jayne Steen, ed., *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 8–9, 56–57.

**26** Steen, *Letters*, 10.

**27** Sarah Gristwood, *Arbella: England’s Lost Queen* (London: Bantam, 2003), 325. See also T. S. Graves, “Jonson’s ‘Epicoene’ and Lady Arabella Stuart,” *Modern Philology* 14 (January 1917): 525–30.

**28** Gristwood, *Arbella*, 327.

**29** Steen, *Letters*, 68, 94–96. On the possibility that Beaumont and Fletcher’s *A Noble Gentleman* may comment on Arbella’s situation, see also Gristwood, *Arbella*, 310; for possible allusions in *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy*, see Gristwood, *Arbella*, 385–86.

**30** Lisa Hopkins, “On the Edge of the S(h)elf: Arbella Stuart,” in *Women on the Edge*, ed. Lisa Hopkins and Aidan Norrie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 159–78.

Hardwicke for hugenes, Worsope for height,  
Welbeck for vse, and Bolser for sight.<sup>31</sup>

Erecting, restoring, and furnishing houses was a tradition that went back to Bess of Hardwick, of whom it was prophesied that she would never die while she was still building; it came true in 1608, when the mortar froze and work could no longer proceed on her final project. The Cavendishes not only built houses, though; they also wrote about them. Houses and domestic furniture figure prominently both in William's writings and in those of his wife and daughters, and both these descriptions and the Cavendish houses themselves, like the motif of the nowed snake, are often rich in symbolism and suggestion.<sup>32</sup> As Crosby Stevens's chapter discusses, a typical Cavendish building had a mythological program, and William has sometimes been mocked for the raciness of some of these images, but there is perhaps an instructive contrast with what was happening in Colchester, home of William's second wife Margaret, where the Puritan fanatic Matthew Hopkins was using the castle to interrogate witches. William, by contrast, was relaxed, eclectic, and ecumenical about what was included in his homes. His father, Sir Charles Cavendish, was a secret Catholic;<sup>33</sup> he had Catholic friends to whose religion he turned a blind eye (Burke and Coolahan note that "Kenelm Digby's Catholicism goes unmentioned in Newcastle's two poems to him"),<sup>34</sup> and many of the recipes in the cookery book of his cousin Lady Arundel are openly Catholic. At Bolsover there was a Heaven closet and an Elysium closet, images of saints, a Venus fountain, and a figure of Hercules over the main entrance to the Little Castle. Hercules is holding up the globe, temporarily relieving Atlas, and this both suggests acting—he is standing in for Atlas—and potentially alludes to the Globe Theatre itself, confirming the Little Castle's status as a residence strongly associated with entertainments.

The Little Castle's use of mythology built on Bess of Hardwick's use of figures such as Penelope, Lucretia, and particularly Cleopatra. Although it is now lost, there was once a tapestry depicting Cleopatra at Hardwick;<sup>35</sup> Alison Wiggins, noting that Bess had a *Works*

**31** "Dr Andrewes on Houses of Cavendish," in James Loxley, Anna Groundwater, and Julie Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland: An Annotated Edition of the "Foot Voyage"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 138.

**32** See for instance Lisa Hopkins, "Play Houses: Drama at Bolsover and Welbeck," *Early Theatre* 2 (1999): 25–44; "Margaret Cavendish and the Cavendish Houses," *In-Between* 9 (2001): 63–76; and "Point, Counterpoint, Needlepoint: The Tapestry in Margaret Cavendish's 'The Unnatural Tragedy,'" *Women's Writing* 20 (2013): 555–66; Alison Findlay, "She Gave You the Civility of the House': Household Performance in 'The Concealed Fancies,'" in *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594–1988*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 1988), 259–71, 260; and "'I Hate Such an Old-Fashioned House': Margaret Cavendish and the Search for Home," *Early Modern Literary Studies* special issue 14 (May 2004); online: <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-14/findhate.html>.

**33** Worsley, *Cavalier*, 11.

**34** Burke and Coolahan, "The Literary Contexts of William Cavendish and His Family," 136.

**35** For a description of the Cleopatra panel and its iconography, see Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania

of Chaucer, suggests that “We can observe that the five ‘Noble Women of the Ancient World’ selected for the full-length wall hangings at Hardwick New Hall all appear in Chaucer: Lucretia (which is also the name given to Bess’s daughter who died in infancy) and Cleopatra have their own stories in *The Legend of Good Women*, Artemisia is mentioned in the *Franklin’s Tale*, Zenobia in the *Monk’s Tale* and Penelope ... is regularly cited as an example of virtuosity.”<sup>36</sup> The Egyptian queen was of considerable interest to a number of seventeenth-century aristocratic women: Lady Anne Clifford was painted as her,<sup>37</sup> and Margaret defended Cleopatra (though she attacked Penelope)<sup>38</sup> and asked of Shakespeare “who could describe Cleopatra better than he hath done?”<sup>39</sup> In Jane and Elizabeth’s play *The Concealed Fancies*,<sup>40</sup> when the three sisters are under siege, Cicilley says to Sh,<sup>41</sup> “You mean how did you look in the posture of a delinquent? Faith, as though you thought the scene would change again, and you would be happy though you suffered misery for a time” (3.4.6–10), and Sh replies that she was able to do this because “I practised Cleopatra when she was in her captivity, and could they have thought me worthy to have adorned their triumphs[,] I would have performed his gallant tragedy and so have made myself glorious for time to come” (3.4.13–16). One reason for the sisters’ interest might have been that Cleopatra, like the Cavendish family, was symbolized by a snake;

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Press, 2010), 61. For a suggestion about its possible fate, see Lisa Hopkins and Barbara MacMahon, “‘Come, What, a Siege?’: Metarepresentation in Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley’s ‘The Concealed Fancies,’” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 16 (2013): online: <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/journal/index.php/emls/article/view/83>.

**36** Wiggins, *Bess of Hardwick’s Letters*, 103.

**37** Yasmin Arshad, *Imagining Cleopatra: Performing Gender and Power in Early Modern England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 3, though *pace* Jessica Malay, “Viewing the Jacobean Cleopatra Portrait: Literary and Visual Intersections in Female Devisership,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 18 (Winter 2018): 29–65.

**38** Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 127.

**39** For discussion of this, see Katherine Romack, “‘I Wonder She Should Be So Infamous for a Whore?’: Cleopatra Restored,” in *Cavendish and Shakespeare, Interconnections*, ed. Katherine Romack and James Fitzmaurice (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 193–211, 194.

**40** Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley, *The Concealed Fancies*, in *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 1996). Burke and Coolahan note that “The repeated use of the word ‘fancies’ in its various guises in the writings of William Cavendish, his daughters and his second wife has been interpreted as an indication of the extent of the former’s influence over the women writers of his family” (“The Literary Contexts of William Cavendish and His Family,” 130; they cite specifically Betty Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship in Early Modern England: The Case of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and Her Loose Papers* (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1999), 60).

**41** The speech prefix “Sh” is the only name we have for this particular character. I have suggested elsewhere that it may stand for Susannah (“‘The Concealed Fancies’ and Cavendish Identity,” in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity in Seventeenth-Century England: William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Newcastle, and his Political, Social and Cultural Connections*, ed. Peter Edwards and Elspeth Graham (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 111–28).

another was perhaps that in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* we find the lines "O'er-picturing Venus where we see / The fancy outwork nature" (2.2.207–8) and

Nature wants stuff  
To vie strange forms with fancy; yet t' imagine  
An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy.<sup>42</sup>

Both "nature" and "fancy" are key words in Cavendish writings.

Jane and Elizabeth wrote their play at a time when Welbeck was under siege by the Parliamentarians, a powerful reminder that life in Cavendish households was not always happy. Both William and Margaret were either frequently ill or believed themselves to be so, and Sir Theodore Mayerne gave strict advice about their diets.<sup>43</sup> Margaret's second book, *The World's Olio*, took its name from a foodstuff,<sup>44</sup> and in her play *Bell in Campo*, one of Lady Victoria's proclamations is that women "shall eat when they will, and of what they will, and as much as they will, and as often as they will."<sup>45</sup> This is in marked contrast not only to twenty-first-century attitudes to female appetite but also to the lived experience of actual Cavendish-Talbot women in the seventeenth century: Bess of Hardwick reported to Sir Robert Cecil that Arbella "is so wilfully bent that she hath made a vow not to eat or drink in this house at Hardwick, or where I am, till she may hear from her Majesty,"<sup>46</sup> and Arbella does indeed seem ultimately to have starved herself to death. In this context, there are two final members of the extended Cavendish family that I want to mention, two of the three daughters of Mary Cavendish, Bess's eldest daughter, and her husband Gilbert Talbot, 7th Earl of Shrewsbury: Aletheia Howard, Countess of Arundel, and Elizabeth Grey, Countess of Kent, both of whom wrote recipe books that can help to give us a sense of what daily life was like in Cavendish households. (I have already touched on details from them.) Their books are Aletheia's *Natura Exenterata* (1655) and Elizabeth's *A Choice Manual of Rare and Select Secrets* (1653). For *Natura Exenterata* no author is named, but Aletheia's portrait appears opposite the title page, and one of the recipes observes of "a Water called Maids-milk" that "This Water is good to make the skin neshe" (89). We are looking, then, for a female aristocratic author equally at home transcribing Latin and using the dialect term "nesh";<sup>47</sup> Bess of Hardwick's granddaughter,

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<sup>42</sup> William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. John Wilders (London: Routledge, 1993), 5.2.97–99.

<sup>43</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 103.

<sup>44</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 167.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Sophie Tomlinson, "'My Brain the Stage': Margaret Cavendish and the Fantasy of Female Performance," in *Women, Texts and Histories 1575–1760*, ed. Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (London: Routledge, 1992), 134–63, 149.

<sup>46</sup> Gristwood, *Arbella*, 212.

<sup>47</sup> John Ray, *A collection of English words not generally used* (London: Bruges for Barrell, 1674), 34, observes of "nesh": "Skinne makes it proper to Worcestershire, and to be the same in sence and original with Nice. But I am sure it is used in many other Counties, I believe all over the North-West part of *England*, and also in the midland, as in *Warwick-shire*." It is certainly still in use in Sheffield.

who grew up in Sheffield and whose cousin Lady Arbella Stuart knew five languages, is the perfect if not the only possible fit.

These two books were among the earliest household manuals published, though they had been written even earlier than that, around three decades before, and they can tell us a lot about the lifestyle of the Cavendish-Talbot women. In writing their books, the sisters were tacitly acknowledging their own positions as part of a family which valued domestic entertainment. The dedication of Ford's *Perkin Warbeck* assures William Cavendish that "The custome of your Lo[rds]hips entertainments (even to Strangers) is, rather an Example, than a Fashion," and in both Margaret's play *The Unnatural Tragedy* and William's play *The Variety*, domestic ceremony is important.<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth and Aletheia had grown up in this tradition, and both of them continued it after their marriages. The younger sister, Elizabeth, married Reginald Grey, Earl of Kent, and probably after his death John Selden<sup>49</sup> (whose tract on *Mare Clausum* is parodied by William in *The Variety*). She produced two books, one of recipes and one of remedies: *A choice manual of rare and select secrets in physick and chyrurgery* and *A True Gentlewomans DELIGHT. Wherein is contained all manner of COOKERY: Together with Preserving, Conserving, Drying and Candyng, Very necessary for all Ladies and Gentlewomen*. The *choice manual of rare and select secrets in physick and chyrurgery* is described in the preface as "this small Manuall; which was once esteemed as a rich Cabinet of knowledge," and the reader is assured that "it may be justly deemed as a rich magazene of experience."<sup>50</sup> "Magazene" has a different tonality in the seventeenth century: we have already seen Jane Cavendish calling Bess of Hardwick "the very magazine of rich," and Hero Chalmers notes of Margaret Cavendish that "Her own martial metaphor of her brain as 'a Magazine' storing up her husband's 'wise discourse' implicitly links the printing of her texts with a resistance to the muzzling of her husband precipitated by military events."<sup>51</sup> However, the two books do indeed have something of the feel of a modern lifestyle magazine offering its readers privileged glimpses into Lady Kent's lovely kitchen and enviable life, not least the exoticism of some of the ingredients: "An approved Medicine for the Plague, called the Philosophers Egge" starts innocuously enough with "Take a new laid Egg" but then demands "five or six simples of Unicorns horn," though it does concede that hartshorn will do as a substitute (132 and 134). In this surely lay the appeal of the book at the time of its

<sup>48</sup> John Ford, *The Chronicle Historie of Perkin Warbeck* (London, 1634), sig. A2v.

<sup>49</sup> Lynette Hunter, "Women and Domestic Medicine: Lady Experimenters, 1570–1620," in *Women, Science and Medicine 1500–1700*, ed. Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), 89–107, 91.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Grey, Countess of Kent, *A choice manual of rare and select secrets in physick and chyrurgery collected and practised by the Right Honorable, the Countesse of Kent, late deceased; as also most exquisite ways of preserving, conserving, candyng, &c.; published by W.I., Gent* (London: G. D. for Shears, 1653), sig. A2r.

<sup>51</sup> Hero Chalmers, "Dismantling the Myth of 'Mad Madge': The Cultural Context of Margaret Cavendish's Authorial Self-Presentation," *Women's Writing* 4 (1997): 323–40 at 326.

publication. Even if you had been able to obtain a substance that you called unicorn horn before the Civil War broke out, you would not have been able to do so once it had started—the Royalist garrison at Pendennis Castle in Cornwall was reported to be eating horseflesh—or, if you were Royalist, after it had finished, since so many of the king's supporters were living in poverty and exile. Lady Kent's book peddles a fantasy, offering poignant reminders of a time when people had leisure and energy to trouble themselves about trivia. In the same way, Jane and Elizabeth too write themselves a better world than that offered by the harsh reality of war, and Arbella dreams herself up a lover, while Margaret's fertile pen imagines not just different societies but different worlds. In one of the most disturbed periods in English history, the literary culture of the Cavendishes offers us an extraordinary window into the world of a private family intimately connected to public events—a world in which living itself is a form of performance—and allows us to see the breaking down of gender distinctions and the emergence of whole new genres.

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## Chapter 2

# GEORGE CAVENDISH'S HISTORIOGRAPHICAL MOMENT

Gavin Schwartz-Leeper

IT IS A truism to observe that moments of revolution, reformation, and transformation prompt reflection and experimentation in art. Nevertheless, surveying the literary outputs of the Cavendishes shows us how these reflections and experiments speak in a diachronic kind of way—both about and across time—from what researchers normally see. To follow on from Lisa Hopkins's point that a general lack of conventional poetic technique typifies the Cavendish family canon, focusing on three centuries of a single family's outputs rather than a collection of accomplished or thematically connected texts allows us to see a very different kind of evolving literary culture that could either move with or push against contemporary trends. The most famous literary Cavendish—Margaret, whose works are examined in [Chapters 10](#) and [11](#) in this volume—used poetry to consider scientific questions: in this volume, Lisa Walters argues that Margaret “escapes” from the seventeenth-century push towards what Robert Hooke called a “plainness” of scientific language. Margaret instead uses poetry and language to explore the philosophic and scientific, and we can see how she worked consciously against developing trends in natural philosophy to test how best to work through these most difficult questions about the nature of the world. In a similar manner, we can see George Cavendish, ancestor of Margaret's husband, weighing the relative capabilities of poetry and prose to illuminate the past, testing his own sense of verisimilitude and poetic style against changing contemporary ideas about how to write about the past.

As George sat in comfortable retirement in rural Suffolk in the 1550s, it must have seemed to him—as to many of his contemporaries—that there were important lessons to be taken from a turbulent past and applied to an uncertain present. Having served as gentleman usher to Thomas Cardinal Wolsey (ca. 1470–1530) for at least the final eight years of Wolsey's life, George was an eyewitness to and participant in elements of some of the most important political and religious events of the early Henrician period. He was personally acquainted with many of the famous and infamous personages involved in Henry VIII's divorce, from Katherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn to Mark Smeaton; he was in service to Cardinal Wolsey when Martin Luther's books began to make their impact felt in England, and he witnessed Wolsey's early monastic dissolutions; and his second marriage (probably in the early 1520s) was to Margery Kempe, niece by marriage to Sir Thomas More.<sup>1</sup> George was well placed to observe the gaps between the public perceptions of these important figures and their more private personalities.

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<sup>1</sup> George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (Oxford: Early English Text Society, 1959), xx.

Born into a Suffolk-based family of minor courtiers (previously mercers and drapers), George Cavendish in some ways typified the civil and courtly servants who rose from the developing Tudor bureaucracy to establish new aristocratic families in the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> George's younger brother William—the founder of the aristocratic Cavendish dynasty—would go on to become MP for Thirsk, deputy chancellor of the exchequer, and second husband of Bess of Hardwick; however, George removed himself from public service following the death of Wolsey in November 1530 and retired to the family holdings in Suffolk.<sup>3</sup>

It was in this retirement that Cavendish would write two important texts, marking the beginning of the Cavendish family's known literary outputs. As an amateur author like his descendant William (considered by Matthew Steggle in [Chapter 5](#)), George's two main works were not intended for a wide commercial circulation; unlike William, George was not known as a patron or to have been particularly interested in wider literary or historiographical influence. These two texts have largely been restricted to modern readerships from the eighteenth century onwards, and the more influential of the two has been *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* (1554). Once assumed to have been the work of younger brother William, the *Life* is a lengthy prose biography of Wolsey written from the perspective of his gentleman usher. It has often been mined by historians interested in the development of the Henrician bureaucracy and court, as George provided extensive detail about Wolsey's day-to-day interactions, estate, and conduct (much of which he witnessed himself; for the rest, it appears he relied on accounts from Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Houses of Lancastre and Yorke* and from remembered conversations with Wolsey himself).<sup>4</sup> The *Life* would become influential in the mid-Tudor period, circulating widely in manuscript and forming the basis for anecdotes in texts by Stow, Speed, and Holinshed.<sup>5</sup> The second text by George was a collection of poems, later titled the *Metrical Visions* by their nineteenth-century editor Samuel W. Singer.<sup>6</sup> These poems are presented as *de casibus* tragedies in the tradition of Boccaccio and Lydgate, wherein the spirits of notable court figures from the 1520s speak to the sleeping author about fortune, vice, and the tribulations of court life. The bucolic dream vision of George places the *Visions* in the long line of dream literature stretching from Virgil and Boccaccio to Chaucer, Sannazaro, Lydgate, Skelton, and Sidney.

<sup>2</sup> Cavendish, *Life and Death*, xvii.

<sup>3</sup> Cavendish, *Life and Death*, xxii; Sybil M. Jack, "Cavendish, William (1508–1557)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>4</sup> Cavendish, *Life and Death*, xxx–xxxii.

<sup>5</sup> Cavendish, *Life and Death*, xi.

<sup>6</sup> As A. S. G. Edwards notes, one of the few extant manuscript copies (London, British Library, MS Dugdale 28) calls them "diuers Elegieciall Poems on sundry persons" (fol. 219r), which is a bit of a mouthful in comparison. George Cavendish, *The Metrical Visions*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 17.

While the *Life* has been utilized by historians for generations and circulated in manuscript during the sixteenth century, the *Metrical Visions* have been subjected to less scrutiny, though they act as an important—even essential—aspect of George's historiographical thinking and literary importance. Neither has been very important to modern Tudor scholarship, however: the *Life* generally has been picked over for historical details, while the *Visions* have long lingered on the "periphery" (even the extreme periphery) of the canon.<sup>7</sup> This is surprising for several reasons. First, George Cavendish was a literary and historiographical innovator. The *Life* is one of the earliest secular biographies in English, and the *Visions* represent our earliest examples of first-person *de casibus* poems in English, predating the first edition of the influential poetic collection *A Mirror for Magistrates* by nearly a decade. Crucially, these were not accidental innovations: while dating of the *Visions*-poems is uncertain, George appears to have begun writing them prior to 1554 before breaking off to write the *Life* in direct response to the perceived deficiencies of historians such as Edward Hall and Polydore Vergil.<sup>8</sup> Upon finishing the *Life* in 1554, George returned to his *Visions*, which were completed sometime around 1558. George was not motivated exclusively by the impulse to defend his old master (though undoubtedly he sought to clear up matters "inventyd ... to bring ... honest names into infamie"); instead, he experimented with poetic and prose forms to work out how best to correct the "blasphemous trompe" of the "rude commonalty" that had come to the fore in representing the coalescing sense(s) of a narrativized English past constructed by authors like Hall and Vergil.<sup>9</sup> George opened the *Life* with a direct statement that his purpose in writing was to combat rumour and reveal truth. In this, he tied into concerns about how best to represent the past voiced previously by the polemicist John Bale and later by Abraham Fleming, the editor of the 1587 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*.<sup>10</sup> We can conclude that George was thinking actively and critically about how to use genre and form to alter senses and contemporary applications of the past.

Despite these experiments, George had limited influence as either a literary or a historiographical figure. There is no evidence to suggest that George was known by his contemporaries as a reader or writer of much significance; the popularity of the *Life* among writers like John Stow can be attributed to George's eye for detail rather than a clearly articulated methodological or stylistic appreciation. The *Visions* circulated to a far lesser degree than the *Life*, if they were circulated at all: only three manuscript copies are known to exist, one of which is George's holograph fair copy and another of which is

<sup>7</sup> P. L. Wiley, "Renaissance Exploitation of Cavendish's 'Life of Wolsey,'" *Studies in Philology* 43 (1946): 121–46; Harriet Archer, "'Those chronicles whiche other men had': 'Paralipsis' and Blenerhasset's 'Seconde Part of the Mirror for Magistrates' (1578)," in *A Mirror for Magistrates in Context: Literature, History, and Politics*, ed. Harriet Archer and Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 147–63, 148.

<sup>8</sup> Edwards dates the earliest poems to 1552. For more, see Cavendish, *Metrical Visions*, 7–9.

<sup>9</sup> Cavendish, *Life and Death*, 4. The holograph manuscript Sylvester follows is London, British Library, MS Egerton 2402.

<sup>10</sup> Gavin Schwartz-Leeper, *From Princes to Pages: The Literary Lives of Cardinal Wolsey, Tudor England's "Other King"* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 180–82.

fragmentary.<sup>11</sup> This limited readership might have been the choice of the author or the result of his irregular metre and relative social isolation. In the mid-twentieth century, Paul Wiley traced the limited contemporary or subsequent references to George's works, and future work might provide grounds to argue for a more diffuse influence. This argument is never easy to make, and Richard Wood's essay in this volume (Chapter 6: "William Cavendish and Elizabethan Nostalgia") highlights the difficulty of the task. William (Earl of Newcastle) was George's descendant, at least as likely as any seventeenth-century writer to have access to manuscript copies of the *Life* or *Metrical Visions*. William was himself concerned with history-writing and the Tudor—specifically, Elizabethan—court and as interested in the problems of historical representation and contemporary application of the past as was his ancestor (see Chapter 6), but there is no definite evidence that he ever read George's writings.

George was not uneducated, however, and both the *Life* and *Visions* indicate substantial influences in his poetic and historiographic thinking. As George himself indicated, the *Life* was written as a direct response to historians like Edward Hall, and it absorbed many of the methodological concerns with the reliability of evidence and specificity of detail that typify the Tudor humanist histories; indeed, as we will see, many of the anecdotes in the *Life* were drawn from Hall's *Vnion* despite George's antipathy towards its anti-Wolsey stance. On the poetic side, in addition to the clear Lydgatian framework of the *Visions*, Mike Pincombe finds echoes of Virgil's *Eclogues* (we might be more specific and highlight Eclogue IV), William Neville's *Castle of Pleasure* (1530), and Guillaume Alexis's *Argument Betwixt Man and Woman* (1525).<sup>12</sup> A. S. G. Edwards notes that John Skelton began his *Garland of Laurel* (1523) with a similar dream vision, which Cavendish may have encountered during his time with Wolsey.<sup>13</sup> There are also limited connections between other poems by Skelton, the anonymous satire *Godly Quene Hester* (ca. 1529), and the *Metrical Visions*.<sup>14</sup>

It is difficult to tell if George was influenced directly by non-English writers; while the *Visions* have clear echoes of Virgil's *Eclogues*, Boethius's *De consolazione philosophiae*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, it is far from certain that George could read Italian (or, indeed, whether his Latin or Greek were particularly developed). His education was fairly standard for a young man of his social rank, having left Cambridge without taking a degree.<sup>15</sup> His position in Wolsey's service was not a political one, so while he may have been expected to negotiate administrative issues of a personal nature

<sup>11</sup> Cavendish, *Metrical Visions*, 4. The copies are: MS Egerton 2402, fols. 94–151 (in holograph); London, British Library, MS Additional 14,410, fols. 100–102; and MS Dugdale 28, fols. 228v–264.

<sup>12</sup> Mike Pincombe, "A Place in the Shade: George Cavendish and *De Casibus* Tragedy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 372–88, 380.

<sup>13</sup> Cavendish, *Metrical Visions*, 151.

<sup>14</sup> Schwartz-Leeper, *Princes to Pages*, 92–94.

<sup>15</sup> Cavendish, *Life and Death*, xvii, following C. H. Cooper and Thompson Cooper, ed., *Athenae Cantabrigienses* (1858), 1:217.

for the Cardinal on Wolsey's limited foreign trips, it is far from certain that he had substantial language skills or conducted those negotiations directly himself. We can be reasonably sure that George had direct access to Hall's *Vnion*, the *Fall of Princes*, and a limited number of other early sixteenth-century texts in English (and perhaps Latin). When considering his experimentations with verse and prose history-writing, we should therefore be cautious about inferring a direct and conscious attempt to enter into a wider methodological debate. Instead, George was conducting effectively private experiments with how best to understand the past; as we will see below, in so doing he foreshadowed more articulate discussions from writers like Spenser and Sidney, as well as more public interventions from the authors of *A Mirror for Magistrates*.

### **The Speaking Dead: George Cavendish, Thomas Churchyard, and *Eidolopoeia***

While George's own direct influence was limited and difficult to trace beyond the specific references or anecdotal appropriations that have been identified by scholars like Paul Wiley, reading the *Life* and *Metrical Visions* alongside any of the English *de casibus* poetry of the sixteenth century shows clearly that George was a comparatively early participant in the mid- and late-Tudor debates about how *de casibus* texts could help readers to understand the past. That George broke off from his *Metrical Visions* to write the *Life* in defence of Wolsey (and in so doing provided a competing interpretation of the "true history" of the early Henrician court) provides us with an opportunity to examine how George and his contemporaries experimented with historiography, genre, and style. To illuminate how George's texts—and the understudied *Visions* specifically—tie into contemporary efforts to make sense of the recent past, this study will compare them with perhaps the most influential mid/late-Tudor *de casibus* poetic collection, *A Mirror for Magistrates*; in particular, it will focus on the contributions to the *Mirror* from Tudor soldier-poet and stalwart Thomas Churchyard (ca. 1529–1604).<sup>16</sup> Churchyard and George shared little biographically: though both were born into mercantile families (like George, many of Churchyard's progenitors were drapers), they were separated by the substantial confessional gulf of the English Reformation. George was a moderate conservative, while Churchyard exhibited reformist sympathies.<sup>17</sup> George served only one master that we know of—Wolsey—and rarely travelled outside England, while Churchyard saw service across Europe under five English monarchs. George's literary outputs were modest in scope, while Churchyard was one of the most prolific authors of the sixteenth century. George was a court servant with a bureaucratic background, whereas Churchyard's primary employment was as a soldier: his first war was with

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<sup>16</sup> Churchyard is the subject of a recent and authoritative biography by Matthew Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard: Sword, Pen, and Ego* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> For George Cavendish's religious alignment, see A. S. G. Edwards, "Cavendish, George (b. 1494, d. in or before 1562?)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; for Churchyard's, see Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard*, 91.

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, in the 1543 Anglo-Imperial campaign against the French, and he served in generations of Tudor wars on the continent.<sup>18</sup> George retired to not-insignificant family holdings following the death of Wolsey in November 1530, whereas Churchyard established a notoriety for complaints about poverty as he sought patronage and employment at court for decades.

Yet both appear to have been fairly moderate in their religious beliefs, and, like George Cavendish's texts, Churchyard's *Mirror* contributions were written later in life as the author looked back over a tumultuous life on the edge of the Tudor court. Having lived through and participated in many of the machinations, wars, and upheavals of five monarchs, Churchyard's reflections on the past were shaped by many of the same anxieties and hopes as George's. Like the *Visions*, the *Mirror* sought to provide its readers with explorations of the lessons of the past framed through a series of eidolopoetic poems: speeches from the ghosts of notable men and women. Eidolopoeia—defined by Richard Rainolde in his 1563 *Foundacion of rhetorike* as when “a dedde manne talketh”—allows an author to exploit the didactic power of the past without necessarily committing to the public articulation of personal political or religious belief.<sup>19</sup> However, what the *Mirror* shares with George's texts (and the *Visions* in particular) stands in contrast with what it does not: whereas George wrote alone, the *Mirror* was composed and revised by a substantial team of contributors including some of Tudor England's best-known writers, ranging from mid-Tudor satirist and novelist William Baldwin to Anthony Munday. While George's texts were circulated in limited fashion, the *Mirror* was one of the most popular and influential texts in early modern England.<sup>20</sup> Despite their differences, we will see how the *Mirror* and George's texts reveal much about each other and Tudor experiments in history-writing.

The importance and purpose of this experimentation in how to tell the stories of the past is emphasized by history-writers of every variety across the period. As an example, if we turn to the work of the mid-century printer and historian Richard Grafton, we can see a central ambiguity about the way(s) in which history-writing should appear and what the consequences of those authorial choices might be. In his verse epistle to his edition of John Hardyng's *Chronicle*, Grafton wrote that chronicles “dooe recorde and testifie” (fol. 7r) and act as a “lanterne, to the posteritee” (fol. 8r).<sup>21</sup> The primary meaning

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<sup>18</sup> Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard*, 44–45.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Rainolde, *A booke called the Foundacion of Rhetorike* (London, 1563), fol. l. For a detailed consideration of eidolopoetics and history-writing in the early modern period, see Sherry Roush, *Speaking Spirits: Ventriloquizing the Dead in Renaissance Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Scott Lucas, “Hall's Chronicle and the ‘Mirror for Magistrates’: History and the Tragic Pattern,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 356–71, 362.

<sup>21</sup> John Hardyng, *Chronicle of John Hardyng* (London, 1543). Copy held by Johns Hopkins University, Sheridan Libraries: DA130.H35 1543 c.1.

of these claims regards the literal events of the past and the interpretive uses of those events, as Grafton highlights:

By chronicles we knowe, thynges auncient  
The succession of tymes, and menne  
The state of policies, with their regiment  
How long eche partie hath ruled, and when  
And what wer all their procedynges then.  
Chronicles make reporte of matters dooen  
And passed many thousande yeres gooen.  
(fol. 7r)

However, Grafton was not simply recording the past; he was showing how the past can “testifie”: speak its truth. As Tyndale translated John 3:11, “We speake that we knowe, and testify that we have sene”; engaging with the truths of the past requires not just a record but a performance of knowledge.<sup>22</sup> For this reason it is significant that George’s *Metrical Visions* are framed as eidolopoetic laments. It is this performative and instructive rhetorical structuring that links the *Metrical Visions* most closely to *A Mirror for Magistrates*; both feature first-person laments from a range of historical figures like Richard II, Anne Boleyn, and Cardinal Wolsey, whose poems open the *Metrical Visions* and conclude the 1587 edition of the *Mirror*.

As Sherry Roush has argued in one of the few extended studies of eidolopoeia, for early modern writers, eidolopoeia was a crucial figure used for two purposes, both of which bring together the structural and stylistic choices of George and the *Mirror* poets.<sup>23</sup> First, eidolopoeia was used to establish authority for a text: the author channelled the spirit of the eyewitness, the monarch, or the demonstrative figure to provide first-person performative truth-telling, to testify that which they have seen. Crucially, the reader (or audience) must recognize the authority of the spirit being channelled: either the author must convincingly introduce the spirit so as to justify its testimony, or the reader must come to the text already knowing the spirit’s deeds, reputation, or importance. In the *Metrical Visions* and *A Mirror for Magistrates*, we find examples of both categories: in the *Visions*, George Cavendish gives Anne Boleyn the same space to speak as her alleged lover Mark Smeaton. In the *Mirror*, lesser-known gentry and nobility rub shoulders with great monarchs and prelates: all are framed as providing important lessons through authorial interventions or direct appeals to the reader.

Second, eidolopoeia was used to provoke an action or a reaction: the dead do not appear simply to ruminate, but to teach, warn, or advise. They are able to do so not just because they were important in life or were witnesses to important events but because they have been made “perfect” in death: having died, they are now able to more fully understand their own triumphs and errors in a context that extends beyond the subject

<sup>22</sup> For more on the intersection between religious conceptions of truth and performativity in Tudor England, see Andreas Höfele, *Stake, Stage, and Scaffold: Humans and Animals in Shakespeare’s Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> Roush, *Speaking Spirits*, 4.

to include the reader.<sup>24</sup> This power (or perspective) is made clear in both the Wolsey-poems from the *Metrical Visions* and the *Mirror*. As the *Visions*-Wolsey finishes his tale of “warblyng dole” (line 70), he makes the moral of his story clear to the dreaming George:

Loo nowe may you se. what it is to trust  
In wordly vanytes / that voydyth with the wyng  
Ffor deathe in a moment / consumyth all to dust  
No honor. no glory. / that euer man cowlde fynd  
But tyme with hys tyme / puttythe all owt of mynd  
Ffor tyme in breafe tyme / duskyth the history  
Of them that long tyme / lyved in glory.  
(lines 218–24)<sup>25</sup>

So too observes the Churchyard-Wolsey, making explicit the apocalyptic exegetical link between a classically informed circumspection regarding Fortune and humility to Matthew 25:1–13, the parable of the ten virgins:

He needs must fall, that looks not where hee goes,  
And on the stars, walkes staring goezling like:  
On sodayne oft, a blostring tempest bloes,  
Than downe great trees, are tumbled in the dike.  
Who knows the time, and howre when God will strike?  
Then looke about, and marke what steps yee take,  
Before you pace, the pilgrimage yee make.  
(lines 379–85)<sup>26</sup>

The operative verb in both passages is “look”: both Wolseys warn their listeners (and by extension the reader) to play an active role in the cultivation of a good life. This, then, is the central thrust of both George’s and Churchyard’s poetic experiment: to urge the reader to reflect on notable examples from the past in light of the reader’s own mortality and imperfections. This cuts to the heart of Tudor concerns with history-writing: the didactic and authoritative appeal of *de casibus* narratives made clear *why* Tudor writers and readers felt they should learn about the past. Now we can examine *how* this process was enacted.

## Learning from the Past: Tudor Historiopoetics

Beyond the use of idolopoetic framing, there is a more fundamental generic concern that links the *Visions*, the *Mirror*, and the excerpt from John Hardyng’s *Chronicle* as

<sup>24</sup> Roush, *Speaking Spirits*, 6. This idea of the dead becoming “perfect” is rooted in long-running exegetical thought running from Psalm 110 and St. Augustine to Dante and Auerbach.

<sup>25</sup> I have reproduced George’s grammar and punctuation following Edwards’s transcription. Virgules without brackets are authorial; virgules with brackets [/] are my additions to indicate line breaks.

<sup>26</sup> Quotations are from Lily B. Campbell, ed., *The Mirror for Magistrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

quoted above: all three of these texts were composed in verse. The poetics of these texts require further examination: they are markedly different texts on a structural level, but they share a common concern with how to depict the past. The use of verse (or poetry) was by no means the only—or even the dominant—method of writing history. The process of determining the appropriate method for representing the past is, in part, illuminated by Grafton's epistle to the reader added to Hardyng's *Chronicle*. The epistle is in verse—like the rest of Hardyng's text—but Grafton's "continuation" of the *Chronicle* was in prose. This switching between verse and prose reveals how the authors entered into the wider debates regarding the way in which the past could be accessed and understood through a broad Aristotelian framework. As Aristotle wrote in [chapter 9](#) of the *Poetics*, poetry and history are both instructive, but "one [history] relates actual events, the other [poetry] the kinds of things that might occur".<sup>27</sup> While history can be written using poetic structures (in an Aristotelian model), it is concerned with particulars (ἕκαστον λέγει), while poetry is concerned with universals (τὰ καθόλου). The shifting emphasis on empiricism through which the people and events of the sixteenth century are represented in the *Life*, *Visions*, and *Mirror* indicate a continuous and unclear series of experiments about whether these stories about the past can be both universal and specific: if they can communicate universal truths or teach lessons when composed in verse or prose, acting as both poetry and history.

However, Aristotle's *Poetics* has a complex critical history, as Micha Lazarus has recently demonstrated: it is difficult to tell how mid-century writers like Grafton or George Cavendish (or Churchyard) would have encountered the *Poetics*.<sup>28</sup> Would they have read it in Greek or in a Latin translation? Did they read it at all or rely on a more diffuse interpretation drawn from a broader awareness of the humanist debates around Greek philology and scholarship that ran throughout their writing careers?

Regardless of how Grafton or George Cavendish encountered Aristotle (or Aristotelian commentary), their texts demonstrate three points. First, this perceived Aristotelian binary was not rigid; poetry and prose allowed history-writers to move along a structural spectrum that ranged from direct accounts of deeds done to abstracted musings on the truths that the past can illuminate. Second, this spectrum was not well defined, and George's switching between *de casibus* poetry and biographical prose demonstrates an attempt to work out how best to "testify" regarding the people and events to which he bore witness. Third, George Cavendish may have been a participant in this debate, but he was not the only one. As we will see, George's idolopoetic *de casibus* poems foreshadowed those found in the monumental text *A Mirror for Magistrates*, the often-expanded collection of mid- and late-Tudor poems explicitly pitched as morally instructive ruminations on fate. In comparing the *Metrical Visions* with the *Mirror*—and using the Wolsey-poems found in both—we can see how history-writing in verse was practised during the second half of the sixteenth century and how these texts were concerned

<sup>27</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Stephen Halliwell (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1999), 59.

<sup>28</sup> Micha Lazarus, "Aristotelian Criticism in Sixteenth-Century England," *Oxford Handbooks Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 9.

with intertwining both the “particular” and the “universal.” Indeed, George described his poetic *Visions* as a “hystory” (line 78), establishing that the poems should be read through a historiopoetic lens (rather than a strictly historical or poetic one).

### Comparing the Texts

One of the reasons why *A Mirror for Magistrates* has been under-studied by modern researchers is that it is difficult to interpret. As Donald Jellerson has argued, it is difficult for readers (contemporary or modern) to draw explicit lessons from *A Mirror for Magistrates* beyond a general exhortation to live a good life in the expectation that it could end without notice and all one’s hard work will be lost to time (or, if one has led a bad life, one might not have a chance to repent and rectify past mistakes). To demonstrate this difficulty, Jellerson points out the fate of the otherwise positive Thomas Montague, Earl of Salisbury: shot in the face in his moment of triumph at the siege of Orléans, and thus demonstrating to the reader “the vncertaynty of glory” even for a worthy person.<sup>29</sup> Yet there is a broader message here that links positive figures like Montague with more mixed figures like Cardinal Wolsey. Read through an apocalyptic theology drawn from the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1–13; these stories urge readers to focus on the cultivation of their souls rather than the attainment of earthly goals.

This is not just good theology: it is also practical advice. George Cavendish opens his *Metrical Visions* with the question that plagues all students of history confronted with the complexity of interpreting the past. While falling asleep under an oak tree, George finds his mind turning to Fortune and wonders:

How some are by ffortune / exalted to Riches  
And often suche / as most vnworthy be  
And some oppressed / in langor and syknes /  
Some waylyng lakkyng welthe / by wretched pouertie  
Some in bayle and bondage / and some at libertie  
With other moo gyftes / of ffortune Varyable.  
Some pleasaunt / Somme mean / and some onprofitable.  
(lines 8–14)

This is the question that lies at the heart of the difficulties that modern readers encounter in the *Mirror*: how do we make sense of these stories? The *Mirror* authors respond with a less-than-satisfying answer: “To what ende (quoth one) muse we so much on this matter. This Earle [Montague] is neyther the first nor the last whom Fortune hath foundered in the heyth of their prosperitie.”<sup>30</sup> The company of poets moves on to James I of Scotland

<sup>29</sup> *Mirror*, ed. Campbell, tragedy 9, line 274, 153; see also Donald Jellerson, “The Spectral Historiopoetics of the ‘Mirror for Magistrates,’” *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* 2 (2010): online: [www.northernrenaissance.org/the-spectral-historiopoetics-of-the-mirror-for-magistrates](http://www.northernrenaissance.org/the-spectral-historiopoetics-of-the-mirror-for-magistrates).

<sup>30</sup> *Mirror*, prose 9, lines 4–5, 154.

with little further discussion. George Cavendish, however, provides a justification for his own inability to see a clearer pattern in these stories:

But after dewe serche / and better advisement  
 I knewe by Reason / that oonly God above.  
 Rewlithe thos thynges / as is most convenient  
 The same devydyng / to man for his behove.  
 Wherefore dame Reason / did me perswade and move /  
 To be content / with this my small estat  
 And in this matter no more to vestigate /  
 (lines 15–21)

For the *Mirror* poets, the purpose of these stories is to demonstrate how both divine providence and fortune work together to punish the proud (or, if the person has lived a good life and is nevertheless cut down, that readers should take it to be a lesson on being prepared for death). For George, a true understanding of the past belongs to God alone; we can only try to live well according to previous examples and hope for the best. In this figuring, pre-Christian ideas about fate and history can fit into a Christian mythos. George frames his *Visions* as inspired by God, not by the epic Muse Calliope:

To whome therefore / for helpe shall I nowe call  
 Alas Caliope my calling wyll vtterly refuse /  
 Ffor morning dities / and woo of fortunes falle  
 Caliope dyd neuer. / in hir dyties vse.  
 Wherefore to hir I might my self abuse  
 Also the musis that on Parnasus syng  
 Suche warblyng dole / did neuer tempor stryng  
 Nowe to that lord / whos power is celestiall  
 And gwydyth all thing of sadness and of blysse  
 With humbe voyce. / to the I crie and call  
 That thou woldest direct / my sely pen in this  
 Ffor wantyng of thy helpe / no mervell though I mysse  
 And by thy grace / thoughe my stele be rude  
 In sentence playn / may full well conclude.  
 (lines 64–77)

For George, his *Visions* are not some kind of high art requiring a poet's muse: indeed, the classical gods and goddesses are dangerous figures whose presence indicates a problematic life. The *Visions*-Wolsey and George both acknowledge "Fortune," but both author and subject are focused on a Christian theology. By contrast, the spirit of Henry VIII found in the *Visions* begs and pleads with the Hellenic Fates to be allowed to speak: "Geve me leve Attrophos / my self for to lament" (line 1273). Henry—who only acknowledges God in the final stanza—is denied the "perfection" that comes through the circumspection provided by death and God. The Henry-spirit is so unsettled that George provides an epitaph in his own voice framing Henry as comparable to a long list of historical greats, from Julius Caesar and Solomon to Cicero and Charlemagne (lines 1434–70), perhaps to mitigate against the unkind portrayal.

## Tracing Influence

Influence is notoriously difficult to track, but in the course of this chapter we have seen how George Cavendish sought to employ historiopoetic structures from English and Italian authors (and through those absorbed influences from a web of classical writers), blending empirical and anecdotal historical detail with poetic ruminations on fate, humility, and vice. Though the circulation of his texts (and the *Visions* in particular) was limited, within a decade of the completion of the *Metrical Visions*, William Baldwin and his associates were composing similar eidolopoetic poems on the same theme. As the *Mirror* went through several expansions and revisions between the 1550s and the 1580s, this poetic form was applied to further historical figures from the English past; for the 1587 edition, Thomas Churchyard contributed a lengthy poem on Cardinal Wolsey to close the collection. There are two questions here that merit further consideration. First, is it significant that the Wolsey-poem closes the collection? Second, and more important, what was the subsequent influence and importance of these ongoing poetic developments?

The second question we can answer with some confidence. The influence of the *Mirror* and of Thomas Churchyard can be identified fairly clearly in the works of the most well-known late-Tudor authors. Churchyard himself was well known (if not necessarily universally respected) in Elizabethan and Stuart literary circles, and upon his death tributes appeared from authors like Drayton, Spenser, and Nashe.<sup>31</sup> George's influence is less clear: while there are substantial generic connections between the *Visions* and the *Mirror*, it is uncertain whether these features are the result of a direct connection between these texts or if both texts were simply following similar developmental pathways from earlier works like *The Fall of Princes*. A. S. G. Edwards has proposed the possibility of a connection between George and some of the earlier *Mirror* poets but argues that firm evidence is lacking.<sup>32</sup> That George intended to circulate the poems is itself unclear. In the final poem in the *Visions*, George urges his book to "crepe forthe ... / vnder the proteccion [...] Of suche as haue / bothe learning and eloquence" (lines 2384–85). Despite this, there is no evidence to suggest George took an active role in circulating these poems: as noted in this chapter, very few sixteenth-century copies have survived, making it unlikely that the author put much effort into developing a wide readership. We can conclude that George's texts (and the *Visions* in particular) were important but not influential; they demonstrate innovative features embraced and disseminated widely by later authors, though George's claim to fame may only be that he got there first. Churchyard was influential but perhaps less important (in terms of *de casibus* literary innovation, at least); his wider canon influenced authors and publishers from Drayton to Shakespeare.

It is in Shakespeare's works that we can see how George's texts and Churchyard's works represent divergent authorial pathways joining each other. In Shakespeare and

<sup>31</sup> Woodcock, *Thomas Churchyard*, 264–65.

<sup>32</sup> Cavendish, *Metrical Visions*, 12–13.

Fletcher's *Henry VIII*, Woodcock finds links between Cardinal Morton from *Churchyards Challenge* (1593) and Cardinal Wolsey: Morton laments "Had I servd God, as well in every sort, / As I did serve, my king and maister still: / My scope had not, this season beene so short."<sup>33</sup> In *Henry VIII*, Wolsey provides a similar sentiment: "Had I but served my God with half the zeal / I served my King, he would not in mine age / Have left me naked to mine enemies" (3.2.455–57).<sup>34</sup> This connection seems plausible, but if we look in George's *Life*, we find Wolsey's deathbed lament: "But if I had serued god as dyligently as I haue don the kyng he wold not haue geuyn me ouer in my gray heares."<sup>35</sup> While it is possible that Shakespeare and Fletcher might have had access to the *Life*, it is more likely that they used one of the major printed histories of the period. Through John Stow (who annotated a copy of the *Life*), similar versions appeared in multiple texts, including Stow's own often-reprinted *Chronicles of England*.<sup>36</sup>

Well, wel, Maister *Kingstone* quoth the Cardinall, I seee the matter howe it is framed: but if I hadde serued God as diligently as I haue done the King, he woulde not haue gyuen me ouer in my grey haire.<sup>37</sup>

We can therefore surmise that both Churchyard and Shakespeare (and/or Fletcher) had access to one of Stow's histories or a text that quoted Stow: thus through Stow we can trace a trajectory from George to Churchyard and Shakespeare. It is entirely possible that either Churchyard or Shakespeare (or both) had access to the *Life*, but given the comparative availability of Stow's texts, that route seems most likely. This is not to suggest that Churchyard (or Shakespeare) read the *Visions*, but it does indicate a more nebulous interaction between these texts indicative of how George's and Churchyard's conceptions of historiopoetics moved through time.

As for the first question: why does Wolsey close the 1587 *Mirror*? This is an unexpected end for a collection of poems that features very few sixteenth-century figures and no other churchmen. I have argued elsewhere that Wolsey came to represent more than just himself by the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>38</sup> Unlike other topical political or religious figures who found themselves satirized during their lifetimes (including fellow churchmen like Stephen Gardiner or Edmund Bonner, or bureaucrats like Thomas Cromwell or William Cecil), characterizations of Wolsey were found to be useful when discussing a range of social, political, economic, and religious issues throughout the sixteenth century. This utility continued far beyond Wolsey's direct political or religious relevance: Wolsey came to typify excess, vanity, and a lack of circumspection for a range of sixteenth-century writers and readers. In George's Wolsey-poem, the deceased Cardinal urges the listener to learn from his mistakes, which "As in a mirror / ye may behold in /

33 Thomas Churchyard, *Churchyards Challenge* (London, 1593).

34 William Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII*, ed. Gordon McMullan (London: Arden, 2000).

35 Cavendish, *Life and Death*, 178–79.

36 Stow's manuscript copy of the *Life* is now held in London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 197, fols. 264r–313v.

37 John Stow, *The Chronicles of England* (London, 1580), 977.

38 See Schwartz-Leeper, *Princes to Pages*.

. me" (line 170). As all good *de casibus* poems should, Wolsey's story illustrates the good advice to be found in the parable of the ten virgins: prepare for the end and do not trust in Fortune. By contrast, these Wolsey-spirits fear forgetfulness, both for their own sake as well as for that of the reader they hope to instruct. As we have seen, the lessons of history only become clear when the reader acknowledges the authority of the dead: this can be done through the skill of the historian-poet or through the weight of a broader cultural memory. Yet the writers and their channelled spirits are only too aware that they are fighting a losing battle, and cynicism about the role of the historian concludes Churchyard's Wolsey-poem (and thus the 1587 edition of the *Mirror*):

But what of that? The best is wee are gone,  
And worse of all, when wee our tales haue tolde,  
Our open plagues, will warning bee to none,  
Men are by hap, and courage made so bolde:  
They thinke all is, theyr owne, they haue in hold.  
Well, let them say, and thinke what thing they please,  
This weltring world, both flowes and ebs like seas.  
(lines 484–90)

The job of the historian-poet is to mitigate against this ebb and flow to the benefit of those in the present and future and to memorialize those in the past so that the reader may learn from them: good and bad alike.

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## Chapter 3

# ARBELLA, ORIANA, AND THE MUSIC OF MICHAEL CAVENDISH (1565–1628)

Keith Green

MICHAEL CAVENDISH IS something of an enigma. He should be better known than he is, being of the Cavendish family (albeit a more obscure branch than the subjects of other chapters of this book) and a composer of lute ayres that are close in mood and texture to those of his more famous contemporary, John Dowland (1563–1626). He was a cousin of Arbella Stuart (1575–1615), the one-time possible successor to Queen Elizabeth. As Lisa Hopkins notes (see [Chapter 1](#)), Arbella was a key figure in the rise to prominence of the Cavendish family. Some sources suggest that Michael was a grandson of Bess of Hardwick (1527–1608), but this is not the case. Nevertheless, he is an important if somewhat neglected figure in the Cavendish narrative, being not only cousin to Arbella but also one of the grandsons of George Cavendish (1497–1562), the biographer of Cardinal Wolsey (see Gavin Schwartz-Leeper’s chapter). George was part of the Cavendishes of Cavendish Overall in Suffolk and had one son, William, who had three sons: William, Ralph, and Michael, the subject of this chapter. Michael’s eldest brother, William, sold Overhall Manor in 1596 to a Robert Downes of London. As Francis Bickley notes in an early twentieth-century biography of the Cavendish family, for a while after this date Cavendishes still lived in and around the Suffolk base.<sup>1</sup> Despite his heritage and connections, much of Michael’s life remains undocumented and his musical career was curiously short-lived. At present there are no recordings of the complete lute ayres, which, published in 1598, compare favourably with those of Dowland. He was a “gentleman” and he contributed to Thomas Morley’s (1557–1602) collection of madrigals (1597) and to a supposed paean to Elizabeth, *The Triumphs of Oriana* (1601), as well as composing his fourteen lute ayres and sundry madrigals and psalms.

Bess’s youngest son Sir Charles Cavendish, to whom the composer John Wilbye (1574–1638) dedicated his *First Set of English Madrigals* in 1598 for his “excellent skill in music, and great love and favour of music,” was a cousin of Michael, who remained at the old family house in Suffolk as “an amateur madrigalist” and “a good follower of Morley”<sup>2</sup> (who will turn up later). Then the trail grows somewhat cold. The sale of Overhall Manor in 1596 by Michael’s elder brother William really points to the coming end of the line that had begun with Sir John Cavendish (b. 1355). As Edmund Fellowes states in his 1925 introduction to Michael’s *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*, “the branch

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1 Francis Bickley, *The Cavendish Family* (London: Constable, 1911), 26.

2 G. A. Philipps, “John Wilbye’s Other Patrons: The Cavendishes and Their Place in English Musical Life during the Renaissance,” *The Music Review* 38 (1977): 81–93.

became extinct in the seventeenth century.”<sup>3</sup> We do know that later, Michael became “servant in the bedchamber to Prince Charles,” and he also features in the list of Grooms of the Privy Chamber in Ordinary to Henry, Prince of Wales.<sup>4</sup> But other than his service to the princes, almost nothing is known about his life after this until his death. His will is dated July 5, 1628; he died unmarried in the parish of St. Mary Aldermanbury (in the City of London—the church was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666). The *14 Ayres*, of which there is only one copy, acquired in 1917 by the British Museum, belonged to Lord Waterpark in the nineteenth century, Waterpark being a title given in 1792 to a branch of the family descended from an illegitimate son of Bess of Hardwick’s eldest son Henry. The contents page of the Ayres includes a woodcut of the Cavendish coat of arms of three bucks’ heads. The *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles* was printed by Peter Short, the printer of several works by Shakespeare as well as of Morley’s *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597).

Michael was also a contributor to Thomas East’s (ca. 1540–1609) *First Booke of Psalmes* (1592), dedicated to Sir John Puckering, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, who was involved in the trial and execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. This volume was a new edition of the psalter of William Damon (one of “Her Majesty’s Musicians”) containing extant tunes newly harmonized by composers that included Michael. The volume was close to resembling what we would now call a “score,” as opposed to the part-book organization of much music of the time. Michael was also recorded as being present at Chatsworth in September 1604 with a “Frenchman” named Lambert, thought to be a lutenist previously employed at the house, where many musicians assembled. According to David Price, Michael may even have become an agent or temporary household musician, for in April 1605 he purchased a “sett of singing books” for sixteen shillings and in June he was paid “four pounds, six shillings and eight pence.”<sup>5</sup> He is often referred to as being a “country gentleman and arcadian,” but he is also a significant musical figure and composer of lute ayres and madrigals—the most popular musical genres of the day—during the extraordinary late years of Elizabeth’s reign.<sup>6</sup> He does indeed refer to himself as “gentleman” in the volume of ayres and madrigals, but this was a practice followed by others, including Dowland, in order to stress their social position at a time when the title “musician” was still not wholly respectable. Cavendish, though, clearly was a man of good social standing, albeit hardly at the top of the Cavendish order. The book of songs and madrigals is similar in style to the work of his contemporary Thomas Greaves; both collections end with a group of five-part madrigals. Further, Greaves’s employer was Sir

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Fellowes, ed., *Songs Included in Michael Cavendish’s Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles* (1598) (London: Stainer and Bell, 1926), unpaginated introduction.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Birch, *The Life of Henry, Prince of Wales, Eldest Son of King James I* (Dublin: Faulkner, 1760), 452.

<sup>5</sup> David Price, *Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 116.

<sup>6</sup> Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 116.

Henry Pierrepont, whose wife, Frances Cavendish, was a daughter of Bess of Hardwick and cousin to Michael's father, William.

Michael's *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles* of 1598 was dedicated to his cousin, Arbella Stuart. At Hardwick Hall in the 1590s, it is reported that Arbella purchased a set of viols, and she may have employed the Queen's Players between 1596 and 1600. The household accounts for the Cavendishes at Chatsworth and Hardwick for January 1600 show 4s. 8d. spent on Michael Cavendish's "booke of musike."<sup>7</sup> The title page of the volume is damaged and, as Fellowes notes, the principal title is missing. The rather lengthy subtitle is as follows:

14. Ayres in Tabletorie to the Lute expressed with two voyces and the base Violl or the voice & Lute only. 6. more to 4. voyces and in Tabletorie. And 8. Madrigalles to 5. Voyces. By Michaell Cavendish Gentleman. At London Printed by Peter Short, on bredstreet hill at the sign of the Starre: 1598.<sup>8</sup>

In the diary of one John Ramsey, gentleman, Cavendish, along with Dowland, is commended as being a "fine Musitian."<sup>9</sup> That Michael had some reputation as a musician is shown by the fact that Ramsey "was not merely interested in what Dowland and Cavendish could teach him about music, but also in the prestige that personal contact with them could generate."<sup>10</sup> According to Price, a "Mr Starkey," a music teacher to the Chatsworth Cavendishes, bought a copy of the *Booke* in 1600 for "Master William."<sup>11</sup> Michael's presence in the Hardwick and Chatsworth accounts from this time may indicate that he took charge of his second cousin's musical training. The importance of music in the Cavendish household is stressed by Price, who notes that William spent eight years between 1597 and 1605 learning the viol. Morley's treatise, *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597/1608), was purchased by the Cavendish and Sidney families.<sup>12</sup> The records of the Cavendish family show that the household spent £11 12s. 5d. on English music prints and another £2 4s. 2d. on music paper and blank music books in the period from 1599 to 1614, as well as £3 13s. on twenty-two sets of mostly Italian vocal music, some of it second-hand, between 1599 and 1614. The Cavendish family had perhaps the best-stocked music library in the country, having amassed volumes by Dowland, Weelkes, East, Rosseter, Wilbye, Younge, Farnaby, and of course Michael Cavendish, to name but a few—all contemporary lute or madrigal composers. As Price notes of the Cavendishes in general:

Undoubtedly the Cavendishes were a remarkably cultivated family, even without their musical interests. Their passion for literature, science and travel marked them out as

<sup>7</sup> Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 117.

<sup>8</sup> Fellowes, *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*, unpaginated introduction.

<sup>9</sup> Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 187.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Gale, "John Dowland, Celebrity Lute Teacher," *Early Music* 41 (2013): 205–18 at 208.

<sup>11</sup> Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 115.

<sup>12</sup> Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 117.

worthy rivals of the Howards, Herberts and Sidneys. Yet none of these compared with a passion for music, which, because of the nature of the surviving evidence, seemed to be as intense as it was short-lived.<sup>13</sup>

This notion of a short-lived, intense musical career is certainly applicable to Michael Cavendish.

More significant beyond the brief biographical details available is the fact that Cavendish was part of that complex of musicians and patrons which included, besides himself and Arbella (who had the lutenist Thomas Cutting in her service), John Wilbye, serving the Kitsons of Hengrave (see Crosby Stevens's chapter), and Thomas Greaves, serving Sir Henry Pierrepont—two patrons who were related by blood or marriage to Arbella. Greaves published a collection of lute songs in 1604 dedicated to the Catholic magnate Pierrepont (whose brother Gervase was arrested for treason at the printer Thomas East's shop in 1600). The set of songs was based on Cavendish's (earlier) collection, so clearly Michael had some influence in musical circles. Though clearly having an interest in the arts, it appears that Arbella was not a particularly active patron.<sup>14</sup> The reason must in part be financial, as Arbella, as noted by her biographer Sarah Gristwood, could not afford such commissions.<sup>15</sup> Although a number of composers dedicated volumes to her, such figures were not intimately associated with the court. At one point between 1611 and 1614 William Cavendish patronized at least six players, including Cutting, Hewett, Molsoe, Pierce, Robert, Dowland, and, according to Lynn Hulse, possibly Michael Cavendish, who was at that time gentleman of the bedchamber to the prince.<sup>16</sup> As Hulse further notes, William's lutenists are known to have played three-part consort music, popular among private gatherings as well as at court during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

## The Musical Context

Two important musical forms were flowering at this time, and both were extraordinarily short-lived: the lute song and the madrigal. Michael Cavendish wrote both and is known particularly for one piece in each of the two genres, the madrigal "Come, Gentle Swains" and the lute song "Wandering in This Place." Lyrically, and to some extent musically, his madrigals are rather conservative, although it is the case with madrigals generally, having rather quaint and backward-looking words, typically dealing with nymphs and swains and other jolly elements of a mythical rural life:

Down in a valley, down in a valley  
Shady vales are pleasant ports,

<sup>13</sup> Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 117.

<sup>14</sup> Sara Jayne Steen, ed., *The Letters of Arbella Stuart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 57.

<sup>15</sup> Sarah Gristwood, *Arbella: England's Lost Queen* (London: Bantam, 2003), especially 262.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Spring, *The Lute in Britain: A History of the Instrument and Its Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 207; Lynn Hulse, "The Musical Patronage of the English Aristocracy, 1590–1640" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1992), 222.

For merry, merry  
 Merry, merry, merry lads' resorts.  
 Such was our hap to catch a swain  
 O happy valley!

(Michael Cavendish, "Down in a Valley")<sup>17</sup>

Both of the Cavendish pieces noted above were originally compositions for lute, "Come, Gentle Swains" being recast in madrigal form for Thomas Morley's *The Triumphs of Oriana* (1601)—the collection of madrigals in supposed homage to Elizabeth and containing works by Cavendish, John Wilbye, and Thomas Weelkes among many other (primarily church) composers. One or two of Cavendish's lute compositions certainly compare well with Dowland, and the volume as a whole is quite early in the history of the flowering of lute-song composition that ended so suddenly after the first quarter of the seventeenth century. As Fellowes notes:

Michael Cavendish was the author of a Madrigal "Come Gentle Swains" published by Morley in *The Triumphs of Oriana*, 1600. He also published in the previous year "14 Ayres ..." Imprinted by Peter Short, 1599 folio. This work is among the rarest of its class. It is not mentioned by Hawkins or Burney, nor does it occur in any sale-catalogue.

Of the *Ayres*, Fellowes further states that "[T]his book is one of the rarest of its kind."<sup>18</sup>

The two volumes that Michael Cavendish wrote music for—his own *Ayres and Madrigalles* and Morley's *The Triumphs of Oriana*—supplement the little we know of his life and provide fresh and interesting insights into his relationship to contemporary society. Both collections have mysteries behind them which may well never be solved given the scant details of Cavendish's life. However, I am going to investigate Cavendish's connections, through his relations with Arbella, with conspirators in the Essex rebellion of 1601 and (more generally) with Catholic patrons of the arts. We start with the dedications of each. Arbella Stuart, as noted, was a patron of the arts (albeit in a relatively modest way) and especially music (she apparently played the lute and the viol), who, as a contender in the line of succession to the queen, was unavoidably implicated in the political struggles of the day. Though a Protestant, she was apparently well disposed towards Catholics, and there is the further complication of her (and others') relationship with the Earl of Essex, as we shall see. Here is the dedication to Arbella from the *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*:

#### TO THE HONOURABLE PROTECTION OF THE LADIE ARBELLA

Notwithstanding your rare perfections in so many knowledges, which have adorned you and you them, let not, worthie Lady, one sole qualitie of mine seeme the rather insufficiency

<sup>17</sup> Fellowes, *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*, 30. Christopher Hogwood's brief biography of Michael in the *Dictionary of National Biography* suggests that Michael's madrigals are musically somewhat backward-looking.

<sup>18</sup> Fellowes, *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*, unpaginated introduction.

to your iudgement, or breed lesse acceptance for being offered alone. It commeth out of a profession worthie some grace, and hath in it humors variable for delights sake. I offer them as that wherby I can best expresse my service to you, and you may (if it please you) make use of them at your idlest houres. Manie causes I have to imbolden mine attempts of dutie to you, and your favours stande in the top of them: others there are more secrete, and lie in the nature of your owne apprehension. And howsoever the policie of times may hold it unfit to raise men humbled with adversities to titles of dearnesse, whether to shunne charge, or expresse pride, I rather know not, yet you I hope out of the honour of your nature, will vouchsafe your favours to a forward servant, so nearly tied to a dutifull devotion. In what ranke you please to place me, I will not change mine order. It shall be promotion to me that you account of me in any place, and all the commendations I seeke to my labors in this woorke, if you will be pleased to heare it at some times, and protect it at all times. Thus your ladyship having heard what I can say in this first leafe, you may (if it please you to vouchsafe acceptance) heare what I have song in the rest that follow. And so I rest: Yours humbly to be commaunded: MICHAELL CAVENDISH.

From Cavendish this 24 of Iuly.<sup>19</sup>

The rather curious reference to the “policie of times” in among the more usual praises and expressions of humble devotion is striking, yet no one so far has known quite what to do about it. Who are those “humbled with adversities”? It could certainly apply to Arbella, somewhat ironically, who was at this time restricted to Hardwick Hall (from the 1590s to 1603) and would have had many “idlest houres” in which to sing or play. The most likely reading, however, is that it is Michael himself, who did better after Elizabeth had died inasmuch as he seemed to lead a fairly content life without the need to make further music and therefore risk possibly aligning himself with Catholic heretics. And, of course, the “policie” of those times was not glorious and benevolent. The years 1585–1603, the so-called “second reign” of Elizabeth, have been called years of “ambition, apprehension, insecurity, authoritarianism, self-interest, discord, aggression, resentment, veniality, paranoia and claustrophobia,” culminating in the execution of Essex in 1601 and the queen’s own death in 1603.<sup>20</sup> During this extraordinary time, Michael Cavendish was represented both in a volume of madrigals supposedly as a paeon to Elizabeth (although, as we shall see, this is by no means straightforward) and in a volume dedicated to Arbella—a possible successor to Elizabeth. The question remains as to the extent to which Michael was sympathetic both to Catholicism and to Robert, Earl of Essex (1566–1601), the one-time favourite of Elizabeth, who was executed for treason in 1601 (many believing he was tolerant of Catholicism). Lillian Ruff and Arnold Wilson go as far as to say that the madrigal and lutenist composers were “*overwhelmingly* of Essex sympathies” (my italics).<sup>21</sup> The link between the Roman Catholic church,

<sup>19</sup> Fellowes, *Booke of Ayres and Madrigalles*, unpaginated introduction.

<sup>20</sup> John Guy, ed., *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7–8.

<sup>21</sup> Lillian Ruff and Arnold Wilson, “The Madrigal, the Lute Song and Elizabethan Politics,” *Past & Present* 44 (1969): 3–51 at 23.

music publishing, and music patronage is significant here, as David Price suggests, although a crude linking of composers with Catholicism is to be avoided:

[Yet] it does remain possible that many published composers were at some time involved in Roman Catholic activities, that this often drew them to the patronage of Roman Catholic families or their sympathisers, and that this connection influenced their choice of musical collaborator, of musical titles, even of musical text.<sup>22</sup>

Ruff and Wilson make the more specific contention that “the course taken by the Elizabethan madrigal displays ... a remarkable correlation” with “the meteoric rise and fall of the young earl of Essex.” Examining the registering of madrigal collections, they note:

Weelkes, Wilbye and other composers brought the madrigal to its acme in quality and quantity in 1598 when Essex was at the apex of his career. This is followed by the five years which saw his downfall and ruin, the aftermath, and the death of the Queen, paralleled by a deep trough in the publication of madrigals.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, Michael Cavendish’s collection of ayres and madrigals was published in 1598 and includes the *Oriana* refrain, which appears throughout the *Triumphs*. With its association with the competitor for the throne, Arbella, it was hardly likely to be met with delight by Elizabeth.

As for the parallel story of the lute song: no lute songs were published in 1599 when Essex’s collapse occurred, and there was a general clamping down on publication. In 1600 and 1601, the years of Essex’s house arrest and his death, 120 songs were published, including the best work of the best composers: John Dowland, Philip Rosseter, and Thomas Campion. Tellingly, however, there was nothing further from Cavendish. This might seem to suggest a worsening of Michael’s situation, but, as I have intimated, I think it more likely that during this time his life improved and he had no further desire to compose. Although his considerable talents as a composer were not to be utilized again, he may well have continued his lute playing in the service of the sons of James I. It may also have been the case that Michael had exhausted his interest in this bright-shining but brief compositional genre.

Some extravagant claims have been made for the sudden flowering and swift demise of the lute song. Its heyday between 1597 and 1623 (that is, between Dowland’s first and last collections) spans the final years of Elizabeth’s reign and almost all of James’s. The overarching emotion of the lute ayres is melancholy, but this cannot be fully accounted for by recourse to the conventions of courtly love. Daniel Fischlin suggests that the melancholy of the ayre suggests a *fin de siècle* of Elizabeth’s reign and the *weltanschauung* of James’s.<sup>24</sup> Certainly the final years of Elizabeth’s reign (as noted earlier)

<sup>22</sup> Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 155.

<sup>23</sup> Ruff and Wilson, “The Madrigal,” 4, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Fischlin, *In Small Proportions: A Poetics of the English Ayre, 1596–1622* (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 21.

were discordant—and this is where we find Cavendish's *14 Ayres* with its dedication to Arbella.

Ruff and Wilson suggest that madrigal verse of 1597 to 1599 would *probably* include some bearing an openly pro-Essex slant. This is more difficult to substantiate, as madrigal verse is notoriously bland; the better poetry tended to feature in the lute songs. Though expressing the conventions of courtly love in its intimacy, the lute song was able to make subtle connections between the private and the public. Cavendish's ayres contain words from Gaspar Gil Polo's *Diana Enamorada* (1564), translations of Petrarch sonnets (which are more conventional), and a verse from Fulke Greville's *Caelica*. Greville's poetry is rather sombre and Calvinist, though the poem in question ("Loue the delight of all well thinking minds") is little more than a conventional blazon. There is a nod to Dowland's "Flow My Tears" in Cavendish's most famous ayre, "Wandering in This Place":

O deus, deus, non est dolor, sicut dolor meus. ("O God, God—there is no sorrow like unto my sorrow.")

Following a quotation from Michael's lute song "Why Should I Muse?", Arbella's biographer, Sarah Gristwood, notes with reference to Arbella's plight that "even the songs were gloomy."<sup>25</sup> Part of this "gloom" can of course be accounted for by the conventions of courtly love, as the quoted verse shows:

Why should my muse thus restless in her woes  
Summon records of never dying fears?  
And still revive fresh springing in my thoughts,  
The true memorial of my sad despairs?

The words to the song as a whole are taken from a late fifteenth-century work at first wrongly attributed to Chaucer, "Lamentation of Mary Magdalen." The lamentation was a fairly common subject in religious poetry and art in general up until the high baroque period (ca. 1700), but its transposition into a lute song here is striking. In its original context the words are a mournful evocation of the period between the death of Jesus on the Cross and his being placed in his tomb, with the complex figure of the penitent Mary Magdalen in attendance. Given the largely secular nature of lute song lyrics, it is curious that such words are set here. In their new context the words look less like a religious elegy and more like a fairly conventional lover's lament, with the rhetorical questioning of the lover, the references to sadness and despair, and the oblique reference to death. But the interweaving of contexts produces a more startling reading. However, I think that the combination of this noted gloom and the dedication suggests an unhappy state for Michael Cavendish—as one might say for the country as a whole. We do not know how long he remained in Overhall or the surrounding area, for details of this kind are almost impossible to establish without some kind of public record. But it is plausible that the latter part of the sixteenth century was a dark time for Michael. Essentially a "country gentleman," he operates on the fringes of the Cavendish family and does not

<sup>25</sup> Gristwood, *Arbella*, 175.

regain a public face until after Elizabeth's death. His book of lute ayres and madrigals, with its dedication to Arbella Stuart, seemed similarly to lie dormant, in this case virtually unheard of until discovered in the twentieth century. And yet it was published only a year after Dowland's *First Book of Songs and Ayres* (1597), suggesting that Cavendish was at the forefront of lute-song writing in the late sixteenth century. It is curious that he should pass so quickly out of musical life.

## Michael Cavendish and Oriana

The other important volume where we find the music of Michael Cavendish is in Thomas Morley's collection *The Triumphes of Oriana*. Here is the dedication of *The Triumphes* (to Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham):

I Have aduentured to dedicate these few discordant tunes to be censured by the ingenious disposition of your Lordships Honorable rare perfection, perswading my selfe, that these labours, composed by me and others, (as in the survey hereof, your Lordship may well perceiue) may not by any meanes passe, without the malignitie of some malicious *Momus*, whose malice (being as toothsome as the *Adders* sting) couched in the progres of a wayfaying mans passage, might make him retire though almost at his iourneyes end.<sup>26</sup>

Ruff and Wilson note:

These words surely express the disappointment and weariness of a man who has accomplished a thankless task against obstacles and ill-will which have made him lose heart; and there is evidence that this was indeed so.<sup>27</sup>

Jeremy Smith argues convincingly that the allegorical identification of "Oriana" (who originated in the fourteenth-century romance *Amadis de Gualle*) with Queen Elizabeth is inappropriate, given the fictional character's marriage, fecundity, and impulsive nature.<sup>28</sup> Instead, he proposes that "Oriana" represents James VI's wife, Anna of Denmark (with "Amadis" as James himself). The later amendment of the dedication was doubtless due to the execution of Essex, which made it incumbent upon Morley and his collaborators to pay tribute to Elizabeth instead. But not all traces of the original intent were effaced. This may well have been the case, but it is not clear that this reflected a political statement in support of Essex on Morley's and his collaborators' part rather than a commercial response to the growing expectation of a Jamesian succession. Certainly, Morley seems eventually to have played safe, dedicating the volume to the Earl of Nottingham (1536–1624), who had been prominent both in the prosecution of Mary, Queen of Scots and as Essex's commander of the English forces against the Armada. It has been said that the reason was purely financial, but Smith has again shown that there is much more

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Morley, *Madrigales: The triumphes of Oriana, to 5. and 6. Voices* (London, 1601).

<sup>27</sup> Ruff and Wilson, "The Madrigal," 22.

<sup>28</sup> Jeremy Smith, "Music and Late Elizabethan Politics: The Identities of Oriana and Diana," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58 (2005): 507–58.

to the case than a simple matter of finance. The eventual printing was dated 1601: in fact, there were two printings so dated, with two sets of part-books set up in different type. There is no mention whatever of the queen, and the work was not registered with the Stationers' Company until October 15, 1603, seven months after the queen had died and seven years after Morley may be presumed to have launched the project. Moreover, evidence of the circulation of any copies before 1603 is found in only one case: this was recorded as having been purchased in 1601 for Sir William Cavendish of Hardwick Hall, the future 1st Earl of Devonshire. Each madrigal ends with the following phrase, which is from Michael's madrigal; thus his voice is obliquely heard throughout this important and paradoxical collection:

Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana:  
Long live fair Oriana

Thomas Elias, in the liner notes for the Hyperion recording of the *Triumphes*, says:

In search of the best music, Morley drew upon England's richest source of musicians, the organists and singing men of the chapels and cathedrals. Although many of the composers now seem obscure, in the 17th century the list of contributors to the *Triumphs* would have read like a list of the great and the good of *English church music*.<sup>29</sup>

(My emphasis.)

But the madrigal is a secular genre, and Morley's choice of composers has some startling omissions. Jeremy Smith rightly questions why, of all names, that of William Byrd was missing, whose spirit, more than anyone's, had set the whole thing in motion.<sup>30</sup> There were other notable court composers, such as Farnaby and Greaves, who were not represented. One madrigal, by Michael East, arrived so late that it was printed not in the body of each part-book but in the preliminary pages (which, peculiarly, were always printed last). Another madrigal by Bateson was not included in the set at all (and does not appear on the Hyperion recording), but it was printed in Bateson's own set of 1604 with the admission, "This song should have been printed in the set of Orianas." Of the composers represented in Morley's volume, Daniel Norcombe was lutenist to Christian IV of Denmark. Kirbye, Wilbye, and Edward Johnson were employed in private houses around East Anglia, part of the extensive network of musical households in which William Byrd also participated. But beyond that, it is hardly drawing on the great composers of the day.

Why was there such a scramble at the finish that East's madrigal was late and had to be squeezed in at the front without a number? Why were the great lutenists, Dowland, Campion, Daniel, Ferrabosco, Pilkington, and Rossetter, not represented when there were six names short of the desirable twenty-nine and when some who had been included were minor composers such as Lisley, Hunt, Marson, and Nicolson? Morley also

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Elias, CD liner notes to *The Triumphs of Oriana*, sung by the King's Singers (Hyperion Records, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Smith, "Music and Late Elizabethan Politics," 511.

included two by himself and two by Ellis Gibbons, suggestive of a “padding out” and perhaps the loss of named composers previously anticipated for inclusion. Finally, it is surely odd that the circulation of something that was expressly designed for the queen was subject to such mystery in 1601, when she was alive, and then publicly released in 1603 when she had been dead for seven months. All in all, it does not suggest the joyful tribute to an adored queen that had been the accepted description since John Hawkins first suggested it in 1776.<sup>31</sup>

The most well-known contributor to the *Triumphes* was undoubtedly John Wilbye. Famous as a leading madrigalist, he was a friend of the music printer Thomas East and lived for many years at Hengrave Hall (near Bury St. Edmunds; see Crosby Stevens’s chapter), a recusant household. This seeming innocent connection actually just shows us how intricate was the web of politics, music, and publishing in the late Elizabethan era. For two decades until 1596, music publishing was virtually a monopoly under the composer William Byrd. Byrd wrote music for Anglican congregations but became a Catholic in 1570, a somewhat perilous path to take under Elizabeth. Byrd had no interest in lute music, and when his monopoly ended and his licence transferred to Thomas East, there was a tremendous flowering of music publication—particularly of lute ayres but including madrigals and other secular works. Significant in this renaissance of publishing is Morley. He called William Byrd his “mentor” and was also a Roman Catholic, albeit one who ultimately recanted to avoid execution.

David Price suggests that Michael Cavendish was especially acquainted with Morley because of his purchase in December 1601 of *The Triumphes of Oriana*, which he claims, though printed that year, was not sold until after the queen’s death.<sup>32</sup> While it is true that Morley’s publication was not entered in the Stationers’ Register until October 15, 1603, it was listed with other items published up to six years earlier. It is certainly possible that their relationship predated the publication of the *Triumphes*.

On April 2, 1600 several English Catholic recusants were arrested for treason at the house of Thomas East, at whose press the *Triumphes* was printed. East, it will be remembered, was also the publisher of the volume of psalms to which Michael Cavendish contributed. East had produced secret editions of Byrd’s *Masses* and *Psalms, Sonets and Songs*, the content of which was broadly consonant with the pro-Essex party. It is clear that many musicians and composers were caught up in the net of political intrigue and plotting, and this would include Michael Cavendish by virtue of the timing and ambiguous context of his compositions. The political turmoil and disillusionment that followed the execution of Essex in 1601 is evident in the bitter dedication of Morley’s in the *Triumphes*. Morley resigned from the Chapel Royal in 1602 and died the same year. Smith states:

Morley himself might well have shared the political disillusionment, yet his ambition and his love of music would impel him to proceed with the publication in order that

<sup>31</sup> Cited in “‘The Triumphs of Oriana’: A Collection of Madrigals,” *Musical Times* 6 (January 1855): 258.

<sup>32</sup> Price, *Patrons and Musicians*, 116.

the labour of years should bear some fruit. The profoundly disturbed atmosphere that followed Essex's execution, with almost a reign of terror and intense antagonisms on all sides, would make 1601 a most unfortunate year for publication. But, after the accession of James, when he sought to utilize Essex's popularity by rehabilitating his supporters in 1603, more favourable conditions would have prevailed.<sup>33</sup>

And, of course, very little is really heard of Michael Cavendish after this until after Elizabeth's death, despite the continued interest in and patronage of lutenists such as Thomas Cutting (who had also been employed by Prince Henry in 1607) within the Cavendish family. Yet he wrote and published in the two short-lived but dominant musical forms of the time, which in turn were part of the extraordinary relationship that existed between music publication and political intrigue. When James I ascended the throne, Cavendish was evidently much more settled and content to see out his days as a gentleman in service. His few short years of composing coincided not only with the heyday of lute and madrigal compositions but also with the final "terror" years of Elizabeth's reign. Though undervalued at the present time, Michael Cavendish's music, in particular the lute ayres, remains an important contribution to this fascinating and volatile period of English history.

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33 Smith, "Music and Late Elizabethan Politics," 542.

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## Chapter 4

# THE CAVENDISH INVENTION OF BOLSOVER CASTLE

Crosby Stevens

IN MARK GIROUARD'S foundational study of the architectural work of Robert Smythson, the keep or Little Castle at Bolsover is bewitchingly described as "a dream-world ... an almost untouched expression in stone of the lost world of Elizabethan chivalry and romances." Yet Girouard finds the building difficult to fathom. "Bolsover is like nothing else in England."<sup>1</sup> He salutes the imaginations of Robert and John Smythson, father and son, and their talent for adapting a variety of sources, but he argues that this building's individuality springs largely from the characters of Sir Charles Cavendish, who commissioned the work in 1612, and his son William, 1st Duke of Newcastle, who completed it after his father's death in 1617.

Girouard observes that Charles's "castle mania" fitted with the bravery and martial pride of a man who had fought in the Dutch wars and who was exceptionally skilled in horsemanship and fencing.<sup>2</sup> However, he suggests that it may also have stemmed from a mixture of romanticism and snobbery, born of the union of new (Cavendish) money with ancient Northumberland lineage in the marriage of Charles to Katherine Ogle. He detects a change of direction, a more relaxed approach to the design, when William inherited his father's unfinished project. John Smythson was sent to London to study the new buildings associated with Inigo Jones, returning with examples that he only partly understood. However, for Girouard, William, "the sprawling Duke," may in truth have "preferred something a little more bizarre." In characterizing his architectural taste, Girouard observes that William "suffered from a certain flabbiness": a lack of drive or organizing capacity and an extravagant love of music and "soft pleasures."<sup>3</sup> He notes comments by contemporaries which reveal that these weaknesses underlay his failure as a Royalist commander and his compromised reputation at court. For Girouard, William's poetic and dramatic writings had no shape, and his scientific dabbings were superficial. He was perhaps a little absurd. Thus the castle appears among the witnesses for the prosecution not only in observations about the uneven reception of the continental Renaissance in Tudor and Jacobean Britain but also in Girouard's assessment of Charles and William Cavendish themselves. Architecture is enlisted to colour their biographies, and biography informs the interpretation of the architecture.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 209.

<sup>2</sup> Girouard, *Robert Smythson*, 232.

<sup>3</sup> Girouard, *Robert Smythson*, 247, 251.

Girouard's approach has proved influential. This chapter begins by examining the ways in which interpretations of Cavendish personalities and Cavendish architecture have remained central, and mutually dependent, even as discussions of the Welbeck branch of the family have broadened to encompass the iconography of the murals at Bolsover, the royal visits of 1633 and 1634, the literature associated with William, his broad cultural interests, and his politics. It then offers a new perspective on these discussions by taking a fresh look at the Little Castle and by examining the life of Charles, reviewing the context for commissioning the building work, and his experience and interests. Finally, recent research on the applied paintings challenges interpretations of William's reception of his father's initial design and sheds further light on his creative output.

While Girouard wrote little about the paintings that decorate the Little Castle, Timothy Mowl has focused on their erotic charge. Echoing Girouard, he presents continuity between the morals in the pictures and the morals of their consumer: the wall paintings in the closets give both "the artistic range and measure of the man." For him it is an "amazing revelation of the times" to realize that this Jacobean creation allowed William to feast his eyes on unclothed flesh in either room, for "Heaven is almost as naughty as Elysium."<sup>4</sup>

Timothy Raylor, too, finds that the decorative scheme at Bolsover expresses the character of William. Indeed, in his ground-breaking study of the applied paintings, he goes further by suggesting that the building should be read as "a witty apologia" for its second owner.<sup>5</sup> He describes the dynamic, theatrical character of the paintings and statues, and he indicates connections in the iconography to both the topos of the banquet of sense and Jonson's masque of 1618, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*. For him, the decoration juxtaposes Neoplatonism with Ovidianism and refers directly to William, who emerges as a complex, potentially contradictory figure. By this interpretation, the schemes portray William as a man of sanguine temperament, who can embrace sensuality because he is endowed with Herculean moral strength. The paintings reveal the central message: William's family and noble guests might come to Bolsover and legitimately partake of pleasure because they too have inherent virtue and self-knowledge.

In Lucy Worsley's biography of William, he is a man "perhaps more deeply addicted to pleasure than most." Worsley presents the visit to Bolsover by King Charles and Queen Henrietta Maria in 1634 as a high-risk strategy on William's part. They "will either be charmed ... or else ... slightly disgusted."<sup>6</sup> For her, the castle is a private retreat for illicit indulgence but also a shrine to William's lust. She proposes that William used the paintings as a window onto his character (lascivious but not depraved) in a daring campaign of self-promotion to a prudish Caroline court.

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy Mowl, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Style* (London: Phaidon, 1993), 123.

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Raylor, "'Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue': William Cavendish, Ben Jonson, and the Decorative Scheme of Bolsover Castle," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999): 402–39 at 402.

<sup>6</sup> Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a Seventeenth-Century Playboy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 106.

James Knowles's biographical essay on William also explores his ambivalent reputation. Knowles chooses, however, to foreground William's engagement with continental culture, his energy as a practitioner in a wide range of cultural activities, and his intellectual curiosity. He notes that William was a significant patron of the arts, although he argues that William's primary contribution was as a wealthy "*animateur*." His gift was to bring together exceptionally talented individuals (most famously hosting a dinner for Hobbes, Gassendi, and Descartes), allowing them to enjoy "sweet conversation."<sup>7</sup>

Knowles also makes a link between hospitality and politics. He observes that William was "a keen but critical monarchist" who sometimes rejected court culture and developed instead a distinctly northern style that "absorbed and remade the Caroline aesthetic." Again, Bolsover Castle is called to the stand.

[William] supported architecture that was Gothic, often with a distinctly Protestant cast (the Bolsover Little Castle is said to borrow from the style of Prince Henry who would, had he lived, have been the militantly Protestant Henry IX of England); he collected and patronised northern European artists; and he practised his local governance and hospitality in a manner closer to the chivalric figures of the English Middle Ages, or the great nobles of the Elizabethan era, rather than the regulated and limited aristocratic style preferred at the Caroline court.<sup>8</sup>

Here Knowles sees an association between William and Gothic architecture, although he does not suggest that William built in the Gothic style. He is a "supporter," it seems, because he did not erase his father's work and because he increased the resemblance of the west façade of the Little Castle to the set by Inigo Jones of Oberon's Palace for Jonson's *Oberon the Fairy Prince* of 1610, first noticed by Roy Strong.<sup>9</sup> By connecting William to his father's Gothic architecture, Knowles elides the two men. With William positioned as a nostalgic proponent of Elizabethan chivalry, Knowles can make a link to his artistic taste, implying that his patronage of northern European artists (Daniel Mytens, Anthony van Dyck, Hendrick van Steenwijck, Alexander Keirincx) reveals him to be out of step with an upcoming appreciation of Italian art.<sup>10</sup>

Knowles also makes a link to William's style of hospitality, for him characterized by extravagance, nostalgia, and a regional inflection. This is further explored in Knowles's analysis of Jonson's text for the site-specific masque performed at Welbeck Abbey in

<sup>7</sup> James Knowles, "From Gentleman to Prince: William Cavendish in Context," in *Royalist Refugees: William and Margaret Cavendish in the Rubens House 1648–1660*, ed. Ben Van Beneden and Nora De Poorter (Antwerp: Rubenshuis and Rubenianum, 2006), 13–20, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Knowles, "Gentleman to Prince," 18, 19.

<sup>9</sup> Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 96–97.

<sup>10</sup> This is in contrast with Karen Hearn, who states in her essay for the same collection that for portraiture William "appears to have employed the most fashionable and skilled painters available, when they were at the height of their vogue." Karen Hearn, "William Cavendish and the Fine Arts: Patronage before the Exile," in Van Beneden and De Poorter, ed., *Royalist Refugees*, 90–94, 94.

1633.<sup>11</sup> He observes that the hybrid buildings at Welbeck conveyed William's combination of localism and internationalism, his attraction to the figure of the Earl of Leicester (see Richard Wood's chapter), and the image he cultivated of himself as "critically distant from the court and its styles." Welbeck was an assemblage. It featured the vaulted remains of the medieval abbey, and the remodelling by Charles, with Robert and John Smythson, included a neo-chivalric porch. These were, however, set beside a canal and pavilions, also by Charles, with a series of ponds that were reminiscent of the Medici villa at Pratolino.<sup>12</sup>

Much has been invested, then, in a picture of Charles as a muscular, though cultured and romantic, proponent of Gothic-inspired architecture with a regional flavour. Likewise, much hinges on the depiction of the mature William as a man of contradictions—trying to square the commitment to traditional aristocratic honour, manliness, chivalry, and Elizabethan magnificence that he inherited from his father with a refined sensibility and a hopelessly louché temperament.<sup>13</sup> This root internal conflict has been found not only in the architecture William sponsored but also in writing by him (and associated with him) that references the masque at Kenilworth of 1575 and the Earl of Leicester, the topos of the banquet of sense, and the opposition in Neoplatonic philosophy between earthly and heavenly love. The literary locations for these William-associated themes include Ben Jonson's *The New Inn*, *The Magnetic Lady*, *The Tale of a Tub*, and *The Sad Shepherd*, in addition to the Welbeck and Bolsover masques. They also include several of William's own plays and fragments of plays (many of which borrow from Jonson: see the chapters by Matthew Steggle and Tom Rutter) and his poetry: *The Variety*, *A Debauched Gallant*, the Antwerp pastoral, and the poem beginning "I'll Muster Up my senses with delight," as well as *The Concealed Fancies* by Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley.<sup>14</sup> Scholars have connected specific dramatic characters with William and/or Charles: Lovel, Goodstock, Beaufort, Ironside, Compass, Robin Hood, Newman, Manly, and Monsieur Calsindow.<sup>15</sup> Dick and Tom in *A Debauched Gallant* are another

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**11** Ben Jonson, *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck*, ed. James Knowles, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6:661–80, 661–63.

**12** Lucy Worsley, "The Architectural Patronage of William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle, 1593–1676," 2 vols. (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sussex, 2001), 2:130, 137–38.

**13** Raylor, "Pleasure Reconciled," 410–11.

**14** For the banquet of sense in the Antwerp pastoral see James Knowles, "'We've Lost, Should We Lose Too Our Harmless Mirth?': Cavendish's Antwerp Entertainments," in Van Beneden and De Poorter, ed., *Royalist Refugees*, 70–77.

**15** Anne Barton, "Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline Nostalgia," *English Literary History* 48 (1981): 706–31; Jane Cavendish, *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, ed. Alexandra G. Bennett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 16–21; Alison Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 44–53; Lisa Hopkins, "Play Houses: Drama at Welbeck and Bolsover," *Early Theatre* 2 (1999): 25–44, 28; Lisa Hopkins and Barbara MacMahon, "'Come, what, a seige?': Metarepresentation in Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley's

variation.<sup>16</sup> Shadows of both father and son are detected behind the figures that are old-fashioned, principled, and valiant, although only William is the model for the contrasting good-timers and reprobates.

I would like to come at the connection between Cavendish buildings and Cavendish biography from the starting point of the function of the Little Castle in order to question the established view that it was an exercise in snobbish nostalgia and northern pride for Charles and a secluded nest of pleasure for William. It has generally been agreed that Bolsover was conceived in the tradition of Jacobean lodges, although, as we will see, this can be partly challenged. Colin Platt's survey of remodelled houses discusses Robert Smythson's Wootton Lodge of ca. 1610 and identifies "companion lodges" in "Walter Raleigh's Sherborne, Thomas Howard's Lulworth, Francis Bacon's Verulam, Thomas Tresham's Lyveden, Robert Cecil's Cranborne, and Charles Cavendish's Bolsover." According to Platt's account, the Little Castle was in line with the others: intended for both private contemplation and intimate, cultivated sociability. It was a retreat from the main household and centre of estate business, a "fully—even luxuriously—equipped" second home. It was an "expensive one-off toy," deliberately small and private, though fully formed, with little emphasis on public rooms.<sup>17</sup>

However, Paul Drury's conservation management plan for English Heritage shows that the Little Castle was never a complete house. His analysis of the phases of building underscores an attachment to Charles's main residence at Welbeck Abbey, seven miles to the east. Bolsover lacked a brewery, a laundry, and a wardrobe, and it had limited accommodation for servants, even as the Terrace Range and stable block expanded through the 1620s and 1630s.<sup>18</sup> Thus, while the castle was certainly residential, and its location in a small town was convenient for supplementary services, it was nonetheless dependent on communication with, and transport from, Welbeck Abbey. It was designed for semi-independent living, suitable for day trips and short stays.

Drury's analysis also leads us to challenge the view that Bolsover was built for privacy. Although the Little Castle had a complete range of kitchens from the outset,

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"The Concealed Fancies,'" *Early Modern Literary Studies* 16 (2013): online: <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/journal/index.php/emls/article/view/83/82>. Ben Jonson, *The Magnetic Lady*, ed. Helen Ostovich, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, 6:393–540, 406–10; Raylor, "Pleasure Reconciled," 433–36. David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 302; Nick Rowe, "'My Best Patron': William Cavendish and Jonson's Caroline Dramas," *The Seventeenth Century, Special Issue: The Cavendish Circle*, 9 (1994): 197–212 at 201–10; Ben Jonson, *The New Inn*, ed. Julie Sanders, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, 6:167–313, 170–74; Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish, *The Concealed Fancies: A Play by Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley*, ed. Nathan Comfort Starr, *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 46 (1931): 802–38 at 838.

**16** Lynn Hulse, ed., *Dramatic Works by William Cavendish* (Oxford: Malone Society, 1996), 92–131.

**17** Colin Platt, *The Great Rebuildings of Tudor and Stuart England* (London: University College London Press, 1994), 93–98.

**18** Paul Drury, "Bolsover Castle, Derbyshire: A Conservation Plan," 2 vols. (unpublished report, English Heritage, 2012), 1:42–84.

including specialist pastry ovens, this generous provision was increased when the Terrace Range was developed, with further areas for storing and preparing food and drink. David Durant argues that the accommodation and kitchens of the north block of the Terrace were probably begun by Charles, while for Drury it is more likely that they were begun soon after William took over the work.<sup>19</sup> Either way, from the early 1620s there was capacity to prepare elaborate dishes for large numbers of guests, and this was amplified as the Terrace Range grew through the 1630s. It seems that Bolsover was more flexible than a lodge, or perhaps it was a particular type of lodge. It was not only a retreat; it was also a banqueting house and, very soon, a venue for feasts.

This weighting towards hospitality makes sense of the essentially linear plan of the site. The approach to the castle through Bolsover town, then along the terrace, followed by the single prescribed route through the ground floor of the Little Castle to the presence chamber or Star Chamber on the first floor was ideal for performative entries and departures. It was also ideal for the choreographed movement associated with masquing and banquets.

No direct evidence has been discovered for Charles's intentions or the use of the castle by William in the early 1620s. However, we can piece together a context of consumption, conviviality, and festivity among their immediate family that corresponds with the architecture. This undermines the view that Charles's design was nostalgic and localist and that William changed direction in style and use. A study of social practice in the family can help us to reinterpret the architecture, and the architecture then sits differently beside the biographies.

Relatively few records survive relating to the personal life of Charles, but his elder brother William (created 1st Earl of Devonshire in 1618) left detailed financial accounts, beginning in 1597, that offer a glimpse of experiences that overlapped with those of Charles. Devonshire met with his brothers, sisters, and other family members, including Lady Arbella Stuart and relatives of his wife Elizabeth and her son Francis Wortley, both in the Midlands and in London.<sup>20</sup> It is clear that Cavendish siblings and cousins led an active social life within a group of local elite families, many of whom attended court and travelled regularly between London, the Midlands, and the north. There were multiple intersections between them in both geographic locations through friendship, land management, politics, and cultural interests.

Devonshire's expenses show that he spent several months a year in London, often making the journey multiple times, and he frequently took his wife and children with him. He kept sixteen liveried servants in the house he rented at Holborn from 1602. We can begin to see how many of the contacts, skills, and interests shared by the Cavendish family were developed. We find Devonshire, for example, travelling by water

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<sup>19</sup> David N. Durant, *The Smythson Circle: The Story of Six Great English Houses* (London: Owen, 2011), 178–79.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Riden, ed., *The Household Accounts of William Cavendish, Lord Cavendish of Hardwick, 1597–1607*, 3 vols. (Chesterfield: Derbyshire Record Society, 2016), 2:126, 161, 169, 199, 239; 3:115, 140, 269, and *passim*.

to the palatial Talbot house at Coldharbour and to Arundel House and Baynard's Castle, belonging to his stepnieces and their husbands the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke; stopping at Apethorpe Hall on his journey south from Derbyshire; giving a tip to "a woman that kept the Venetian Ambassador's house";<sup>21</sup> visiting the theatre at Blackfriars; spending four weeks in lodgings at Greenwich to attend court; paying £10 to his son for translating Castiglione into Latin and English;<sup>22</sup> spending 4d. on setting up the coach for his wife to dine with Sir Leonard Holliday—who was Lord Mayor and Master of the Merchant Taylors' Company, as well as a founding member of the East India Company—and buying books, lace, perfumes, swords, Venetian glass, paintings, viols in different sizes, cloth from the court supplier Sir Baptist Hicks, prints depicting the Labours of Hercules, and "the Order of My Lord Mayor's Pageant."<sup>23</sup>

The continuity between London and the country is striking. Devonshire took pains to live in the same style in both locations. There was a flow of luxury goods from London and an exchange of servants. We can trace expertise in interior decoration, food, and music within a mobile household. For example, James Painter was sent to London in 1600 and 1602, while his father John Ballehouse was still adding decorative schemes to Hardwick Hall and Owlcotes.<sup>24</sup> Two cooks and a baker were sent up from London to Derbyshire. A French lutenist named Lambert was dressed in Cavendish livery.<sup>25</sup> And in 1604 Baines the singing teacher travelled with the Cavendish children from Derbyshire to Holborn, where Devonshire bought dozens of English and Italian singing books.<sup>26</sup>

In the spring of 1605, Devonshire paid £60 to Sir Walter Cope to buy the "years" of the musician Nicholas Ham (presumably transferring his contracted service).<sup>27</sup> Ham was undoubtedly a catch. Cope was an experienced courtier and a client of Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury, and he had impressive theatrical connections. Only the year before, he had helped Cecil to entertain Queen Anne by liaising with Cuthbert Burbage to present a revived version of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* at Salisbury House.<sup>28</sup> He was also, like Devonshire, engaged in building, with an eye on court hospitality. Work on Cope Castle in Kensington was in full swing when he stayed at Hardwick in 1606.<sup>29</sup>

The Cavendish family was involved with entertaining and sociable performance at the highest level in London. Arbella and Gilbert's daughters, the Countesses of Arundel and Kent, danced in court masques. Devonshire regularly rewarded musicians, and in

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21 Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, Calendar of Devonshire Manuscripts, HM/29\*, April 1608, and HM/29, April 1608.

22 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:264, 316; 3:247, 250.

23 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:141, 150, 158, 165, 213, 334, 335; 3:317, 263, 402.

24 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:259, 345, 386.

25 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:199, 201.

26 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:194, 386, 390; 3:123–25.

27 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 3:207.

28 Edmund Kerchever Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), 4:139. Richard Dutton, *Shakespeare, Court Dramatist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 268–69.

29 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 3:359.

payments for the last four months of 1604, connected to his campaign for elevation to the peerage, he bought perfumes, spices, and the aphrodisiac eringo, as well as 31¼ lb. of Barbary sugar and ½ lb. of white sugar candy, probably all for banquets. In June 1605 he bought a colossal 57 lb. of Barbary sugar, 14lb. of Canary sugar, and 3lb. of sugar candy. In the same month, he paid £80 “To Mr Walter Wentworth by My Lord’s appointment, servant to Lady Bedford” and “To Mr Drayton at the same by my Lord 25s.” This may record the assistance of Lucy, Countess of Bedford and Michael Drayton in the celebrations for Devonshire’s elevation as Baron Cavendish of Hardwick. Two years later, a “confectioner’s bill for banqueting stuff” in London cost 42s. 9d.<sup>30</sup>

Devonshire also spent large sums on entertaining in Derbyshire, and practice there appears parallel to that in London. When, in 1604, he and his mother hosted the meeting of a law commission at Chatsworth, Freake the Footman was paid 6d. for “running when my master went with 3rd Earl of Cumberland,” probably marking a formal entry or departure.<sup>31</sup> Freake also ran for Devonshire in London, and he performed the same service for Arbella.<sup>32</sup> Cumberland was a Knight of the Garter (alongside Charles’s stepbrother Gilbert) and he was on the King’s Privy Council. He was Elizabeth’s second champion after the retirement of Sir Henry Lee of Ditchley. It would have been de rigueur to entertain him with ceremony and magnificence—James Painter was paid 12d. for gilding marchpanes, probably for an associated banquet.<sup>33</sup>

The Cavendish family may also have hosted masked entertainments in Derbyshire. In January 1598 Devonshire paid “for eight kid skins at 6d the skin to line masks for my mistress,” suggesting Anne, his first wife, organized a masque for the Christmas season. In 1601 Devonshire bought his 6-year-old daughter Frances a satin mask. He bought two more masks in 1603 and six in 1604. In September 1606, the same month that Cope stayed at Hardwick Hall, Devonshire paid for three silk and taffeta masks. A month later the Derbyshire accounts record that Mr. Piercy was paid £10 to teach dancing.<sup>34</sup>

The development of Bolsover as a venue for festivity can be seen in the context of this sociable and political activity. Both branches of the Cavendish family received royal and aristocratic guests, and it is likely that they were to some extent in competition. For example, Prince Charles visited both Welbeck Abbey and Hardwick Hall in August 1619. Although Devonshire successfully feted the prince with a banquet and a musical entertainment, the royal party would have been able to see his nephew’s fantasy castle across the valley at just the moment William was beginning his alterations there.<sup>35</sup> A novel and highly visible venue for hospitality suggested that William was advertising his abilities and ambitions as a host and might soon upstage his uncle. If we think that William hoped to impress the prince and his court in 1619 and entice them to return, then the addition

<sup>30</sup> Riden, *Household Accounts*, 3:173–75, 208–9, 403.

<sup>31</sup> Riden, *Household Accounts*, 3:155.

<sup>32</sup> Devonshire MSS, HM/29, January 1608.

<sup>33</sup> Riden, *Household Accounts*, 3:156, 290. London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS Talbot, fol. 38.

<sup>34</sup> Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:64, 339; 3:23, 148, 152, 360, 365.

<sup>35</sup> Mark Girouard, *Hardwick Hall* (London: National Trust, 1989, revised 2006), 64.

of the balcony on the west façade, increasing the resemblance to the set design of *Oberon's Palace* by Inigo Jones, noted above, appears astonishingly inspired. The design might have recalled William's attachment to Prince Henry while also trumpeting his loyalty to Prince Charles. William had taken part in the celebrations of 1610 to mark the investiture of Henry as Prince of Wales. He performed in *Barriers*, received the Order of the Bath, and supported Henry in the investiture ceremony. He had also, more recently, run at the ring in the celebrations for the investiture of Charles in 1616. A fantasy castle could have referenced both those moments of success at court and promised a continuation of the festivities that surrounded similar occasions.

In creating the new building, Charles and William refashioned a real royal castle, which had once belonged to King John, in a real country setting to construct a miniature palace that not only demonstrated their familiarity with royal spectacle and iconography but also positioned them as actors in that setting. They were quasi-royal hosts shadowing the king and the prince, who might take symbolic possession of the castle on a future visit. I will suggest in this chapter that the later decoration by William picked up on this essential metatheatrical conceit. Indeed, it went further and set up implied tableaux where the Cavendish family and their royal guests could find themselves caught up in a form of immersive and multisensory theatre, adding an extra dimension to hoped-for entertainments.

The architecture of the Little Castle in the first phase, designed by Charles with John Smythson, combined Gothic, Elizabethan, and Italianate styles in remarkably inventive ways. If we view the castle as an arena or a theatre, it can be understood as a building not just to live in or to look at but to think about and experience. The exterior resembled a Norman keep, and details such as arrow loops in the outer courtyard, twisting staircases, and an archaic version of the Talbot arms in the Star Chamber had Spenserian resonance. However, these contrasted with classical and modern elements: versions of Tuscan, Ionic, and Corinthian pillars, mullioned windows, and a balcony on the south façade, overlooking the garden—an early example of a pergola in Britain that echoed the latest Italianate innovations in London.<sup>36</sup> While borrowing classical and Italianate elements was not new (there were important examples at both Hardwick Hall and Owlcotes), here the contrast in styles was affective and intellectually challenging. Charles organized the interior to create a chronological, perhaps also moral and spiritual, ascent.<sup>37</sup> Gothic on the ground floor gave way to a largely contemporary first floor and more advanced Renaissance simplicity below a lantern at the top (Figure 4.1). The architecture was both a blend and a progression. It was in a sense Vitruvian, and it might express the reborn best of Roman and ancient British, the flowering of a new Golden Age—a theme that was familiar from Jacobean spectacle and poetry.

This view of the form of the castle and its intended use should give us pause. It points towards a revised picture of Charles's project and so of Charles himself. It seems he was planning, as he neared old age, to host entertainments in strikingly sophisticated,

<sup>36</sup> Drury, "Bolsover Castle," 1:51–52.

<sup>37</sup> Raylor, " 'Pleasure Reconciled,' " 418.

even courtly, surroundings. His ambition, his adoption of continental styles, his take on London fashion, and his commitment to the Smythsons raise a number of questions. It is worth examining Charles's life to uncover more of his particular social and cultural experience, his interests, and his reputation before focusing on the period of transition at Bolsover when he was succeeded by his son.

Charles lived in the shadow of national politics from birth, and his family life revolved around the dual enterprise of developing estates in the Midlands and advancement at court. He was 15 when his mother married George Talbot, 6th Earl of Shrewsbury, in 1568. Large sums were settled on him and his brother Devonshire, as Bess's younger sons, to be paid when they came of age, and Bess gave Charles parcels of property in Derbyshire at intervals over the next thirty years. He also acquired a patchwork of Talbot land, forest, and houses in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire.

Charles was sent to Eton and Cambridge, and he became closely attached to his stepbrother Gilbert. In 1582 Gilbert became heir to Shrewsbury's titles and estates, and Charles found himself the right-hand man to the future 7th Earl, attending court and travelling to numerous royal palaces and country houses.<sup>38</sup> When he stayed at Coldharbour in London in the autumn of 1604, Charles was paid for his diet as part of Gilbert's retinue.<sup>39</sup>

Charles and Gilbert shared an interest in Italian culture. In 1570, when they were still teenagers, they accompanied Charles's eldest brother Henry on an expedition to Europe. They visited Speyer, Milan, Pavia, and Genoa and continued east to Parma, Verona, Mantua, and Venice.<sup>40</sup> They spent several months in Padua and stayed in Italy more than a year.<sup>41</sup> Charles acquired excellent Italian. Thus the brothers had first-hand experience of mid-sixteenth-century French, German, and Italian culture at an impressionable age. Gilbert and Charles returned to Italy at least once more when, in 1574, they visited Rome.<sup>42</sup> Lynn Hulse has noted that Gilbert also fostered contacts with Italians in London. The Tuscan poet Antimo Galli, who served Lady Elizabeth Grey, may have served in his household, and Sir Horatio Pallavicino, an agent for the purchase of Italian artefacts (who also loaned £3,000 to Gilbert), stipulated in his will that his son should be educated in the household of his godfather, the 7th Earl of Shrewsbury.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Talbot MS 3203, fol. 378, Charles Cavendish to his mother from Oatlands, n.d. [1592].

<sup>39</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, Shrewsbury MS 702, fol. 47, Expenses of Thomas Coke for his journey to London, October 27–December 21, 1604.

<sup>40</sup> Jonathan Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors: English Students in Italy 1485–1603* (Cambridge: Clarke, 1998), 218.

<sup>41</sup> Shrewsbury MS 697, fol. 71, Edward Osborne to the Earl of Shrewsbury, November 1, 1571.

<sup>42</sup> Shrewsbury MS 709, fol. 9, Accounts for February 26, 1574.

<sup>43</sup> Lynn Hulse, "Apollo's Whirligig: William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle and His Music Collection," *The Seventeenth Century, Special Issue: The Cavendish Circle* 9 (1994): 213–46 at 216. Talbot MS 3199, fol. 659, William Hammond to the Earl of Shrewsbury, January 26, 1594.



Figure 4.1. The lantern space on the second floor of the Little Castle at Bolsover.  
© Historic England Archive.

Charles was knighted in 1582, and he married the heiress Margaret Kitson. Margaret's mother was the daughter of Sir Thomas Cornwallis of Brome in Suffolk, a high-ranking client of the 4th Duke of Norfolk, and the Kitsons were related to the Bacon and Drury families, with strong Catholic ties. According to Margaret's settlement, on the death of her father, Charles would acquire property in London and become master of Hengrave Hall in Suffolk. Hengrave was built by Margaret's paternal grandfather Sir Thomas Kitson, who made a fortune in trade with Antwerp. The mansion was sumptuously furnished and had a Dutch garden. When Queen Elizabeth stayed there during the progress of 1578, the Kitsons provided the court with a feast and a banquet, as well as an entertainment that featured fairies.<sup>44</sup> Charles's expectations changed, however, when Margaret died in childbirth in 1583 and he was forced to relinquish his claim to the Kitson estates. He appears nonetheless to have remained in contact with her family, despite the bereavement, particularly through a shared interest in music. John Wilbye the madrigalist, who came into the Kitsons' service, probably in the 1590s, dedicated his first book of madrigals (1598) to Charles, and Charles may have translated Nicholas Yonge's *Musica Transalpina* (1588), the first printed anthology of Italian madrigals in England, with a dedication to Gilbert.<sup>45</sup>

Charles had a longstanding interest in architecture. His connection to Robert Smythson came through both his mother and his stepfather Shrewsbury. Bess had allowed her master mason to be seconded to Wollaton, where her friend Sir Francis Willoughby had commissioned Smythson to begin building an ambitious mansion in about 1580. Charles may have discovered the publications of Hans Vredeman de Vries, Sebastiano Serlio, and Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (with plans of French châteaux) through the Wollaton project, although by this time he already had direct experience of continental styles.<sup>46</sup> In about 1584 Shrewsbury commissioned Smythson to expand the lodge at Worksop, and it is likely that Charles and Gilbert, who would inherit the vast new house, were consulted.

Charles may have brought ideas from East Anglia into the Smythson canon around this time. Girouard noticed an unusual corridor system at Smythson's Barlborough Hall (five miles west of Welbeck Abbey), dating from the mid-1580s, that appears to have been copied from Hengrave Hall, and a similar system of corridors was adopted in Smythson's plan for a house for Charles at Slingsby in the 1590s.<sup>47</sup> It is probable that when Charles married Katherine Ogle, ca. 1591, he took an interest in her ancestral homes too, although there is little to suggest that he copied particular features of the Ogle castles. Charles may already have been aware of these buildings: Katherine's sister

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<sup>44</sup> Zillah Dovey, *An Elizabethan Progress: The Queen's Journey into East Anglia, 1578* (Stroud: Sutton, 1996), 104–9.

<sup>45</sup> Hulse, "Apollo's Whirligig," 216–18.

<sup>46</sup> Anthony Wells-Cole, "Hardwick Hall: Sources and Iconography," in *Hardwick Hall: A Great Old Castle of Romance*, ed. David Adshead and David A. H. B. Taylor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 39–52.

<sup>47</sup> Girouard, *Robert Smythson*, 123, 178–79.

Jane married Gilbert's brother Edward (the future 8th Earl of Shrewsbury) in December 1583, and six weeks after their wedding Jane's father wrote to Shrewsbury asking that he send the lead promised for the building of his great chamber.<sup>48</sup>

In May 1607 Charles presented an architectural plan of his own devising to Gilbert and his wife Mary (Charles's sister), who were probably considering the redevelopment of Welbeck Abbey shortly before the property passed to Charles. Although there is no indication that this design was stylistically innovative, Charles was consulted around the same time by John Lumley, 1st Baron Lumley, Keeper of Nonsuch Palace, on a plan for an advanced Italianate building, possibly with Inigo Jones present as the architect.<sup>49</sup> Charles was at pains to show his familiarity with Italian buildings and their use, but he was nonetheless scornful of the proposals, arguing from practical experience of catering for an English aristocratic household in a cold climate.

[The central position of the Hall would] fill all the house with noyes and smell so many dores flankinge one another, wherby in winter it wilbe uninhabitable, the other place to eat in, which in Italian the [sic] call tenelli is fitt for an Italian gentleman that kepith un pair di servitori and not for an Eng[lish]: Erle ther diett beinge but salletts and frogges that yeald litle vapor, his kytchen is fitt for such a diet [...] all his chimneys shall smok being under the loover that lyghts his hall.<sup>50</sup>

Charles appears to have cultivated a connoisseurship that Lumley could admire. When Jonson stayed at Welbeck in the summer of 1618, he was shown Charles's library, "which beside the neatness and curiosity of the place, the books were many and of especial choice." Jonson was also taken to the Evidence Room to view an array of weapons. Most of these had been captured in 1599 when Sir John Stanhope and thirteen men ambushed Charles and three companions at Kirkby-in-Ashfield. Although two of the assailants were professional fencers, Charles had killed them both.<sup>51</sup> The conjunction of the library and the weapons in the account is telling. The fight was a badge of honour to be set alongside the record of Charles's learning and discernment: the architecture of the library (part of Charles's Gothic-inspired building work), his connoisseurship, his outstanding martial skills, and his bravery were connected parts of his reputation. Although Charles and Gilbert were frequently involved in litigation, sometimes spilling into violence, and they have often been presented as temperamentally quarrelsome, Jonson was to choose the theme of rational control and the

<sup>48</sup> Talbot MS 3198, fol. 237, Lord Ogle to the Earl of Shrewsbury from Bothal, February 7, 1584.

<sup>49</sup> Lumley and Gilbert Talbot were friends and land-owning neighbours. See Talbot MS 3200, fol. 224, Lumley at Tower Hill to Gilbert Talbot thanking him for the present of a red deer, 1594.

<sup>50</sup> Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury: preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire*, 19 (London, 1965), Salisbury MSS 19, 120–21az, cited in Girouard, *Robert Smythson*, 183–84.

<sup>51</sup> James Loxley, Anna Groundwater, and Julie Sanders, ed., *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland: An Annotated Edition of the "Foot Voyage"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 51–52.

measured use of violence when he praised both father and son in *Underwood* 59, "An Epigram: To William, Earl of Newcastle" of ca. 1629.<sup>52</sup> The compliment was repeated on the public stage when he referenced them in the portrayal of Lovel in *The New Inn* (4.4.36–220).<sup>53</sup>

Charles had distinguished, if brief, military experience to support this gentlemanly martial standing. In 1586 he served in the army of the Earl of Leicester, fighting at the Battle of Zutphen where Sir Philip Sidney was killed. A year later, in a letter from Theobalds, when he sent his mother news of the Dutch wars, he expressed fears for the safety of his "good friends" among the officers who remained, including Sir Roger Williams. It is striking that his comments about the army are inserted among passages giving an account of Arbella's reception at court; gossip about Leicester, Essex, and Raleigh; a description of the wondrous ceiling and artificial trees in the gallery that captivated Elizabeth; and the purchase of a piece of land in the Peak District, brokered by the Earl of Cumberland. Charles comes across above all as an accomplished courtier and an advocate for his family's interests: his informed stance on the war seems little more than a useful part of his portfolio as an aristocratic insider.<sup>54</sup>

Charles's military experience may have served primarily to fit him for ceremonial chivalry, and at least one high-profile opportunity came through his association with Gilbert, who, as a senior nobleman, assumed a prominent role in ritual at court. Charles participated in the extravagant embassy to France of 1596 when Gilbert presented Henry IV with the Order of the Garter. William Segar, who was Garter King of Arms and the author of a manual of honourable combat, was in the entourage, and the party was joined by the soldier Sir Henry Danvers, later Earl of Danby (whom Charles is likely to have known from Zutphen). Together they witnessed the celebrated entry of the French king into Rouen.<sup>55</sup> The Latin poem by John Westwood of 1634 may have imagined a comparable scene for Welbeck or Bolsover: their Gothic colouring was suitable for similarly flamboyant aristocratic and regal display.<sup>56</sup>

Gilbert was also present at the reception of Frederick, Count Palatine of the Rhine at Whitehall in October 1612 (two weeks before building at Bolsover began), and it is probable that Charles was informed about the preparations for the wedding of Princess

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**52** Roy Hattersley, *The Devonshires: The Story of a Family and a Nation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2013), 86–89.

**53** Ben Jonson, *The Underwood*, ed. Colin Burrow, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 7:71–295, 207–8.

**54** *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence c. 1550–1608*, Letter 209, [www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=209](http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=209).

**55** Margaret M. McGowan, "Henry IV as Architect and Restorer of the State: His Entry into Rouen, 16 October 1596," in *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe: The Iconography of Power*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Maria Ines Aliverti (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 53–75.

**56** Timothy Raylor and Jackson Bryce, "A Manuscript Poem on the Royal Progress of 1634: An Edition and Translation of John Westwood's 'Carmen Basileuporion,'" *The Seventeenth Century, Special Issue: The Cavendish Circle* 9 (1994): 173–95.

Elizabeth.<sup>57</sup> The extended celebrations included curiously mixed allusions to celestial fire, Virginian princes, knights of Mount Olympus, and St. George.<sup>58</sup> A year later (with Bolsover taking shape), William's kinsmen the Earls of Rutland and Pembroke performed in the *Challenge at Tilt* for the lavish wedding of the Earl and Countess of Somerset. His future wife, Elizabeth Bassett, married the bride's brother Henry Howard at about the same time, and Henry, too, was among the tilters.<sup>59</sup>

Viewed this way, the medieval style which Charles favoured for his houses appears in step with a familial and national culture of magnificence inflected with chivalry that was centred at court and that was still vibrant and evolving at the time of Charles's death in 1617. The move to blend medievalism with Italianate classicism at Bolsover appears informed, adroit, and aspirational rather than nostalgic and northern. How, then, should we view the changes made by William?

The cycle of paintings that William added to the Little Castle ca. 1621 was a coherent program across seven rooms. Several key features in the iconography harmonize with Charles's architecture and suggest a fundamental continuity in the concept and use of the building. I have offered a more detailed account of the pictures elsewhere, but here I wish to argue that William, like his father, intended Bolsover for festive entertainment as well as for more private sociability, and he embraced the notion of the castle as a broadly theatrical space for shared performances in receptions, feasting, banqueting, and masques.<sup>60</sup>

The first painting that visitors still encounter on entering is of an empty platform flanked by classical pillars, with a tempietto in the distance (Figure 4.2). The picture is a continuation of the narrowing ascent from the Doe Lea Valley into the castle. The viewer is invited to imagine entering the picture space and so the metaphysical world of the heavens. The scene might even depict a stage, lit for a performance.

The other paintings in the room show three of the four temperaments or humours. Raylor has shown how William and his wife could have stood in for the missing image of sanguinity—a witty welcome to pleasure-seeking guests.<sup>61</sup> There are clues in the other paintings to Cavendish identities, and in deciphering the puzzles, the viewer discovers that these pictures, too, play with the conceit that the hosts move in and out of the picture space. The game depends on a knowledge of masquing culture and London theatre,

<sup>57</sup> John Nichols, *The Progresses, Pageants, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, 4 vols. (London, 1838), 2:464.

<sup>58</sup> Graham Parry, "The Wedding of Princess Elizabeth," in *The Golden Age Restor'd: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603–42* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), 95–107.

<sup>59</sup> Nichols, *Progresses*, 2:609, 714–15, 729.

<sup>60</sup> Crosby Stevens, "'Oh, to Make Boards Speak! There Is a Task': Understanding the Iconography of the Applied Paintings at Bolsover Castle," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 19 (2017), <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/journal/index.php/emls/article/view/339>. For Google Street View, see Crosby Stevens, "The Little Castle: Introducing the Little Castle at Bolsover" (Google Arts and Culture, 2017), <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/vgKy7cIY172WlQ>.

<sup>61</sup> Raylor, "Pleasure Reconciled," 405–10.



Figure 4.2. A tempietto in the Anteroom of the Little Castle at Bolsover. Oil on plaster.  
Lunette 157.5 × 305 cm. English Heritage Trust / Kevin Moran.

friendship with the hosts, and familiarity with the source prints by Martin de Vos. The contrived compositions are cryptic but also flattering, amusing, and multisensory: calculated to engage William's cultivated circle, his "fresh golden guests, guests o' the game" (Jonson, *The New Inn*, 1.5.2). They have a mildly bawdy tone, which corresponds with the boisterous private show commissioned from Jonson in 1620, around the same time the pictures were commissioned, for a Cavendish christening at Blackfriars. This was evidently considered suitable for Prince Charles and the Earl (later Duke) of Buckingham, who were among the invited company and who are referenced in the text.<sup>62</sup>

The decoration in the following rooms develops the themes of love and transformation, and Raylor has noted allusions to the story of Hercules and the topos of the banquet of sense. Figures in the paintings appear to reference members of the family, and it is possible they include real as well as allegorical portraits—an area that deserves further research. The conceit of the temple painting is sustained. The Cavendishes and their guests are situated in Derbyshire in present time, but they can shape-shift and move into the various locations and periods imagined by the artist: the Banqueting House at

<sup>62</sup> Ben Jonson, *A Cavendish Christening Entertainment*, ed. James Knowles, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 5:401–15.

Whitehall, the seaside, the forest, a church, the Augean stables, medieval Britain, the biblical world, Mount Olympus, heaven, or fairyland.

There are several other locations in the building where living people can again complete the iconography. Raylor points to the window space in the Marble Closet, where William and Elizabeth (perhaps alternatively King Charles and Queen Henrietta Maria) might represent the allied virtues of peace and concord, missing from the series of prints by Hendrik Goltzius.<sup>63</sup> I suggest there is another, similar, location in the Heaven Closet where a figure standing by the window appears to receive a garland of red and white roses from an angel descending from the ceiling, and this implied tableau reveals more about the meaning and purpose of the iconography (Figure 4.3). If William stood by the window, backlit, it would seem that the garland hovered over him while Christ looked on. If the pose of Jesus was associated with depictions of the Day of Judgement, for example, in celebrated paintings by Rubens and Michelangelo, then Christ would be inviting William to rise up into heaven. The real and painted characters would be enacting an animated, multisensory Apotheosis, referencing a Neoplatonic circle of love.

In Jonson's entertainment of 1634, Eros appeared, as if from the clouds, wearing a garland of red and white roses.<sup>64</sup> If the character was derived from the paintings, as has often been argued, then the scene was not a presentation of William's deplorable personality, it was part of the architectural and artistic invention of the building: characters were conjured up from the painted world of the Vitruvian building to greet the royal guests in a celebration of love. Delightfully, the angel in the Heaven Closet had magically continued his descent from the painted ceiling and entered the mortal sphere. He was translated into Eros, who was depicted in the Elysium Closet, and he might represent William as both heavenly and erotic, Christian and classical, love. It was "Love's Welcome at Bolsover," the title of the piece in the 1640–1641 Folio of Jonson's works.

Classical gods and goddesses are painted on the cornices of the Elysium Closet, positioned below further versions of themselves on the ceiling above. Linked figures, including dual Venuses, allude to the opposition between earthly and heavenly love and their reconciliation through the production of children (Figure 4.4). Some of the images are sexually explicit, unlike those in the Heaven Closet, but I suggest that they would not have appeared degenerate to William's coterie, nor in opposition to Christian heaven, as Mowl, Raylor, and Worsley have argued. The paintings were the visual equivalent of an epithalamion, ending in the bedchamber suite, and they were intended to be both encouraging and teasing. The partial nudity of characters who are allegorical representations of the Cavendish family resonate with portraits by Anthony van Dyke from the early 1620s, while, at the same time, the scheme appears on the cutting edge of a fashion for the

<sup>63</sup> Raylor, "Pleasure Reconciled," 421–22.

<sup>64</sup> For a discussion of the scene, see James Fitzmaurice, "William Cavendish and Two Entertainments by Ben Jonson," *The Ben Jonson Journal* 5 (1998): 63–80 at 73–74.



Figure 4.3. Christ with joyful and sorrowing angels in the Heaven Closet of the Little Castle at Bolsover. Oil on plaster. Ceiling 370 × 300 cm. English Heritage Trust / Kevin Moran.



Figure 4.4. The theme of love in the Elysium Closet of the Little Castle at Bolsover.  
Oil on plaster. Cornice 105 × 370 cm. English Heritage Trust / Kevin Moran.

irreverent use of stories from Ovid.<sup>65</sup> As in the Heaven Closet, the scheme is flattering, pleasantly shocking, and amusing, and there is a parallel Neoplatonic ascent.

The identity of the lead artist is unknown, but the invention may owe a debt to Jonson, who was brought to the castle by William when he visited Welbeck in the summer of 1618. There are correspondences between the portrait of Jonson by Abraham van Blyenberch of 1617 and three figures in the decoration: Aaron, Democritus, and Heraclitus, which call for attention (Figure 4.5).<sup>66</sup> It is possible that the commission to write the Bolsover entertainment in 1634 and the decision to make the game of the paintings its central conceit reflect a close and ongoing connection between the poet and the building. It seems probable that the 1634 entertainment was one in a series of dramatic pieces, beginning with *The New Inn*, that picked up on the idea that versions of the characters in the Bolsover decoration, representing the Cavendishes, could appear in shows.

<sup>65</sup> Susan J. Barnes, Nora De Poorter, Oliver Millar, and Horst Vey, ed., *Van Dyck: A Complete Catalogue of the Paintings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 135, 137; Oliver J. Noble Wood, "Mythological Burlesques: Pimps, Prostitutes, and Pacientes," in *A Tale Blazed Through Heaven: Imitation and Invention in the Golden Age of Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 126–60.

<sup>66</sup> Karen Hearn, "Images of Ben Jonson," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, [http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/essays/jonsons\\_images\\_essay/1/](http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/essays/jonsons_images_essay/1/).



Figure 4.5. Aaron in the Star Chamber of the Little Castle at Bolsover. Oil on panel.  
200 × 45.5 cm. © Historic England Archive.

If we place the various Cavendish-associated texts in the context of the castle and its decoration, we can discover new readings. The references to Neoplatonism and earthly and heavenly love, to manly virtue and debauchery, and to hospitality, mimicking Kenilworth, may no longer expose two sides of a conflicted character or devotion to an outmoded Elizabethan style. Instead they may ring the changes on an iconography that complimented William and his family, expressed their dynastic and court ambitions, and set up an accumulating tangle of metatheatrical in-jokes.

With a revised view of the early design of Bolsover as a venue for entertainments and a focus on the particular mix of Gothic and Italianate elements, we can point to Charles's familiarity with London and the royal court and his sophistication as an architect. Likewise, through a study of William's alterations to the building and the associated decoration, we can modify the view that he was sexually depraved while underscoring his importance as a patron and *animateur*. The mutual dependence of architecture and biography is supported, but dramatic literature inspired by the paintings emerges as a missing link in the interpretation. By studying the four areas together (the buildings, the biographies, the literature, and the art) we can open up fruitful avenues of enquiry into the Cavendish texts, the building as a performance space, the authorship of the murals, and Jonson's engagement with the iconography.

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## Chapter 5

# WILLIAM CAVENDISH: AMATEUR PROFESSIONAL PLAYWRIGHT

Matthew Steggle

AS IS THE case with many other members of the Cavendish clan, the cultural output associated with William Cavendish is astonishing both in its quantity and its variety. This chapter focuses on just one subset of those cultural outputs: dramatic writing, a field in which Cavendish participated both as patron and as author. Cavendish is perhaps best known as a patron of Restoration commercial drama, and secondarily for the family drama associated with his circle, performed outside London, generally by amateurs, and with the involvement of family members, including Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley. And yet before the Civil War, Cavendish had already built for himself an extraordinary position within English commercial drama. During the period up to 1642, he acted as patron, one way or another, to almost all the leading Caroline professional playwrights, as well as himself being involved in the writing of at least three comedies, two of which clearly achieved a measure of commercial success.<sup>1</sup> This chapter asks: what was Cavendish attempting to do in this continuing early engagement with professional drama? And how did it connect with his wider political and cultural aspirations?

Discussion of Cavendish's early plays has always had to engage with author-centred problems to do with their collaborative or collective authorship and the extent to which they are imitative, or indeed derivative, of previous drama.<sup>2</sup> However, these problems can partially be sidestepped by adopting a perspective centred more upon the audience. This chapter considers Cavendish's amateur imitation of professional drama within the

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<sup>1</sup> A recent wide-ranging survey of Cavendish says little about his drama: See Peter Edwards and Elspeth Graham, ed. *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity in Seventeenth-Century England: William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Newcastle, and his Political, Social, and Cultural Connections* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); for overviews of the drama of Cavendish and his circle, see Timothy Raylor, ed., *The Seventeenth Century, Special Issue: The Cavendish Circle* 9 (1994); Irene Burgess, "Recent Studies in Margaret Cavendish, William Cavendish, Elizabeth Cavendish, and Jane Cavendish-Cheyne," *English Literary Renaissance* 32 (2002): 452–73. Contextualizations of Cavendish's work within Caroline drama include Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis 1632–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 197 and Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642–1660* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1995), 316–20.

<sup>2</sup> On the problems of imitation and collective authorship, respectively, see James Fitzmaurice, "William Cavendish and Two Entertainments by Ben Jonson," *Ben Jonson Journal* 5 (1998): 63–80; Timothy Raylor, "Newcastle's Ghosts: Robert Payne, Ben Jonson, and the 'Cavendish Circle,'" in Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth, ed., *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England* (Columbia: Missouri University Press, 2000), 92–114.

frame of audience expectations and argues that if one were able to take a snapshot of the state of English theatre before it was devastated by the closure of 1642, Cavendish would appear as a patron/playwright likely to be pivotal in the future of the commercial stage.

The picture of that stage as a whole has changed significantly over the last forty years. No longer regarded as a decadent, politically escapist institution, gifted with foreknowledge of the impending Civil War, Caroline drama is now seen as a highly political and potentially oppositional form, not just during the Personal Rule (when, as Martin Butler argues, it constituted almost the only public forum for discussion of political matters) but during all of Charles's reign. One older piece of terminology that recent criticism has continued to find useful is the distinction between "professional playwrights"—authors who made a living out of the stage, a group whose most prominent Caroline members are Jonson, Massinger, Ford, Shirley, and Brome—and amateur courtier dramatists, such as Suckling or Carlell, who were not dependent upon theatre for their income. This financial distinction maps reasonably well, although not perfectly, onto a set of characteristic attitudes. Courtier dramatists tend to make use of elaborate costumes and scenery and to be relatively dismissive of audience reaction: professional dramatists tend to insist on the audience's right to be entertained and to present a cynical view of courtly institutions in general. Considered within this terminology, it will be argued, Cavendish is an interesting figure: an amateur dramatist looking to adopt the attitudes, reference points, and generic markers of a professional playwright.<sup>3</sup>

To establish this argument, it is necessary first to consider the extent of Cavendish's patronage and to list those Caroline dramatists to whom he is known to have had patronage links. These include four of the five major "professional playwrights" of the Caroline era. The first and most famous of these is Ben Jonson, whose close association with the Cavendish family had begun before 1619, when he wrote an elegy on Charles Cavendish. Jonson's *Christening Entertainment*, written between 1618 and 1625 for one of the Cavendish families, may well also mark his association with William Cavendish. Jonson addressed Cavendish in two poems, *Underwoods* 53 and 59, on horsemanship and fencing respectively. In the 1630s Cavendish was, in the words of Anne Barton, Jonson's "last patron, and his most loyal," commissioning two masques from Jonson to be performed at the Cavendish family houses in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire: *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck* (1633) and *Love's Welcome at Bolsover* (1634). Jonson's *The Sad Shepherd*, an unfinished pastoral about Nottinghamshire's local hero Robin Hood, has been convincingly identified as another Cavendish-inflected text. For his part, Cavendish continued to celebrate Jonson in allusions, imitations, and even in an elegy on his death in 1637, whose complicated textual genesis has been discussed by Timothy Raylor.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*; Ira Clark, *Professional Playwrights: Massinger, Ford, Shirley, and Brome* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1992); Julie Sanders, *Caroline Drama: The Plays of Massinger, Ford, Shirley and Brome* (London: Northcote House, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Anne Barton, "Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline Nostalgia," *English Literary History* 48 (1981): 706–31 at 706; see also Nick Rowe, "'My Best Patron': William Cavendish

James Shirley was another to benefit from Cavendish's patronage. In 1635 Shirley dedicated to him the publication of his tragedy *The Traytor*. In the later 1630s he appears to have collaborated with Cavendish in the preparation both of *The Country Captain* and *The Variety*, since a song from *The Country Captain*, "Come let us cast the dice," was printed as Shirley's in Shirley's *Poems* (1646), while the licensing record of *The Variety* (discussed in this chapter) names Shirley in connection with that play. During the Civil War, indeed, Shirley was employed by Cavendish, as Sandra Burner records.<sup>5</sup> A third playwright whose connection with Cavendish is well attested is Jonson's protégé and former manservant Richard Brome. Brome dedicated the 1640 publication of his place-realism comedy *The Sparagus Garden* to Cavendish, stating that he was emboldened to do so by "Your favourable *Construction* of my poore *Labours*." Brome also wrote commendatory verses on Cavendish's *The Variety*, performed in 1641, "[Cavendish] having commanded [Brome] to give him my true opinion of it." And a third suggestive document in this respect is Nottingham University Library: Pw. V. 167, a manuscript copy of Richard Brome's verse satire *Upon Aglaura in Folio*, a lampoon on the 1638 courtier drama of Cavendish's political colleague and rival Sir John Suckling. While the collection in which it survives incorporates manuscripts from multiple sources, so the provenance of individual items cannot be established with certainty, this clearly seventeenth-century manuscript may well be from William Cavendish's own library. It is a particularly interesting text to find there in that it mocks Suckling's *Aglaura* both for the lavish costumes used in its performance and for the equally lavish printing of the text, at odds with its success on the stage: "She that in *Persian* habits, made great brags, / Degenerates in this excesse of rags." Brome's insistence that audience reception, not elaborate production, is the true measure of dramatic merit is a classic statement of the professional dramatist's credo and, as will be seen, is close to the attitude to drama expressed in Cavendish's own plays.<sup>6</sup>

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and Jonson's Caroline Drama," *The Seventeenth Century, Special Issue: The Cavendish Circle* 9 (1994): 197–212; W. David Kay, *Ben Jonson: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 180–81; Julie Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Theatrical Republics* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 186; Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. 407–10; and the articles cited earlier in this chapter.

<sup>5</sup> Sandra A. Burner, *James Shirley: A Study of Literary Coteries and Patronage in Seventeenth Century England* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988); William Cavendish, *The Country Captain*, ed. Anthony Jonson (Oxford: Malone Society, 1999); Lynn Hulse, "Apollo's Whirligig: William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle and His Music Collection," *The Seventeenth Century, Special Issue: The Cavendish Circle* 9 (1994): 213–46; Julia Wood, "William Lawes' Music for Plays," in *William Lawes (1602–45): Essays on his Life, Times, and Work*, ed., Andrew Ashbee (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 11–67.

<sup>6</sup> Nottingham University Library: Pw. V. 167; for study of the poem's manuscript history, see Joshua McEvilla, "William Cavendish's copy of Richard Brome's 'Upon AGLAURA printed in Folio,'" *Ben Jonson Journal* 22 (2015): 142–55; Sir John Suckling, *The Works of Sir John Suckling: The Non-dramatic Works*, ed. Thomas Clayton (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 201–2, lines 33–34; Richard Brome, *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brome*, ed. John Pearson (1873; New York: AMS, 1966), 3.111,

In addition to these extensive connections with Jonson, Brome, and Shirley, Cavendish also had a patronage connection with John Ford. The extent and nature of the link is not clear, but it is demonstrated by the fact that Ford dedicated the 1634 printing of *Perkin Warbeck* to Cavendish. Lisa Hopkins has argued that, given Ford's patronage links to allies of Newcastle, including Arundel and Pembroke, the connection may well have been "fairly close."<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Cavendish had some sort of patronage connection with Robert Davenport, a fringe member of the literary circle associated with Brome, Thomas Nabbes, and Robert Chamberlain. In the 1620s and 1630s, Davenport wrote at least three extant plays and nine lost plays. While little is known about Davenport's career, his connection with Cavendish at some point between 1629 and 1643 is evidenced through what is now Nottingham University Library: Pw. V. 16, a presentation manuscript of verse.<sup>8</sup>

Thus Cavendish enjoyed links in the 1630s and 1640s with at least five obviously professional dramatists. In addition, there is evidence to link Cavendish to two other pre-Civil War playwrights. William Sampson was a playwright and poet who celebrated several north Midlands patrons in his eulogistic verse, including the Stanhope and Hastings families: William Cavendish was both one of the dedicatees of his 1636 collection of poetry *Virtus post Funera Vivit* and the recipient of one of its eulogies. Evidence that the connection was long-lasting is to be found in a much later Sampson manuscript, *Love's Metamorphosis*, a poem dedicated to Margaret Cavendish. But Sampson was also a dramatist who wrote for the London stage, whose works include two extant plays and at least one lost one. The Oxford-educated clergyman Jasper Mayne knew Cavendish in the 1630s and was later employed by him as a personal chaplain, but he also wrote two plays that were performed at the Blackfriars, *The Amorous War* and the city comedy *The City Match*.<sup>9</sup> This list does not, of course, include the Restoration dramatists such as Settle, Flecknoe, Shadwell, and Dryden whom Cavendish patronized and with some of whom he collaborated; nor, indeed, does it include William Davenant, active in professional theatre both before and after the Civil War and a close friend of Cavendish.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, in Jonson, Brome, Shirley, and Ford it already contains a figure widely recognized as the country's leading professional dramatist in his day, together with three out of the

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2 [A4r]. Brome's plays are cited throughout from this edition. See also Matthew Steggle, *Richard Brome: Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

7 Lisa Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 25–26.

8 G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1941–68), 3:226–38; N. W. Bawcutt, *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels 1623–73* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 204, recovers the title of a ninth lost play; poems from Pw. V. 16 are transcribed in G. Thorn-Drury, *A Little Ark Containing Sundry Pieces of Seventeenth-Century Verse* (London: Dobell, 1921), 9–15.

9 Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 4:843–50; 5:1042–47; Rowe, "My Best Patron," 198; David Kathman, "Sampson, William (b. 1599/1600, d. in or after 1655)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

10 See Lynn Hulse, "Matthew Locke: Three Newly Discovered Songs for the Restoration Stage," *Music and Letters* 75 (1994): 200–13.

four authors whom Ira Clark groups together as the leading “professional playwrights” of the Personal Rule. Cavendish was not merely an exceptionally active and wide-ranging literary patron: he elected particularly to patronize writers who can be categorized, in the terminology of G. E. Bentley, as “attached professional” dramatists involved with the London stage.<sup>11</sup>

The second claim that requires to be substantiated is that Cavendish himself was known as a successful writer on the pre-1642 stage, and to this end it will be useful to review what survives of his pre-1642 dramatic writing. Before moving on to complete plays, one could start with Cavendish’s own collection of dramatic fragments, some of which (numbers 1–11 in Lynn Hulse’s collection) predate his flight into exile in July 1644 and some of which date from the 1630s. These fragments, dialogues, prologues, and songs are clearly from a variety of contexts, including household performances.<sup>12</sup> In Cavendish’s collection of these fragments one sees ingredients which could be stirred together into another “variety” of the sort exhibited in Cavendish’s completed pre-Civil War plays.

There are at least three such plays, all comedies. The earliest is *Wit’s Triumvirate, or the Philosopher*, which survives in a manuscript dated 1635 and which was first identified as Cavendish’s work in 1993. This very long play is a loosely connected series of dialogues within a plot clearly derived from Jonson’s *The Alchemist*, spiced with quotations from Shakespearean plays including *1 Henry IV*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. The prologues to the play, addressed to a public theatre audience and to the king and queen, suggest that performance of it was at least expected, but there are no records to confirm its production either on the public stage or at court.<sup>13</sup> Cavendish’s next known play is *The Country Captain*, a comedy revolving around the visit of a group of London-dwellers to Sir Richard Huntlove’s house in the country. The play contains a reference to the “late expedition” and the “leaguer at Barwick,” which must postdate the signing of the treaty on June 18, 1639. On the other hand, the play was certainly in the Blackfriars repertory by August 7, 1641, when it was listed among those plays over which the Blackfriars company asserted their ownership. It can therefore be dated to within those limits.<sup>14</sup> As for its contemporary impact, there are two facts indicating that it was, indeed, a stageworthy and successful play: the King’s Men thought it worthwhile

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11 G. E. Bentley, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare’s Time, 1590–1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

12 Lynn Hulse, “Introduction,” in William Cavendish, *Dramatic Works by William Cavendish*, ed. Lynn Hulse (Oxford: Malone Society, 1996).

13 See Cathryn A. Nelson, ed., *A Critical Edition of Wit’s Triumvirate, or the Philosopher*, 2 vols. (Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1975); the attribution is made by Hilton Kelliher, “Donne, Jonson, Richard Andrews and the Newcastle Manuscript,” *English Manuscript Studies* 4 (1993): 134–73; in addition, it has been speculated that he was part-author of the anonymous Caroline comedy *Lady Alimony*: John Freehafer, “Perspective Scenery and the Caroline Playhouses,” *Theater Notebook* 27 (1973): 98–113.

14 Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 3:150; Cavendish, *The Country Captain*. Johnson, “Introduction,” xx–xxii argues, convincingly, that the play can probably be dated to early summer

to assert their rights over it in 1641, and it was revived successfully at the Restoration, with performances recorded in 1661, 1667, 1668, and ca.1680.<sup>15</sup>

For *The Variety*, a city comedy revolving around a marriage-plot, firm evidence of its date has emerged. A rediscovered record derived from the office-book of Henry Herbert reads: "Variety Com: with several reformatations made by Shirley 1641. My Lo<sup>d</sup> Newcastle, as is said hath some hand in it. 1641 allowed upon review without exception." On the one hand, this helps with the dating question, since it indicates that the play was first produced in 1641, and in the process it makes doubly significant the fact that it is not listed in the Blackfriars repertory of August 7, 1641. *The Variety*'s first production seems to have taken place, then, in the second half of 1641. On the other hand, it provides interesting evidence of collaborative authorship, with Shirley clearly entrusted with almost all of the business of arranging the performance. Shirley's late "reformatations" seem unrecoverable: it is unclear whether they were improvements to the dramaturgy or removal of potentially offensive material, although the fact that Herbert took an interest in them might suggest the latter. *The Variety*, too, clearly had some contemporary impact, since it formed the basis for a Civil War era droll, *The Humours of M. Galliard*, based on Cavendish's French dancing master of the same name. This in turn was sufficiently successful for the illustrator of *The Wits*, a Restoration collection of drolls, to depict Galliard among the comic "star turns" in the engraving that formed the title page to the collection. *The Variety* itself was also, probably, revived at the Restoration, further evidence that it was a commercially viable comedy.<sup>16</sup>

An obvious problem here relates to the question of authorship, since Cavendish in general made extensive use of literary collaboration, particularly in processes of redrafting and revision of his poems. Similarly, with his plays, there is evidence of collaboration and rewriting. For instance, *Sir Martin Mar-all* (perf. 1667) was written in collaboration with Dryden, who later claimed the play as his own, and another of Cavendish's post-Restoration plays, *The Triumphant Widow* (perf. 1674), was stitched together by Thomas Shadwell from a series of dramatic fragments written by Cavendish, as Lynn Hulse has shown.<sup>17</sup> Similarly with the pre-Civil War plays, Herbert's record makes it clear that Shirley was involved in writing *The Variety*, while *The Country Captain*, in addition to containing a song attributed elsewhere to Shirley, resembles his work so much that the manuscript version of the play was wrongly assigned to Shirley when it was rediscovered. It would be naive to assume that Cavendish "wrote" the entirety of his surviving plays in the sense that one might expect a modern poet to have written every word of a long poem of theirs. Indeed, as Cavendish's wife wrote, apropos of her own

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1641 and may even contain an allusion to the wedding that summer of Elizabeth Cavendish to John Egerton, Viscount Brackley.

<sup>15</sup> Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 3:146.

<sup>16</sup> Bawcutt, *Control and Censorship*, 209; Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 3:150.

<sup>17</sup> See Raylor, "Newcastle's Ghosts"; Hulse, "Introduction," xiv-xv; Lynn Hulse, "'The King's Entertainment' by the Duke of Newcastle," *Viator* 26 (1995): 355-405.

playwriting endeavours, "I have heard that such poets as write playes, seldome or never join or sow the several scenes together; they are two several professions."<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence that Cavendish was identified at the time with the plays that were later printed under his name. Only this can explain, for instance, the frequent allusions in the Civil War era newsbooks in which he is identified as "*Newcastle*: one that in time of peace tired the stage at *Black-Fryers* with his *Comedies*" or as "A member of Blackfryers Colledge, a Stage-player, one that hath left off his *Comicall Sockes* to act Tragedies of Crueltie in the North."<sup>19</sup> To this extent, it is clear that playwriting (and in particular comedy-writing) formed an important part of Cavendish's public image and that the plays can be seen as functioning as a form of self-fashioning. A hypothetical well-informed playgoer, then, asked in 1642 to comment on Cavendish's role in professional theatre, would identify him as a sponsor of many of the leading professional dramatists of the day and as the author of two recent plays able to compete with professional drama in terms of their quality. They might well predict that he would play a central role in the future development of London professional theatre.

With this perspective established, one can return to Cavendish's Caroline plays, especially *The Variety* and *The Country Captain*, which the 1649 printing presents as a pair of companion pieces.<sup>20</sup> In light of the argument that Cavendish was not just a dilettante but a patron/playwright staking out a prominent territory at the heart of professional theatre, it is striking that these two plays look very much *unlike* courtier drama of the time and much more like Caroline professional drama.

First of all, Cavendish's plays are city comedies rather than the tragedies and tragicomedies favoured by most courtly authors. Cavendish's choice of genres is not quite unique among courtier authors—one could cite, for instance, Thomas Killigrew's *The Parson's Wedding*—but it is certainly unusual. In particular, they are clearly comedies heavily inflected by Jonsonian models, so much so that *The Variety* has been described as a "scrapbook" of humours characters compiled from across the Jonson canon.<sup>21</sup> Within the genre of city comedy, Cavendish's plays have obvious affinities with the "place-realism" comedy being practised by Richard Brome and others in the 1630s, full of references to particular London streets, locations, and taverns. For instance, Act 2, scene 1 of *The Country Captain* is set in the Devil Tavern off Fleet Street, in a way similar to, for instance, Brome's *The English Moor* of 1637–1638, which also sets a scene in that specific tavern. While relatively little use is made of the place-realism setting in the context

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Randall, *Winter Fruit*, 316. See also Anthony à Wood's comment that Shirley "did much assist" in Cavendish's playwriting: Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 3:150.

<sup>19</sup> Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 3:144; Cavendish, *Country Captain*, "Introduction," xxiv.

<sup>20</sup> [William Cavendish], *The Country Captain and The Variety, Two Comedies, written by a person of Honor* (London: Moseley, 1649). On the textual complexities of the edition, see Hulse, "Introduction," in Cavendish, *Dramatic Works*, vii. The texts are separately paginated, and reference to both plays here is by page number to the 1649 edition.

<sup>21</sup> Alfred Harbage, *Cavalier Drama: An Historical and Critical Supplement to the Elizabethan and Restoration Stage* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1936), 72.

of the play—it soon shifts to a rather less precisely located English countryside—the exactness of the scene’s placing in a known and knowable London tavern emphasizes the realistic tone that *The Country Captain* seeks to pursue and implicitly makes a claim that the great nobleman Cavendish is familiar with the same London streets and taverns as the Blackfriars audience.

Second, Cavendish’s plays are like professional drama in their attacks on monopolies of all descriptions. The best way to illustrate these similarities is by considering a number of specific parallels between the anti-monopoly satire in Cavendish’s earlier drama and the anti-monopoly satire of Richard Brome’s 1640 comedy *The Court Begger*. A number of the same, very specific, targets come up. Both include among the patents they satirize a “proiecte for Cornes”: both also satirize a project for gaining a monopoly on periwigs. Both imagine projectors advancing schemes in which they get to have sexual intercourse with large numbers of women for the good of the commonwealth. Perhaps most strikingly, Brome’s satire on monopolies includes the absurd idea of “a Patent, for a Cutpurse-hall”, and in a dramatic fragment Cavendish satirically supposes that cutpurses are organized like a guild, based in “Cutt purse Hall.”<sup>22</sup> Of course, there is no monopoly on anti-monopoly satire, which, as A. H. Tricomi points out, had been a comic staple since Jonson’s *The Devil is an Ass*: nonetheless, these verbal parallels are striking, and although they certainly do not demonstrate that Brome and Cavendish were collaborators, they demonstrate that Cavendish, the amateur courtier dramatist, is applying the same satirical techniques and vocabulary as his professional dramatist client.<sup>23</sup>

A third distinctly “professional,” uncourtly flavour is provided by the way that, in Cavendish’s comedies, courtier drama is repeatedly held up for ridicule. This is given a programmatic prominence in *The Country Captain*, where the Prologue announces:

Gallants, I’le tell you what we doe not meane  
To shew you here, a glorious painted Scene,  
With various doores, to stand in stead of wit,  
Or richer cloathes with lace, for lines well writ.  
(Cavendish, *Country Captain*, 1)

Courtier dramatists’ reliance on painted scenery and elaborate costumes is of course a common theme in anti-courtly dramatic writing of the 1630s. But such antipathy to courtier drama also extends to the world created by the plays as well. A brief exchange in *The Country Captain* lists some of the delights to be found in London:

DEV. [T]here will bee a new play shortly, a prity play, some say, that never heard it;  
a Comedy written by a professed scholler, he scornes to take monie for his witt,  
as the Poets doe.

<sup>22</sup> Hulse, “Introduction,” xi; *Country Captain*, 37–38; Cavendish, *Dramatic Works*, 3, 7; Brome, *Dramatic Works*, 1:192, 194, 215, 217.

<sup>23</sup> A. H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England 1603–1642* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989), esp. 181–84.

LAD. Hee is charitable to the Actors.

SIST. It may bee repentance in them enough to play.

(Cavendish, *Country Captain*, 14)

Taken out of context, one would expect this attack, or the similar passage in *Wit's Triumvirate*, to have been written by a professional like Brome, who elsewhere attacks amateur playwrights who "write / Lesse for your pleasure than their own delight." One would not expect it to have been written by an author who might himself be vulnerable to such charges, and one might also for the same reason be surprised by this play's later attacks on courtiers employing ghost-writers to help with their poetry.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, as well as attacks on amateur writers of stage drama, these plays also contain satire on the whole idea of the courtly masque. In *The Variety* the witless Galliard takes part in masques at court, while Manly dislikes them for their expense (36, 40); Martin Butler traces the development of this idea in Act 4, where a room in a tavern has been converted to an elaborate stage set within which an usher and a whore are elevated on a throne in a drunken parody of a masque. Butler comments: "It is an unidealized, disillusioned version of the Whitehall masques: for Newcastle, masquing carries the same ironic meanings it does in the masque of whores dressed as queens in [Nathaniel Richards's] *Messalina*, or in the masque of beggars in Brome's *A Jovial Crew*."<sup>25</sup>

Much the same analysis can be extended to the treatment of masque in *The Country Captain*. No masque is enacted there, but there is an extended description of an imagined masque, dreamed by the courtly adulterer Sir Francis, who falls asleep and thus misses the chance to cuckold the country gentleman Sir Richard Huntlove. In a soliloquy, Francis describes his dreams:

[M]y dream was full of rapture such as I with all my waking sence would fly to meete; me thought I saw a thousand cupids slyde from heaven and landinge heere made this there scene of Reuells clappinge their goulden feathers, which kept time while their owne feete struck musick to their dance as they had trod and touched so ma[n]y Lutes: This done with in a cloude form'd like A throne, she to whome love had consecrate this night my Mistresse, did descend ...

(Cavendish, *Country Captain*, 74)

Of course, these masque-like dreams are untrue: indeed, while he has been sleeping, we have seen Lady Huntlove rejecting the idea of committing adultery with him. Here, the conventions of the masque are not directly satirized, but in the world of the play they are part of a lascivious and deceiving imagination of adultery. In literary terms, *The Variety* and *The Country Captain* clearly resemble professional rather than courtly drama in a number of ways: in particular, they align themselves against the current practice of courtly writers, especially courtier drama and the masque.

<sup>24</sup> Cavendish, ed. Nelson, *Country Captain*, 41–42; *Wit's Triumvirate*, 4.4.192–218; Brome, *Dramatic Works*, 1:184.

<sup>25</sup> Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, 197.

Interestingly, these references to courtly drama sit inside a much wider and more pervasive awareness of the history of drama. For instance, *The Variety's* relationship to Jonson is not just a matter of secret imitation. At the start of the play, the audience are told that Madam Beaufield is "the only Magnetick widdow i'th Town" (2), a phrase which invites the audience to view the entire succeeding play through the prism of Jonson's Caroline comedy *The Magnetic Lady*. One obvious comparison for this technique is Richard Brome, in whose comedies characters frequently name Jonsonian precedents for their own behaviour: Cavendish's allusion here certainly distances the audience from the dramatic illusion in the same way. But it is only the first of a sequence of references in the opening scenes of *The Variety* to what Anthony Johnson calls "all the other paraphernalia of later Jonsonian comedy"—Madam Beaufield is accompanied by a "Regiment of Jeerers" (2) similar to those in *The Staple of News*; she has an "Academy" of Ladies accompanying her (12) who resemble the Ladies Collegiate of *Epicoene*; the hero's name, Manly, certainly invites comparisons to his namesake in *The Devil is an Ass*. Later in the play, Manly and Simpleton's duet, "Have you felt the wooll of Beaver?" (57) takes lines from a song featured in *The Devil is an Ass* and parodies them by having Simpleton sing the correct words and Manly make fun of Simpleton in a descant.<sup>26</sup> *The Variety*, and its opening sections in particular, invite us to read the play within a Jonsonian frame.

*The Country Captain* too makes frequent intertextual reference to Jonson, as when Sackbury warns Courtwell that too much study of the law will fill up his head with "P[r]oclamations Rejoyndere & hard words beyond the *Alkemist*" (22). And the scene in which he does so is the one set in the Devil Tavern, recalling as it does so not merely the contemporary work of Brome but at the same time the work of Jonson himself, whose favourite tavern it was, who wrote the *leges convivales* for its upstairs room, and who put the tavern on stage himself in *The Staple of News*. Cavendish's use of the Devil Tavern as setting is at once self-consciously contemporary reportage and also an assertion of current literary affinities (for example, to the works of Brome), and yet also a claim to an earlier literary pedigree—to the works of Jonson and to the biographical mythology associated with the Devil Tavern and with Jonson's coterie there. The use of the Devil Tavern as a setting constitutes an intertextual claim to be a Son of Ben.<sup>27</sup>

Jonsonian reference in *The Country Captain* ranges widely around the Jonson canon. Engine in that play is almost a reprise of Engine in *The Devil is an Ass*. Courtwell intends to "sigh out my part, / And drop division with my brinish teares" (34), a line that

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**26** Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass*, 2.6.94–113, although Jonson also printed the lyric as a poem within *Underwoods*, 2.4, "A Celebration of Charis": Jonson is cited from David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, ed., *The Cambridge Works of Ben Jonson*, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

**27** See Percy Simpson, "Ben Jonson and the Devil Tavern," *Modern Language Review* 34 (1939): 367–73; Katherine A. Esdale, "Ben Jonson and the Devil Tavern," *Essays and Studies* 29 (1944): 93–100; for the symbolic importance of drinking and taverns within the mythology of literary coteries, see Timothy Raylor, *Cavaliers, Clubs, and Literary Culture: Sir John Mennes, James Smith, and the Order of the Fancy* (Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1994).

refers back to Echo's song in *Cynthia's Revels*, 1.2, "Woe weeps out her division when she sings." Even Jonson's prose works are knowingly referenced, it seems: when Dorothy complains that impersonating her mistress is making her resemble her mistress, adding, "I have knowen some men taught the Stammers so" (73), it certainly invites reference back to Jonson's famous dictum that "we so insist in imitating others, as we cannot (when it is necessary) return to ourselves; like children, that imitate the vices of stammerers so long, till at last they become such."<sup>28</sup> Indeed, all three of Cavendish's pre-war comedies are saturated in reference to "our best poet" Jonson (*Wit's Triumvirate*, 4.4.166–68): it is not merely that they imitate Jonson extensively (perhaps as extensively as a child imitates a stammerer) but that they are an appropriation of Jonsonian comedy looking to trade on the audience's awareness of their Jonsonian predecessors and—for those sections of the audience more in the know—the author's prominent personal links to Jonson.

But if *The Variety*, especially, locates itself relative to Jonson, then it is important to note that *The Country Captain* wears another literary influence on its sleeve. In the first scene of *The Country Captain*, there is a strange comment by Captain Underwit: "I must thinke, now, to provide me of warlike accoutrements, to accommodate, which coms of accommo Shakespeare the first & the first" (5). A second conspicuous naming of Shakespeare follows, since Thomas goes off to purchase those military accoutrements but ends up spending £23 on books. Among the pile he brings back on to stage is, extraordinarily, a copy of Shakespeare's folio works: a moment worth attention as perhaps the first moment in theatrical history where Shakespeare's plays are paraded on the stage in book form. Underwit seems unimpressed:

UND. *Shakspeares workes. Why Shakspeares workes?*

THO. I had nothing for the Pike men before.

UND. They are playes.

THO. Are not all your musteringes in the Country soe, Sir? pray read on.

(Cavendish, *Country Captain*, 25)

This is a stage on which the presence of Shakespeare's plays is literally tangible.

What, then, are we to make of the play's relationship to Shakespeare? The second of the two direct allusions, punning on his name, is perhaps less helpful here, but the allusion at the start of the play provides more food for thought. Its reference to "Shakespeare the first & the first" makes little sense literally, since it shows Underwit treating Shakespeare almost like a law-book: in fact, the allusion can be tracked down to a relatively obscure passage in *2 Henry IV*, where Shallow and Bardolph discuss the phrase. "Better accommodated!—it is good: yea, indeed, is it. Good phrases are surely,

<sup>28</sup> Jonson, *Discoveries*, lines 784–88. As Barton ("Harking Back," 707) points out, Brome's poem on *The Variety* makes explicit the comparison to Jonson, adapting the last line of *Cynthia's Revels* as it does so.

and ever were, very commendable. Accommodated! it comes of 'accommodo' very good; a good phrase."<sup>29</sup>

Like the Shallow scenes in *2 Henry IV*, this section of Cavendish's play shows a London military captain, of a sort, travelling into the country, so there is more than a verbal reminiscence here. In particular, *The Country Captain's* countryside is certainly conceived, to put it crudely, in Shakespearean rather than Fletcherian terms: it is a detailed and sympathetically presented English landscape, full of mutton and beef and muddy boots and hunting with hounds in the forests, whose rustic simplicity is in marked contrast to the wicked sophistication of the city. The good-humoured handling of the *miles gloriosus* figure of Underwit certainly recalls, in general terms, the Bardolphs and the Falstuffs of Shakespeare. The version of Shakespeare which Cavendish appears to be invoking by the double allusion to him early on is the Shakespeare of Milton's "native wood-notes," a poet of the English countryside to set against Jonson, the bard of the city.

At first glance, this reading of Cavendish's early plays in terms of allusions to Shakespeare and Jonson, prefiguring the discussion of their relative merits in Cavendish's post-Restoration comedy *The Triumphant Widow*, would seem to suggest that Cavendish was already establishing a narrow canon of literary excellence. But, surprisingly, the allusions in the earlier plays are in the context of a much wider interest in professional drama of all sorts. Sackbury imagines a procession of "Cavaliers with tyltinge feathers gaudy as *Agamemnons* in the play," although it is not clear which dramatic representation of Agamemnon is under discussion. "A white Devill is but a Poeticall fiction, for the devill bless us child is black," complains a character at one point. While the phrase is a proverbial one, an audience might well be reminded of Webster's *The White Devil*, acted in 1612. James comments that Simpleton's stratagem was "no tricke to catch the old one," another proverbial phrase which is also the title of a well-known Renaissance play, this time Middleton's comedy of 1608. Unequivocally explicit is James's remark that the coachman "drives like a Tamberlaine," to which Simpleton answers, "Holla ye pamperd Jades."<sup>30</sup> This is a reference, complete with quotation, to Marlowe's play, by now around fifty years old. In the world of *The Variety* and *The Country Captain*, professional drama is so familiar that its titles and catchphrases are in places almost indistinguishable from proverbs. In these allusions and others like them, mainstays of early modern professional theatre are carefully given places in the plays' intellectual frame.

Such an interest in a past theatrical heritage links directly to Cavendish's conscious archaism, his political "Elizabethanism." This idea, discussed in a seminal essay by Anne Barton and developed by Martin Butler, has generally been considered mainly with reference to Manly in *The Variety*, whose humour of dressing up as the long-dead Earl of Leicester is treated in the play as both ludicrous and yet admirable insofar as it indicates his belief in a sense of old-fashioned English virtue. Manly praises the Elizabethan era

<sup>29</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part Two*, ed. René Weis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.2.67–70.

<sup>30</sup> Cavendish, *Country Captain*, 22, 61; *Variety*, 59, 72; see also *Wit's Trumvirate*, 4.4.596–600, which alludes to *Hamlet*, *Tamburlaine*, and *The Spanish Tragedy*.

as "those honest dayes, when Knights were Gentlemen, and proper men took the walls of dwarfes ... these things were worne when men of honor flourish'd, that tam'd the wealth of Spaine, set up the States, help'd the French King, and brought Rebellion to reason Gentlemen" (39). This is in opposition both to the remembrances of the morally dubious Jacobean era presented within *The Variety* by the reminiscences of James the Steward and to the un-English, hyper-courtly behaviour of the people of the present day. Curtis Perry suggests that the reason for Cavendish's choice of Leicester as a positive role model is a pointed contrast between Leicester and more recent favourites, such as Buckingham, who had indeed facilitated Cavendish's own rise to political prominence in the 1620s. Perry links the portrait of Leicester in *The Variety* to a revival of interest in Leicester also manifested, for instance, in the printing in 1641 of Thomas Rogers's poem *Leicester's Ghost*.<sup>31</sup> Another, slightly earlier, example of this effect is Brome's *The Antipodes* (performed 1638), where Letoy refers admiringly to Leicester as "That English Earle, / That lov'd a Play and Player so well" (Brome, *Dramatic Works*, vol. 3, 246). Cavendish's interest in recreating the Elizabethan is part of a wider revival of interest in the Elizabethan that was developing in Jonson's later plays and that is continued by other professional dramatists such as Brome.

While these plays, especially *The Variety*, are full of references to Elizabeth and Elizabeth's time, in *The Variety* much of the mirth directed by the other characters at Manly actually serves to emphasize that contemporary London is full of images of the Elizabethan era. The jeerers recognize that Manly is disguised as Leicester because "Thus I have seen him painted" (31), and the London they describe is full of images on conduits and churches and in paintings that remind them of the Elizabethan (32, 42). In another pointed allusion to the days of Elizabeth, it is "a statute *quingagesimo* of the Queene" (82) that achieves the humiliation of the arrogant Galliard and of the decadent values he represents. Manly, perhaps, remains a somewhat ambivalent and ludicrous figure, but *The Variety* certainly asserts the continuity between Elizabethan London and Caroline London. Hence the welter of references in these plays to earlier drama, going back to Elizabethan texts such as *Cynthia's Revels*, *Tamburlaine*, and *2 Henry IV*, may be partly explicable not merely in terms of politicized nostalgia but as appropriations of a literary tradition. A useful touchstone here is Suckling, the quintessential courtier dramatist, who ridiculed Jonson as a representative of commercial and vulgar drama and yet sought to appropriate the legacy of Shakespeare, posing for a portrait reading *Hamlet*. In contrast, in these plays Cavendish is seeking to regain and reclaim possession of all of Jacobean and (especially) Elizabethan drama, putting his own work at the centre of a continuing tradition.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, one should hesitate to categorize Cavendish's drama as political in the simple sense, since these are not tracts designed to change the way the audience would

<sup>31</sup> Curtis Perry, *Literature and Favoritism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 22–54. See also Barton, "Harking Back," 728–29.

<sup>32</sup> See Mary Edmond, *Rare Sir William Davenant* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 75; Suckling's attacks on Jonson include his poem "The Wits" and personal satire of Jonson

vote, had they had a vote, or to make them leave the theatre with a revised political agenda. However, while they are not propaganda, they can still constitute a public advertisement of Cavendish's literary and cultural affinities with public theatre. Cavendish's dramatic activities in the 1630s and 1640s position him at the heart of English professional drama: as patron, as writer, as claimant to the literary tradition of Jonson and Shakespeare. The intervention of the Civil War meant that Cavendish was perhaps not as central to that future as he would have wished. Although he resumed this project at the Restoration, making him one of a handful of pivotal figures who were influential on both sides of the great divide of seventeenth-century drama, he never quite regained the extensive network of patronage and, perhaps, sense of cultural authority which he, *The Country Captain*, and *The Variety* were starting to establish in the early 1640s.

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in *The Sad One* and *The Goblins*: see Suckling, *Works of John Suckling: The Plays*, ed. L. A. Beaurline (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), esp. 1–32, 286.

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## Chapter 6

# WILLIAM CAVENDISH AND ELIZABETHAN NOSTALGIA

Richard Wood

IN HER BOOK *John Ford's Political Theatre*, Lisa Hopkins suggests that if there is “one political lesson which is indisputably to be learned from *Perkin Warbeck*” (John Ford’s unfashionable history play of the early 1630s), it is that “the fortunes of the King and the fortunes of his nobles are indissolubly interconnected, and both sides will benefit if the relationship between them is as close and as cordial as possible.”<sup>1</sup> Chronicle history plays, like Ford’s play, though highly fashionable in late-Elizabethan theatre, had long since lost their cachet when Ford came to write *Perkin Warbeck*. Nevertheless, the lesson that Ford’s play tries to teach its audience was very much in vogue during the reign of Charles I, not least during his Personal Rule, which began in 1629. Ford’s *Perkin Warbeck* dramatizes the history of the young man from Flanders who claimed to be Richard, Duke of York, one of the Princes in the Tower alleged to have been murdered by Richard III. Perkin presents himself as the rightful heir returned to claim the throne from Henry VII. It is, however, not Henry but the King of Scotland, James IV, who has to learn the aforementioned political lesson of the play. The significance of this point is made more manifest when it is noted that both Henry VII and James IV were the kings through which James I and VI, Charles’s father, claimed the thrones of England and Scotland respectively. And it has been observed that “implicit in the play is the plea that King Charles follow the path of his Tudor rather than his Stuart forebear”: Charles, like Henry VII, should place greater importance on a close and cordial relationship between himself and the ancient nobility of his kingdoms than he appears to do at the present time.<sup>2</sup>

Significantly, the concerns of Ford’s politically interested history play resonate with those of a lesser-known play, *The Variety*, a city comedy by William Cavendish, Earl of Newcastle.<sup>3</sup> That there are resonances between Ford’s history play and Cavendish’s comedy should not come as a surprise, because Ford dedicated the 1634 printing of

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1 Lisa Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 44–45.

2 Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1965; repr. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 302; also see Robert G. Lawrence, ed., *Jacobean and Caroline Tragedies* (London: Dent, 1975), 92.

3 Of the earl’s dramatic works, the plays *The Country Captain* and *The Variety* are the most significant; the date, the printing, and the authorship of *The Variety* are discussed by Steggle in [Chapter 5](#); as Steggle notes, *The Variety* appears to have been produced in the second half of 1641. References to *The Variety* are to the play as it appears in *The Country Capitaine, and The Varietie, Two Comedies, Written by a Person of Honor* (London, 1649). I have modernized spelling and punctuation.

*Perkin Warbeck* to the earl; the significance of this forms the basis of a chapter in Lisa Hopkins's book on Ford's associations with "an aristocratic coterie," including Cavendish, that was "marked by Catholic sympathies and opposition politics."<sup>4</sup> Prominent among the points of comparison with Ford's play is *The Variety*'s explicit and politically charged nostalgia for Tudor culture and politics, a trait of Caroline theatre that Anne Barton has usefully summarized in the phrase "harking back to Elizabeth."<sup>5</sup>

Alfred Harbage's description of *The Variety* accurately, if also rather disparagingly, catalogues its parts:

The first of Newcastle's plays is eloquent of his devotion to Jonson: *The Variety*, c. 1639, is little more than a scrapbook, wherein the story of several courtships laden with the usual bustling intrigue forms merely a frame for the "humours" portraits of a news-monger, a worshipper of the past, a country simpleton and his mother, a French dancing master, a band of professional "jeerers," and the members of a female academy of fashion—all, or nearly all, of whom had appeared in the Jonsonian gallery itself.<sup>6</sup>

The "worshipper of the past" in Harbage's list of characters is Master Manly. Manly is the hero of *The Variety*, and his sensibilities—an old-fashioned masculinity, represented in both his dress and comportment—are shown to triumph over the man of mode, represented by Galliard, a French dance master, who privileges Frenchified elegance over traditional English statesmanship. Manly, who dresses as the Elizabethan Earl of Leicester, signifies an older culture of "Ceremony and degrees of honour" and symbolizes the politically charged nostalgia for the Tudor age that Cavendish wishes to promote.<sup>7</sup> It is Manly, or rather the "manly" man with whom he identifies, the Elizabethan Earl of Leicester, that is the focus of Cavendish's interest. In particular, I wish to suggest that the figure of Leicester, besides his value as a totem for the political Elizabethanism discussed by Matthew Steggle in [Chapter 5](#), had a particular significance for Cavendish and his opponents in the latter half of 1641 when *The Variety* was first performed. And, as well as having a potent political meaning for Cavendish, the figure of Leicester also had a personal, familial significance for him, especially as the figure of Leicester related to that of Cavendish's uncle, Gilbert Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, whom Cavendish lauded as an exemplar of Elizabethan country nobility.

Cavendish passed part of his youth in the household of his uncle and aunt, the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury, whose daughters, Aletheia Howard, Countess of Arundel, and Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, were also part of the aristocratic

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<sup>4</sup> Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre*, front matter.

<sup>5</sup> Anne Barton, "Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline Nostalgia," *English Literary History* 48 (Winter 1981): 706–31; also see Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 300–20.

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Harbage, *Cavalier Drama: An Historical and Critical Supplement to the Elizabethan and Restoration Stage* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1936), 75.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 195.

coterie marked by Catholic sympathies associated with John Ford. This heritage, “as a scion of a great Tudor family,” perhaps explains what Martin Butler considers to be Cavendish’s Elizabethan temperament.<sup>8</sup> On the death of his father in 1617, William inherited the Cavendish estates of Welbeck and Bolsover. He was raised to the peerage, becoming Viscount Mansfield in 1620, and he was created Earl of Newcastle in 1628. At the beginning of the 1630s, he was in search of a court position, something he pursued to the detriment of his finances until 1638 and his eventual appointments as “sole gentleman of the bedchamber” and governor to the Prince of Wales.<sup>9</sup> His efforts to impress the king included the hiring of an old associate, Ben Jonson, to write two masques: *The King’s Entertainment at Welbeck*, for Charles’s journey north for his Scottish coronation in 1633, and *Love’s Welcome at Bolsover*, which was performed in July 1634. Cavendish’s enduring relationship with Jonson is, as we have seen, reflected in *The Variety*.

Returning to *The Variety*, and to the Jonsonian gallery to which Alfred Harbage referred in particular, the news-monger is a character called Formal, a gentleman usher to the rich widow Lady Beaufield, and he offers a clue to the political atmosphere in which *The Variety* was first performed. In an exchange between Formal and Master Newman, a suitor to Lady Beaufield’s daughter, the characters appear to be aware of the significance of the distinction between domestic and foreign news, there having been a Star Chamber ban on domestic reporting until its lifting in the year of *The Variety*’s appearance. This culture of censorship provided fertile ground for a predominantly sensationalist journalism, and what passed for serious news tended to be accounts of the Thirty Years’ War culled from Dutch news-sheets. These extracts form part of the exchange between Formal and Newman:

(Enter FORMAL with a tablebook.)

FORMAL. The same day a dolphin taken in a net at Woolwich and ten live pilchards in a salmon’s belly—strange things! The 13 of July, the cat-a-mountain kitted in the Tower; an eel ship sprung a leak shooting the bridge—here are prodigious things.

[...]

FORMAL. Oh, sir! I know to whom I speak and will tell you more, for I dare trust you with my soul. They say the northern progress holds this year and that the elk is dead in the new great park.

NEWMAN. I hope not.

(Cavendish, *The Variety*, 6–8)

Formal and Newman reflect on several events from which the more sensationalist hacks of the time would deduce omens of great significance: the portentous death of the elk in

<sup>8</sup> Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632–1642*, 195.

<sup>9</sup> Lynn Hulse, “Cavendish, William, First Duke of Newcastle upon Tyne (bap. 1593, d. 1676), Writer, Patron, and Royalist Army Officer,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Windsor Great Park, the “dolphin taken in a net at Woolwich,” and the “ten live pilchards in a salmon’s belly.” The reference to the “cat-a-mountain kittened in the Tower” on July 13 would seem to be an allusion to a more specific contemporary event. The latter of these two passages also alludes to the king’s northern progress, which could refer to one of the occasions when Cavendish entertained Charles, either at Bolsover or Welbeck, or to Charles’s neglect of progresses in favour of the palace at Whitehall, or there could be a more oblique allusion here, with more contemporary political significance, in which “northern progress” connotes the Bishops’ Wars between England and Scotland, in the first of which Cavendish played a significant part. The allusion to the northern progress could hold the key to the significance of July 13.

The prelude to the Civil Wars proper included two conflicts between King Charles and Scots opposed to his episcopal system of church government. The later stages of the second of these Bishops’ Wars, which was concluded at the Treaty of London, signed on August 10, 1641, were played out against the background of civil unrest in London and the impeachment by Parliament of the king’s adviser, Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. Strafford, known as Black Tom Tyrant in popular pamphlets, was held responsible for the king’s calamitous policies after the First Bishops’ War. Strafford was executed on May 12, 1641, and it is the public burning of George Digby’s speech against Strafford’s attainder that was the significant event of July 13, 1641. Cavendish had had to resign his position as governor to the Prince of Wales after being implicated in what became known as the First Army Plot to rescue Strafford from the Tower.<sup>10</sup> The reference to the “cat-a-mountain kittened in the Tower” could, therefore, refer to Strafford. In contemporary literature, including works by Shirley and Jonson, “cat-a-mountain” is usually used derogatively to refer to a “spirited wanton or whore.”<sup>11</sup> The habitual association of the whore of Babylon with the Church of Rome in contemporary Protestant polemics may suggest that the target is another inmate of the Tower at this time: William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose policies were often characterized by his critics as papistical. Given the apparent association with Strafford, a close confidant of the king, “cat-a-mountain” may even allude to a catamite, a young male favourite and sexual partner of the king, who, in contemporary representations, exercises undue influence on the monarch in matters of state.<sup>12</sup> This would not, however, align with what is known of Charles and Strafford’s relationship. Such a scurrilous claim would, nonetheless, have been in the spirit of many of the pamphlets printed after the lifting of the Star Chamber ban.<sup>13</sup>

**10** Ronald G. Asch, “Wentworth, Thomas, First Earl of Strafford (1593–1641), Lord Lieutenant of Ireland,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; Hulse, “Cavendish, William.”

**11** Gordon Williams, *Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* (London: Athlone, 1994), 217–18.

**12** Williams, *Dictionary of Sexual Language*, 216–17.

**13** Steggle notes that Cavendish could have chosen Leicester as a role model in contrast to favourites such as George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham; Curtis Perry, “Leicester’s Ghosts and the Discourse of Favouritism,” paper delivered at the Renaissance Society of America, May 2003.

The political turmoil surrounding Strafford's imprisonment and execution is also a significant context for understanding Manly's appearance dressed as the Earl of Leicester in Cavendish's play of the latter half of 1641. George Digby, Member of Parliament for Dorset in the Short and the Long Parliaments of 1640, was initially a manager of the impeachment of the Earl of Strafford, but he spoke out against Strafford's condemnation, as Ronald Hutton notes, "to prevent the complete estrangement of the king from the reform party."<sup>14</sup> This is arguably not unlike Cavendish's own position, which was one of maintaining fierce loyalty to the crown while, at the same time, wishing to steer Charles towards a stronger, more mutually beneficial relationship between king and nobles. Digby's scheme backfired and he had to be rescued from attainder himself, being elevated to the Lords as Baron Digby of Sherborne on June 9. Significantly, on July 5, a few days before the public burning of Digby's speech against Strafford's attainder, Parliament abolished the courts of High Commission and Star Chamber. This led to a tremendous proliferation of printed material, controversial, polemical, and satirical in nature.<sup>15</sup>

Among the scurrilous publications of 1641 is an edition of a curious work by a little-known Elizabethan and Jacobean poet, Thomas Rogers: it is known by its shortened title *Leicester's Ghost*. It is in fact a rhyme royal tragedy in the style of *A Mirror for Magistrates* that reworks the infamous Catholic libel against Robert Dudley, the Elizabethan Earl of Leicester, known as *Leicester's Commonwealth*. In the Elizabethan original of 1584, Leicester is accused of (among an endless catalogue of crimes): the murder of his wife Amy Robsart; the murders of a number of the husbands of his lovers; preventing the queen from marrying; and, having failed to gain the crown by marrying Elizabeth himself, plotting to dethrone her and, ultimately, achieve the crown for himself alone. Besides the denigration of Leicester, the text puts forward a case for the succession of Mary, Queen of Scots or her son, James, to the throne of England. Rogers's poetic paraphrase, in which the earl's ghost narrates his own dastardly deeds, appeared in two anonymous editions in 1641: a quarto version followed by an emended octavo version. Thanks to the work of Franklin B. Williams, who discovered an authorial manuscript of the poem in the 1930s, Rogers has been identified as the author.<sup>16</sup> The poem appears to have been begun under Elizabeth (in 1601/2) and completed not later than 1605. The

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**14** Ronald Hutton, "Digby, George, Second Earl of Bristol (1612–1677), Politician," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

**15** For the freeing of the presses, see Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 237–57; and Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632–1642*, 236–50, 289–91.

**16** D. C. Peck, ed., *Leicester's Commonwealth: The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1985); Thomas Rogers, *Leicester's Ghost*, vol. 4 of the Publications of the Renaissance English Text Society, ed. Franklin B. Williams, Jr. (Chicago: Newberry Library for University of Chicago Press, 1972); Franklin B. Williams, Jr., "Thomas Rogers of Bryanston," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 16 (1934): 253–67; "Leicester's Ghost," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 18 (1935): 271–85; "Thomas Rogers as Ben Jonson's Dapper," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 2 (1972): 73–77.

original manuscript of *Leicester's Ghost* was dedicated to James I. This dedication and the stanzas on the succession were removed from the abridged form that was circulated in manuscript. The printed Caroline editions are based on an abridged manuscript and consequently do not contain these passages either. In the Huntington Library copy of the 1641 octavo, the theme switches abruptly from Leicester's plot to have his son marry Arbella Stuart to the earl's exploits in the Low Countries.<sup>17</sup> The poem asserts that, by marrying his son, Robert, Lord Denbigh, to Arbella, Leicester wished to form a "new triumvirate" of Bess of Hardwick, Gilbert Talbot, and himself. This is where stanzas 155 to 183 of the authorial manuscript have been removed. Though the quarto and octavo editions of *Leicester's Ghost* are occasionally found alone, they are normally appended (even integral) to matching 1641 printed editions of *Leicester's Commonwealth*, which do contain the material omitted from Rogers's poem.

Thomas Rogers was the son of Sir Richard Rogers and his second wife Mary West. Therefore, Thomas was the half-brother of Honora Rogers, who married Edward Seymour, Lord Beauchamp, son of Catherine Grey and Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford; Thomas's half-brother Andrew Rogers married Mary Seymour, sister of Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford. It is Thomas's connection to the Seymours that appears to have motivated his composition of *Leicester's Ghost* in the early seventeenth century, Hertford's second marriage having been to Frances Howard, sister of Douglas Howard, Baroness Sheffield, whose secret marriage to the Earl of Leicester had been repudiated by the earl. Frances Howard died in 1598 (the earl would in 1601 marry another Frances, who lived on until 1639), but Douglas Sheffield was still alive when Rogers's poem circulated in manuscript; the family enmity towards Leicester (who had died in 1588) clearly remained. Thomas Rogers's *Celestiall Elegies* of 1598 lament the death of Frances, Countess of Hertford. The years 1604–1605 also saw the "Great Cause of Sir Robert Dudley," the legal battle in the Star Chamber in which Leicester and Sheffield's son sought to prove his status as his father's heir.

This is all highly suggestive when we turn again to look at William Cavendish's play *The Variety*, in which the hero is a character who dresses like the Earl of Leicester. Beyond the obvious coincidence of their appearance in the same short period of time, there are other grounds for believing that *The Variety* was, in part, a pointed reaction to *Leicester's Ghost*. The figure of Lady Beaufield, who eventually grants Manly—dressed as the Earl of Leicester—"possession of [her] heart and fortunes" (86), is suggestive in this respect. The name Beaufield clearly recalls another name, one that we have met already: Beauchamp, or *beau champ*. And, as we have seen, Thomas Rogers's half-sister Honora married Edward Seymour, Lord Beauchamp, and so became a Beauchamp herself. This association could support a reading of *The Variety* as an attempt at some kind of rapprochement between former enemies, the Dudleys and the Howards. More significantly, it appears to be quite possible that Cavendish's favourable portrait of Leicester was, in part, a theatrical refutation of Thomas Rogers's belatedly published

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17 "Leicester's Ghost," in *Leicester's common-wealth ... whereunto is added Leicesters-ghost* (London, 1641), sig. B7v.

tragedy; we might suggest that *The Variety* was intended to rescue the earl's reputation from the mire of the Elizabethan libels so recently reprinted. Moreover, it appears that these texts were part of the political discourse centred on the monarch and his troubled rule, and that the legitimacy of the figure of Leicester as a symbol of an earlier model for the relationship between a king or queen and his or her nobility was a key aspect of this discourse. In this context, it is worth noting that Rogers's original manuscript, dedicated to James I, might have been intended as a mirror for Rogers's own prince. Of course, in 1641, when courtiers such as George Digby were divided between their loyalty to the king and their own view of the best policy for the maintenance of the king's safety, whoever it was that published *Leicester's Ghost*—a scurrilous attack on Leicester—could well have broadly agreed with Cavendish on the struggle between Charles and Parliament but profoundly disagreed about the meaning of the Elizabethan earl.

As a means of understanding the Elizabethan earl's significance at this point in political history, I wish to draw out some of the peculiarly Elizabethan characteristics of Cavendish's use of the figure of Leicester. But before looking at Cavendish's play more closely, the parallels between the playwright and the Elizabethan earl should be noted. Cavendish, like Leicester, was known for his horsemanship: Leicester was Elizabeth's Master of the Horse; Cavendish, as governor to the Prince of Wales, was in charge of the future Charles II's equestrian training, and he went on to write the influential treatises on horsemanship *La méthode nouvelle et invention extraordinaire de dresser les chevaux*, published in Antwerp in 1658, and *A New Method, and Extraordinary Invention, to Dress Horses*, published in 1667 (see Elaine Walker's chapter). Cavendish's campaign for high office included the hiring of Ben Jonson to write two masques. Both *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck* and *The King and Queen's Entertainment at Bolsover* drew heavily on the entertainments organized by Leicester for Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575.<sup>18</sup>

It is clear that Leicester was an important cornerstone in Cavendish's self-image, and the nature of that image can be discerned in his play of 1641. When *The Variety* begins it is not at all clear that Manly will win the day. He is tricked into attending Lady Beaufield's party dressed as Leicester by Sir William, a suitor to the hostess; he would normally only dress up in private. When he arrives to a fanfare, he quickly realizes his folly, but he decides to make the best of the situation by presenting a suit (in more than one sense of the word) to Lady Beaufield; you might say he lets his clothes do the talking:

MANLY I am bold to present a suit to you. I confess it was not made by a French tailor. I can make a leg and kiss my hand too after the fashion of my clothes. This served in those honest days, when knights were gentlemen [...] Here's a belly piece that looks like armour. With what comeliness may a man unbutton his doublet when he seems to take the wall to make urine? Your sleeve so near your nose, with a handkerchief, which I take

<sup>18</sup> See Ben Jonson, *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck* and *The King and Queen's Entertainment at Bolsover*, ed. James Knowles, in David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, ed., *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 659–80, 681–96.

out thus with a grace; after emunction, I put up again, with the corianders hanging out. Geometrical breeches in several slices, in which a man is not ashamed of his thighs, nor hides his bow legs, which at the bottom, surrounded with points, make him look like a rough-footed pigeon. These things were worn when men of honour flourished, that tamed the wealth of Spain, set up the States, helped the French king and brought rebellion to reason, gentlemen.

(Cavendish, *The Variety*, 39)

Manly's private nostalgia now made public does not stop at dressing like the knights of the past. He sings a song about John Talbot, 1st Earl of Shrewsbury, the "Terror of the French" who was celebrated in Shakespeare's *1 Henry VI*; he enters a singing contest with Simpleton in which they trade lines from "Little Musgrave" and "The Ballad of Chevy Chase" (57–58), the latter being a particular favourite of Jonson and the quintessential Elizabethan, Sir Philip Sidney. Manly also regales his audience with tales from the days when Garter Knights would process to Windsor with large retinues:

Then you should have the best knight of the country, with the ragged staff on [the retinue's] sleeves. ... Every knight had his hundreds, and these would take up all the taverns in the town, be drunk to the honour of their lords, and rather than not pay their reckoning, pawn their chains, though they pawned something for them the night before.

(Cavendish, *The Variety*, 41)

The ragged staff with a white bear was the badge of the Earl of Leicester, of course.

Cavendish's particular interest in co-opting Leicester for *The Variety* can be discerned from his own writings, in both personal letters and in his advice to Charles II, the latter written during or shortly before the Restoration. As early as 1632, decrying his own marginalization and the progressive decline of the position of the old English nobility at court, he declared himself a lord of misrule, taking that title "for an honor in these dayes rather then the other more common title."<sup>19</sup> In his advice to Charles II, he presents Charles I as a negative example of the art of kingship and declares Elizabeth's government the "best Presedente for Englandes Govermente absolutlye."<sup>20</sup> He invokes his uncle Gilbert Talbot—"In my time Gilberte thatt Greate Earle off Shrewsburye whoe was a wise man & had a Gentle Sole & a Loyall" (212)—before bemoaning the "meane People thatt weare aboute the kinge & the Queen." In a sustained attack on the Frenchified atmosphere at the Caroline court, Cavendish derides those who

woulde Jeer the greateste Noble man in Englande iff hee did nott make the laste monthes Reverence A La Mode thatt Came with the laste Danser frome Paris packte upp In his fidle Case, & no maner off Regarde off the Nobilitye att All butt some fewe to monopolise the kinge & Queen Totalye to them selves, this did Infinitlye Discontente the Nobilitye & Gentrye.

(213)

<sup>19</sup> HMC 55 (various MSS), vii, 402, cited in Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632–1642*, 195.

<sup>20</sup> *A Catalogue of Letters and Other Historical Documents Exhibited in the Library at Welbeck*, compiled by S. Arthur Strong (London: Murray, 1903), 210; page references for subsequent quotations are given in the text.

Cavendish's derision for "the laste monthes Reverence A La Mode thatt Came with the laste Danser frome Paris packte upp In his fidle Case" is almost exactly reflected in the figure of the French dancing master, Galliard, in *The Variety*. In this world of Cavendish's lost childhood, when the name of Talbot carried some weight about the court, the ending of the play, with its marriages and a return to ceremony order, is like a dream of wish-fulfillment. Lady Beaufield's acceptance of Manly, however out of fashion with his times, is much more than Cavendish could have ever hoped for himself.

The references to the Talbot earls of Shrewsbury in both the play and the "Advice" could signal Cavendish's sensitivity to the accusation in Rogers's poem that Leicester wished to form a "new triumvirate" with Gilbert Talbot and Bess of Hardwick to back Lord Denbigh and Arbella Stuart in a push for Elizabeth's throne. But in both texts the Talbots function mainly as exemplars of the ancient nobility who, Cavendish believes, have been dishonoured under Charles, and, in this respect, *The Variety* is very like Philip Sidney's "Defence of the Earl of Leicester." As Roger Kuin has noted in an article for *The Sidney Journal*, Sidney's "Defence" is a "neglected text"; it is neglected by critics, in Kuin's terms, because of "the irrelevance of its concentration on Leicester's lineage" and Sidney's "apparent conviction that *Leicester's Commonwealth* ... is concerned to erase his uncle's name"; critics argue that the original libel aims far greater accusations at the earl.<sup>21</sup> In fact, Sidney's defence of Leicester's name is, as Kuin observes, a defence of the "basic Elizabethan category of honor," and, therefore, Sidney could hardly be playing for higher stakes: to defend Leicester's name—the name of Dudley—is to defend his status as "an anciently descended nobleman."<sup>22</sup>

This is the very concern that pervades Cavendish's play and his "Advice"; he invokes the name of Talbot to defend England's ancient nobility, whose names, whose honour, he senses, are being erased. It is surely not without significance in this context that the name Beaufield also recalls the Beauchamp earls of Warwick, from whom the Dudleys claimed descent and from whom the device of the bear and ragged staff was adopted; indeed, Leicester is said to have "attached a particular sentimental value" to these aspects of his identity.<sup>23</sup> The marriage of Beaufield and Manly in *The Variety* confirms Leicester's lineage.

In defending the honour of the ancient nobility, Cavendish does not advance his own name but invokes the name of his uncle Talbot. This is a Sidneian aspect

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21 Roger Kuin, "This Böö Writing: A Defence of Sidney's Other Defence," *The Sidney Journal* 32 (January 2014): 111–21 at 111, 114; Kuin cites the following examples of critics who have neglected the "Defence": "Albert Feuillerat printed the Penshurst copy in vol. III of his *The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912) but without comments other than textual; H. R. Fox Bourne, *Sir Philip Sidney: A Type of English Chivalry in the Elizabethan Age* (New York: Putnam, 1914), 275 assumed that Philip soon repented of having written it; Alan Stewart, *Philip Sidney: A Double Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), 261 sees it as a political move to get closer to Leicester after the death of the latter's son" (112n1).

22 Kuin, "This Böö Writing" 115–16.

23 Simon Adams, "Dudley, Robert, Earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588), Courtier and Magnate," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

of Cavendish's defence, but, as in Sidney's case, Cavendish has a good deal of self-interest in defending Talbot. In his defence of Leicester's name, Sidney famously declared, "I am a Dudley in blood, that Duke's daughter's son, and do acknowledge ... that my chieftest honour is to be a Dudley, and truly am glad to have cause to set forth the nobility of that blood whereof I am descended."<sup>24</sup> However, Sidney is not a Dudley (except by maternal descent), just as Cavendish is not a Talbot. Both defences rest on the value of the earls' family names—what and, in some respects, who they are—and the fact that neither Sidney nor Cavendish can unambiguously claim these names weakens their personal petitions. Nonetheless, as can be seen from the parallels between the lives of Leicester and Cavendish and the latter's long campaign for a position of service at court, the Caroline earl values what he *does* at least as much as what he *is*. Indeed, as Roger Kuin also notes, the two are inseparable, especially to Sidney, for whom the "category of virtuous action" was central to that other defence, *The Defence of Poesy*.<sup>25</sup>

To speak of "virtuous action" and Sidney is to invoke the end of his life and the realization of his political and religious ambition to actively defend the cause of international Protestantism against the power of Catholic Spain in the Low Countries. It is noteworthy that Sir Charles Cavendish, William's father, served with Sidney in the Low Countries and was present at Sidney's death following the Battle of Zutphen in 1586.<sup>26</sup> In considerably changed circumstances, Cavendish favoured the same cause. In his advice to Charles II, he advocates an aggressive foreign policy, directed first at France and then at Spain, recommending that in engaging the Spanish "warr Shoulde bee by Seae butt no Invation, to hinder his Trade to hinder his Silver flote [fleet],—& thatt woulde begger him In a litle time as Queen Elizabeth did" (236). With regard to the Low Countries, he encourages Charles "to demande off the States the same priveleges Queen Elizabeth had, which Is to have Flushing & the Brill In your Ma<sup>ties</sup> handes, & a Garison off your owne In them" (234).

Again, this passage is clearly echoed by Manly in *The Variety*, who recalls the time "when men of honour flourished, that tamed the wealth of Spain" and "set up the States." The beginning of the English intervention in the Low Countries in 1585 and, more specifically, Leicester's appointment to the governor-generalship of the United Provinces by the States General in 1586 are alluded to here; what followed was a divisive and ultimately unsuccessful period in the emergence of the Dutch Republic, marred for Leicester by Sidney's death. For Cavendish, it appears to have been something of a Golden Age, in stark contrast to the broadly Hispanophile foreign policy of Charles I.<sup>27</sup> Prioritizing the fate of the Palatinate of Frederick V, husband of Elizabeth Stuart, Charles's older sister,

<sup>24</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, "Defence of the Earl of Leicester," in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 129–41, 134.

<sup>25</sup> Kuin, "This Booe Writing," 117–18.

<sup>26</sup> Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre*, 25.

<sup>27</sup> Simon Adams, "Spain or the Netherlands? The Dilemmas of Early Stuart Foreign Policy," in *Before the English Civil War*, ed. Howard Tomlinson (London: Palgrave, 1983), 79–101.

Caroline policy favoured a deal with Spain over the alliance with the Dutch preferred by the forward Protestant party among the nobility, which included the descendants of the Leicester and Essex factions of Elizabeth's reign.

Unlike Sir Philip Sidney, Cavendish was not a man of any theological or philosophical depth. Though professing to be a good Protestant himself, he advised the young Charles (future Charles II) to avoid too much divinity and moral philosophy, as well as warning that those who were Bible mad might incite civil war.<sup>28</sup> Cavendish saw his own lavish entertainments as a guard against "Puritan melancholy."<sup>29</sup> Power, order, and pragmatism seem to have figured more than piety in Cavendish's advocacy of the forward Protestant position, and this is reflected in one of the scenes from his play. This is part of the exchange between Formal and Newman from Act 1, scene 2:

FORMAL. Do not you remember a tempest four nights ago? Then 'twas. Blust'ring times, Master Newman.

NEWMAN. That makes Van Trump so troubled with the wind colic. But now the Hollanders, as they report, have many engineers and mathematicians set awork how to keep and vent it at their pleasure, and so to serve in navigation for their ships, that there may be *ventus liber* as well as *ventus clausus*, answerable to the two seas.

(8)

Newman's joke about "Van Trump" suggests a familiarity with Dutch news-sheets, and Maarten Tromp in particular, who was the supreme commander of the Dutch fleet that defeated the Spanish navy in the Battle of the Downs in 1639; he also went on to be a significant figure in the First Anglo-Dutch War of 1652–1653. Newman, punning on the commander's name, ridicules him as troubled by wind (a fitting ailment for a sailor); Newman simultaneously alludes tangentially to John Selden's treatise *Mare Clausum*, published in 1635, in which the English Selden argued for a dominion of the seas in opposition to the arguments of the Dutch scholar Hugo Grotius, whose *Mare Liberum*, published in 1609, argued for openly navigable seas.<sup>30</sup> Selden served as a member of the Long Parliament and spoke (and voted) against the attainder of the Earl of Strafford. He lived with, and possibly secretly married, Cavendish's cousin Elizabeth Grey (daughter

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<sup>28</sup> For Cavendish's profession of religious conformity, see Douglas Grant, *Margaret the First* (London: Hart-Davis, 1957), 107; for his letter of instruction to Prince Charles, see London, British Library, MS Harleian 6988, art. 62, reproduced in *Original Letters, Illustrative of English History: Including Numerous Royal Letters; from Autographs in the British Museum, and One or Two Other Collections, with Notes and Illustrations*, 2nd ed., ed. Henry Ellis (London: Harding, Triphook, and Lepard, 1825), 288–91.

<sup>29</sup> David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, revised ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 235n36.

<sup>30</sup> Monica Brito Vieira, "Mare Liberum vs. Mare Clausum: Grotius, Freitas, and Selden's Debate on Dominion over the Seas," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 (July 2003): 361–77.

of Gilbert Talbot) after the death of her husband Henry Grey, the Earl of Kent, in 1639.<sup>31</sup> Formal and Newman's exchange indicates that, though he was an advocate for active opposition to Spain, Cavendish was also aware of the recent shifts in relative power between the Dutch and their enemies; the defeat of the Spanish navy was a watershed in this struggle. This comic interlude in *The Variety* betrays Cavendish's anxiety about the rising power of the Dutch navy. Ironically, Tromp went on to protect the Royalist ships in the English Civil Wars.<sup>32</sup>

Cavendish, of course, fled to the continent after the Battle of Marston Moor, eventually setting up home in Antwerp. In the pre-war world of 1641, the policies and conduct of the Caroline court did not reflect the Elizabethan values to which he subscribed, and the contested meaning of the ghostly figure of the Earl of Leicester and the legacy of his Elizabethan forebears were things for which he was prepared to fight.

My reading of *The Variety* highlights the parallels between the values exemplified by Master Manly and those advanced by Cavendish in his advice to Charles II. Cavendish invokes the name of Talbot in both the play and the advice, and it would be interesting to consider what lessons he could have learned from the career of "Gilbert that Great Earl of Shrewsbury." As well as attracting interest from scholars who wish to understand Caroline theatre, Cavendish's advice to Charles has been a useful resource for historians of the Tudor and Stuart aristocracies, especially those scholars plotting the changes in the fortunes—fates and finances—of the English nobility and their relationship with the monarch in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, often with an eye to the causes of the Civil War. The work of one such scholar, Lawrence Stone, particularly his book *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641*, has remained a touchstone for historians of this period since the book's first publication in 1965.<sup>33</sup> Though Stone's methods and conclusions have been challenged on numerous occasions, a good deal of work—much of it in direct response to Stone's analysis—has been undertaken in this area, and it sheds light on the relationship between Cavendish and his Elizabethan relations, including Gilbert Talbot.

Michael Hicks, the author of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry on Gilbert, paints a picture of the 7th Earl as a man often serving the interests of other members of his extended family rather than his own. His marriage to his stepsister Mary Cavendish, according to Hicks, served the interests of his parents, George Talbot (the 6th Earl) and Bess of Hardwick, rather than his own, "since it denied Gilbert the heiress who might have given him an independent future."<sup>34</sup> As George Talbot was charged with the care of Mary, Queen of

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**31** Paul Christianson, "Selden, John (1584–1654), Lawyer and Historical and Linguistic Scholar," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; John Considine, "Grey, Elizabeth [née Lady Elizabeth Talbot], Countess of Kent (1582–1651), Literary Patron and Supposed Author," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

**32** J. R. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Longman, 1996) 113.

**33** Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965).

**34** Michael Hicks, "Talbot, Gilbert, 7th Earl of Shrewsbury (1552–1616), Landowner," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Scots, he was rarely at court himself, so, after 1573, Gilbert attended court largely as a surrogate for his father. While at court, Gilbert lived beyond the means of his £200 allowance, accruing debts of £5,000 and damaging relations between father and son.

George Talbot, the 6th Earl of Shrewsbury, was concerned about the pressure on his own finances, which, apart from Gilbert's extravagance, bore the duty of keeping the Scottish queen and meeting what Hicks decorously terms "the financial demands of his wife, Bess," who was "engaged in expensive building works at Chatsworth and Oldcotes."<sup>35</sup> George's early career saw him appointed joint lieutenant-general of the army of the north and made a Knight of the Garter, but his later life did not fulfill this early promise and became dominated by the limitations placed on him as Mary's gaoler, his anxiety about money, and the bitter quarrel with Bess, his second wife.

George also came into conflict with the queen and the Privy Council over his attempts to procure funds through the raising of rents on his land and properties. A notorious episode involving Shrewsbury's tenants in Glossopdale is thoroughly examined by Stephen E. Kershaw. Despite Gilbert's efforts on his father's behalf to "head them off at Barnet," on April 18, 1579 four of Shrewsbury's tenants, led by "Black" Harry Botham (a "notorious trouble-maker"), petitioned a Privy Council meeting of Burghley, Leicester, Lincoln, Bedford, Hunsdon, Walsingham, Hatton, the treasurer and the comptroller.<sup>36</sup> The significance of this episode is in the response that the dispute elicited from the Council and Elizabeth. George Talbot was forced to climb down. As Kershaw notes, drawing on Lawrence Stone and others, the "Tudors whittled down the powers and privileges of the nobility," and by this point in Elizabeth's reign there was

a very real divergence of opinion over concern for the social fabric and the structure of Elizabethan authority between those peers who operated chiefly at court and those like Shrewsbury who, through choice or necessity, sought instead to maintain a role as great landowners and administrators at the head of local society.<sup>37</sup>

On these terms, the main role for nobles like Shrewsbury was to keep the peace, and stirring up trouble over unjustified rent demands (as the queen saw them) was contrary to this enterprise. Of course, in Shrewsbury's particular case there was the complication of his position as the Scottish queen's gaoler: not only did this role put a higher premium on good order on Talbot's estates, but the earl's persistent complaints at the size of his allowance for what was termed the "Scotch Queen's diet" damaged his credibility with Elizabeth on the subject of finance.<sup>38</sup>

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**35** Elizabeth Goldring, "Talbot, George, 6th Earl of Shrewsbury (c. 1522–1590), Nobleman," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* (2004).

**36** Stephen E. Kershaw, "Power and Duty in the Elizabethan Aristocracy: George, Earl of Shrewsbury, the Glossopdale Dispute and the Council," in *The Tudor Nobility*, ed. G. W. Bernard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 266–95, 271, 274.

**37** Kershaw, "Power and Duty," 282.

**38** Kershaw, "Power and Duty," 268.

The distinction that Kershaw and Stone highlight, between “those peers who operated chiefly at court and those like Shrewsbury who, through choice or necessity, sought ... to maintain a role ... at the head of local society,” seems to have been a significant factor in George Talbot’s dispute with the Glossopdale tenants but also appears to have been part of a general division between “court” and “country” aristocracy that grew in significance in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Indeed, Gilbert Talbot, once he had succeeded his father as Earl of Shrewsbury (in 1590), also seems to have fallen foul of this divide. Described by his biographer as asserting himself in his local society “in the old bastard feudal manner,” Gilbert had his own trouble with the neighbours.<sup>39</sup> His violent clashes with Sir Thomas Stanhope were infamous: Gilbert sent 400 men to destroy the Stanhope fisheries near Nottingham in 1593, first fomenting agitation among his own tenants and then unleashing them on Stanhope’s weir at Shelford. It is unsurprising that a government focused on peace and good order was not impressed. Just as George had had to climb down over the Glossopdale rents, the Star Chamber found against the men who, acting at Gilbert’s behest, had ransacked Stanhope’s fisheries. The Shrewsburies were serial offenders against Elizabeth’s government’s national policy, and this is nowhere more succinctly articulated than in Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst’s warning to Gilbert in 1592:

Your lordship must remember that in the policy of this Common Wealth, we are not over ready to add encrease of power & countenance to such great personages as you are. And when in the country you dwell in you will needes enter in a Warr with the inferiors therein, we thinke it both justice, equity and wisdom to take care that the weaker part be not put down by the mightier.<sup>40</sup>

Of course, one paradoxical aspect of the widening divide between the peers of the Privy Council and the likes of Shrewsbury is that the government’s broader concern was, in fact, “to diminish the perceived gulf between rulers and ruled.” Another paradoxical feature of this situation, which could, arguably, be used in defence of Gilbert and George’s position, is that “the smaller fry,” as Kershaw terms them (“the new parish and middling gentry”), were up to the very same tricks as the Shrewsburies but were “better able to keep their exactions out of the public eye,” and, in the longer term, the methods of George and Gilbert became the widespread and accepted means for the aristocracy to survive economic crises.<sup>41</sup>

Given William Cavendish’s admiration for his uncle, it is interesting that Gilbert Talbot, like Cavendish, sought to improve his financial circumstances by seeking high office—a more than satisfactory means of earning a living, particularly for the court gentry, notable among whom were the privy councillors Christopher Hatton, Francis Walsingham, and Lord Burghley. Gilbert became a privy councillor himself in 1601, a position confirmed by James I on his accession. And, as lord lieutenant of Derbyshire,

<sup>39</sup> Hicks, “Talbot, Gilbert, 7th Earl of Shrewsbury (1552–1616), Landowner.”

<sup>40</sup> Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641*, 237.

<sup>41</sup> Kershaw, “Power and Duty,” 283, 290.

constable and steward of Newark, and forester of Sherwood, Gilbert's power in Derbyshire, Yorkshire, and Nottinghamshire reached its peak in the early Jacobean period. Nonetheless, one diplomatic mission aside—to deliver the Garter to Henri IV at Rouen in 1596—Gilbert's court career did not touch the heights of courtiers such as the Earl of Leicester, the man of honour lauded in Cavendish's play for his actions on the international stage, whose governor-generalship of the Netherlands might have—I stress, might have—"tamed the wealth of Spain." Notwithstanding his own reputation as an asset-stripping landlord, promulgated in *Leicester's Commonwealth*, and his ties to the 6th Earl and Bess of Hardwick, Robert Dudley was essentially a court figure and, consequently, represented the opposing side in the divide between the earls of Shrewsbury and the Council, between country and court.

From this perspective it could be argued, therefore, that, despite the yoking of the figures of Dudley and Talbot together in literary and historical analyses of Cavendish's nostalgia for the Elizabethan age, the figure of Leicester—central to *The Variety*—meant something quite different from the figure of "Gilbert that Great Earl of Shrewsbury" in Cavendish's advice to Charles II. Manly-dressed-as-Leicester might be seen as a projection of the court side of Cavendish's character, his desire for office and the concomitant recognition he thought he was due; Gilbert, on the other hand, could be considered an example of the indispensable country nobility, with whom Cavendish also identified and on whose strength and loyalty he believed a nation must be built. *The Variety's* tribute to John Talbot, the 1st Earl of Shrewsbury, commemorated by Shakespeare in the first part of *Henry VI*, is in keeping with the play's celebration of the old chivalric breed; though it could be argued that Gilbert's extravagance finds its echo in "every knight [with] his hundreds," who "would take up all the taverns in the town, be drunk to the honour of their lords, and rather than not pay their reckoning, pawn their chains, though they pawned something for them the night before," he was not cast from this mould.

That Cavendish's military career ended so ignominiously at the Battle of Marston Moor would suggest that, despite his superior horsemanship, he was one of those aristocrats who, in the terms of Lawrence Stone's thesis, "no longer knew how to fight."<sup>42</sup> Whatever the truth about his military credentials, Cavendish does appear to have sought to combine the roles of courtier and country landlord, inspired by the precedents set by his noble forebears. As I have suggested, the 7th Earl of Shrewsbury might not have been the best example to follow, but, continually invoking his Uncle Gilbert, Cavendish was forthright in his advice to the future king on how to build a strong nation:

In my time Gilberte thatt Greate Earle off Shrewsburie whoe was a wise man & had a Gentle Sole & a Loyall, att a S<sup>r</sup> Georges feaste, I have known S<sup>r</sup> George Booth a Chesheer knight & off sixe or seaven thousande pounce a yeare weare my Lorde off Shrewsburies blewe Cote on a S<sup>r</sup> Georges Daye,—as also S<sup>r</sup> Vinsente Corbett whose Brother had 20.000<sup>l</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641*, 266; it has been suggested that Robert Dudley and Philip Sidney were also "much more experienced in symbolic conflicts in the tiltyard than in real warfare" (see Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, 96).

a yeare & affter the death off his Brother hee had 4<sup>l</sup>: or 5000<sup>l</sup> a yeare & hee wore my Lo<sup>s</sup> blewe Cote off a S<sup>t</sup> Georges daye also,—butt the nexte daye theye satt both att my Lordes Table nexte him & nothinge butt Good Coosen Corbett, & good Coosen Booth & theye weare verye wise In Itt, for thus theye did oblige my Lorde to bee their Servante all the yeare after, with his power to serve them both In Courte & Westminster Hall, to bee their Solisiter, ... for whatt soever busines his Ma<sup>tie</sup> had In anye Countie In Englande, or In all Englande, Itt was butt speakinge to Shrewsburye or Darbye & such Greate men & Itt was don with Ease and fasiletye.

(*Original Letters, Illustrative of English History*, 212)

This vision of the earl at the centre of a harmonious regional community, in which the gentry were glad to wear Shrewsbury's livery in recognition of his "power to serve them both in court and Westminster Hall," does not quite square with the evidence I have presented here; nor does the suggestion that the monarch could trust "such great men," "whatsoever business his majesty had," to serve the crown "with ease and facility." Nonetheless, it was a remarkable manifesto for future conduct in English politics to have been written at the advent of the Restoration period; one that appears to have been built on lessons learned, however indirectly, from the crises large and small endured by the earls of Shrewsbury, Gilbert and George, in the Elizabethan era.

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## Chapter 7

# THE CAVENDISHES AND BEN JONSON

Tom Rutter

THE CURRENT CHAPTER surveys the literary relationship between William Cavendish, Earl (later Duke) of Newcastle, and the poet and dramatist Ben Jonson; it also considers Jonson's literary influence on Cavendish's daughters Jane and Elizabeth and on his second wife Margaret. Among all of Cavendish's patron-client relationships, it is worth singling out that with Jonson for several reasons. First, it was extremely long-lived, conceivably dating from 1610 when the 16-year-old Cavendish was one of fifty-eight challengers at Prince Henry's Barriers (for which Jonson would write an Arthurian entertainment) and continuing until Jonson's death in 1637.<sup>1</sup> Second, it was very productive on Jonson's side, leading to a number of direct commissions as well as other texts that seem to bear Cavendish's influence. And finally, as the chapters by Matthew Steggle and Richard Wood have already demonstrated, it had a pervasive and enduring effect on Cavendish's own writing: he repeatedly alluded to Jonson right up to *The Triumphant Widow*, staged at Dorset Garden in 1674.<sup>2</sup> This chapter is divided into four sections: the first considers Jonson's oeuvre in light of his relationship with Cavendish; the second, Jonson's influence on Cavendish; and the third and fourth, the presence of Jonson in the writings of Jane, Elizabeth, and Margaret Cavendish.

### Ben Jonson

It is impossible to know what contact, if any, Cavendish had with Jonson on the occasion of Prince Henry's Barriers or on that of *A Challenge at Tilt* over the 1613–1614 Christmas season. However, by the summer of 1618 he knew Jonson sufficiently well not only to offer him hospitality at Welbeck for six nights during his celebrated "Foot Voyage" to Scotland but also to give him authority over the household during a period of absence, "commanding his steward and all the rest of the officers to obey [Jonson] in all things."<sup>3</sup> The recently discovered account of this walk written by an unnamed companion of Jonson is a productive place to begin the current survey. Not only does it have chronological priority; in this brief, sometimes obscure, record, the reader finds allusions to people, places, and ideas that feature more prominently in subsequent writings:

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1 James Loxley, Anna Groundwater, and Julie Sanders, ed., *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland: An Annotated Edition of the "Foot Voyage"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 50.

2 Lynn Hulse, "Cavendish, William, 1st Duke of Newcastle upon Tyne (bap. 1593, d. 1676)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online), January 6, 2011.

3 Loxley, Groundwater, and Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 52–53.

The next day Sir William Candish carried my gossip to see Bolsover, alias Bozers, castle, on which Sir Charles had built a delicate little house etc. As also to meet one Smithson, an excellent architect, who was to consult with Mr Jonson about the erection of a tomb for Sir William's father, for which my gossip was to make an epitaph.

The next morning Sir William rid his great horse, which he did with that readiness and steadiness, as my gossip say they were both one piece.<sup>4</sup>

This text provides invaluable evidence about Jonson's work for Cavendish. It establishes that Jonson knew at first hand the venue for which he would write the 1634 *Entertainment at Bolsover*. It also demonstrates that he did not merely submit the poem "Charles Cavendish to His Posterity" for inscription at Bolsover Church but actively consulted the architect John Smythson about the monument on which it was to appear.<sup>5</sup> Finally, it contains the seeds of "An Epigram. To William, Earl of Newcastle" (one of two printed in *The Underwood*) that begins:

When first, my lord, I saw you back your horse,  
Provoke his mettle and command his force  
To all the uses of the field and race,  
Methought I read the ancient art of Thrace,  
And saw a centaur past those tales of Greece;  
So seemed your horse and you, both of a piece!

The epigram must date from some time after the walk, for Jonson goes on to state that he had not yet seen Cavendish's "stable"—presumably the riding-school that Smythson built for Cavendish in the 1620s.<sup>6</sup> In turn, this would seem to suggest multiple visits to Cavendish's houses over a period of time.

In addition to discussing the epitaph for Cavendish's father, Jonson would meet during the walk to Scotland two members of the Cavendish family for whom he would later write memorial verses. Before his stay at Welbeck, he was at Rufford, "where the countess gave us extraordinary grace and entertainment": this was William's aunt Jane Ogle, widowed the preceding February and herself to die in 1625.<sup>7</sup> Jonson's period of rule over Welbeck occurred when "Sir William with my old Lady Candish and his own lady went to Rufford"; "my old Lady Candish" was William's mother Katherine Ogle, memorialized by Jonson after her death in 1629 in a poem and possibly (as will be discussed below) in *The Magnetic Lady*.<sup>8</sup> Certainly the poem uses scientific and mathematical imagery that it shares with the play, claiming "All circles had their spring and end / In her! And what could perfect be, / Or without angles, it was she!" and ascribing

<sup>4</sup> Loxley, Groundwater, and Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 57.

<sup>5</sup> See *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5:350.

<sup>6</sup> *Works of Ben Jonson*, 7:201–2. See also 7:207–8.

<sup>7</sup> Loxley, Groundwater, and Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 49. For Jonson's epitaph, see *Works of Ben Jonson*, 5:715.

<sup>8</sup> Loxley, Groundwater, and Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 52.

to Katherine "All that was solid in the name / Of virtue, precious in the frame, / Or else magnetic in the force."<sup>9</sup>

Jonson's next Cavendish commission was of a different order from the monument to Sir Charles. This was an entertainment written at some time before 1625 to celebrate the christening of another Charles, to whom the Prince of Wales stood as godfather. Although it is uncertain whether the child involved was from the Welbeck or Chatsworth branch of the family (both of whom produced Charleses during this period), the fact that the entertainment appears prominently in the Newcastle Manuscript, alongside the three memorial poems and the two epigrams to the earl, may suggest the former.<sup>10</sup> Most of the entertainment's amusement is derived from a squabble between the wet-nurse Dugs and the dry-nurse Kecks over who should have priority, with the midwife Holdback unsuccessfully trying to calm them down; there is a particular stress on the gender, work, and social status of the disputants, all of which serve to demean them. The bodies of the women are sexualized from the moment Dugs attempts to get "a standing behind the arras," to which Kecks responds, "You'll be thrust there, i'faith, nurse," and their involvement in intimate processes of feeding and washing is figured in the drama in terms of a grotesque physicality.<sup>11</sup> Kecks responds to Dugs's prediction that she will choke the child with her breath by saying:

Indeed, you had like to have overlaid it the other night and prevented its christendom, if I had not looked unto you, when you came so bedewed out of the wine cellar and so watered your couch that, to save your credit with my lady next morning, you were glad to lay it upon your innocent bedfellow, and slander him to his mother how plentifully he had sucked.<sup>12</sup>

While Kecks accuses Dugs of blaming the infant for the wet patch, the entertainment itself performs a contrary deception, displacing the incontinence of the child onto its social and gender inferior. Indeed, the women partly serve as the embodiment of qualities—low status and femininity—that need to be cast out in the celebration of an aristocratic male. The antimasque comes to an end when Holdfast gives way to the Mathematician with the words, "Here comes a wise man will tell us another tale"; his ensuing speech moves the focus from the body to the heavens, where "all good aspects agree / To bless with wonder this nativity," and from the midwives to the prince, whose virtues will be passed on to his young namesake.<sup>13</sup>

Although the *Christening Entertainment* was written for the familiar Jonsonian location of the Blackfriars, a notable feature of the work Jonson produced under Cavendish's influence is its willingness to engage with the England that lay beyond his native

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<sup>9</sup> *Works of Ben Jonson*, 6:315–16.

<sup>10</sup> See James Knowles's introduction to *A Cavendish Christening Entertainment*, *Works of Ben Jonson*, 5:401–2.

<sup>11</sup> *A Cavendish Christening Entertainment*, lines 12–13.

<sup>12</sup> *A Cavendish Christening Entertainment*, lines 159–63.

<sup>13</sup> *A Cavendish Christening Entertainment*, lines 166–67, 169–70.

London.<sup>14</sup> It is particularly evident in the entertainment written for Cavendish to welcome King Charles to Welbeck on his 1633 journey to Scotland, a text that, in its emphasis on local topography and custom, acknowledges Cavendish's role as Lord Lieutenant both of Nottinghamshire and of Derbyshire. The entertainments after dinner are introduced by Accidence, a schoolmaster from Mansfield, and Fitzale, a herald from Derby, the latter clad in "an industrious collection of all the written, or reported, wonders of the Peak":

Saint Anne of Buxton's boiling well,  
Or Elden, bottomless like hell,  
Poole's Hole, or Satan's sumptuous arse,  
Sir-reverence, with the mine-men's farce.<sup>15</sup>

As James Knowles points out, the reference to the Devil's Arse (Peak Cavern) recalls Jonson's earlier masque, *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*; the wider focus on the wonders of the peak also resembles a more recent work by a member of the Cavendish circle, Thomas Hobbes's Latin poem *De mirabilibus pecci*, presented to Hobbes's employer the Duke of Devonshire around 1627.<sup>16</sup> Fitzale is specifically identified as a repository of regional lore, able to report "odd tales, / Of our outlaw Robin Hood / That revelled here in Sherwood"; these interests reflect those of Cavendish, himself a Robin Hood enthusiast.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, the comic treatment of these themes makes it hard to be sure how Cavendish is being placed in relation to them. Accidence and Fitzale invite the listeners to celebrate the wedding of Fitzale's daughter Pem to Stub, an "old stock / O' the yeoman block / And forest blood / Of old Sherwood," a symbolic union of the counties that allegorizes Cavendish's double Lord Lieutenancy. Pem, however, is "a daughter stale ... Known up and down / For a great antiquity," whereas the fact that her groom is "no shrimp ... But a bold Stub" who "Presents himself, / Like doughty elf" seems to imply a potentially comic diminutive stature.<sup>18</sup> A degree of ambivalence also surrounds the wedding sport of running at the quintain, a post set up as a target and equipped with a revolving sandbag that would strike the unwary rider. On the one hand, this would have allowed for displays of horsemanship by Stub and others that Cavendish would have appreciated, as well as exemplifying local custom. On the other, both the event and the

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**14** See Martin Butler, "Jonson in the Caroline Period," in *Ben Jonson in Context*, ed. Julie Sanders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 31–38, 36 and Julie Sanders, "Domestic Travel and Social Mobility," in *Ben Jonson in Context*, 271–80, 277.

**15** *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck*, lines 77–80, *Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 6.

**16** See Knowles's introduction to *Entertainment at Welbeck*, *Works of Ben Jonson*, 6:662; Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 240.

**17** *Entertainment at Welbeck*, lines 90–92. On the painted ceiling in the Heaven Closet at Bolsover, one of the cherubs can be seen holding the music for a country dance tune of Robin Hood and Little John. See Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Life of a Seventeenth-Century Playboy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 82.

**18** *Entertainment at Welbeck*, lines 120–23, 106–9, 133–34.

challengers were a far cry from what Cavendish would have contributed to Prince Henry's Barriers. The songs and hornpipes that follow are "broken off" by the entry of "an officer or servant of the Lord Lieutenant's," who berates the revellers for interrupting the King's "serious hours / With light, impertinent, unworthy objects."<sup>19</sup> The entertainment thus enacts both an expression of local culture in keeping with Cavendish's status as regional magnate and a disciplining of it in keeping with his status as officer of the king.

A similar ambivalence is visible in another drama set in Cavendish territory, namely *The Sad Shepherd*, possibly Jonson's last play. As the Prologue explains, Jonson's "scene is Sherwood, and his play a tale / Of Robin Hood's inviting from the Vale / Of Belvoir all the shepherds to a feast": the play is, therefore, as the editors of the *Walk to Scotland* observe, "very much a product of the Cavendish and Rutland domains that Jonson had experienced directly on his 1618 journey through Nottinghamshire," as well as speaking to Cavendish's Robin Hood interests.<sup>20</sup> As Julie Sanders points out, however, Robin Hood in this play is not an outlaw but a "woodman" or forest official; Friar Tuck is his steward, Little John his bow-bearer, Much the miller's son his bailiff. Robin is thus domesticated, professionalized, and placed within an orderly forest hierarchy akin to a noble household, and the crime of stealing venison is committed not by the merry men but the witch Maudlin.<sup>21</sup> Although *The Sad Shepherd* is unfinished and its intended venue unknown, the play's simultaneous evocation of the Robin Hood myth and resistance to the myth's subversive implications recall the Welbeck entertainment and are in keeping with Cavendish's role as Lord Lieutenant.

The *Entertainment at Welbeck* and *The Sad Shepherd* both reveal a Jonson willing to exploit provincial settings and materials. Perhaps surprisingly, the same is not quite true of his final entertainment, *The King and Queen's Entertainment at Bolsover*, staged during a visit whose total cost (according to Cavendish's future wife Margaret) was "between Fourteen and Fifteen thousand pounds."<sup>22</sup> In some respects, this is highly localized drama, exploiting the internal and external spaces of Bolsover Castle. Its opening song, which includes the lines "When were the senses in such order placed? / The sight, the hearing, smelling, touching, taste, / All at one banquet," would have been well suited to the Pillar Chamber, which is decorated with "lunettes depicting the Five senses, copied from engravings by Cornelis Cort after Franz Floris."<sup>23</sup> The second sequence is written to be performed in the garden, which is fittingly adorned with a

<sup>19</sup> *Entertainment at Welbeck*, lines 261–62, 273–74.

<sup>20</sup> *The Sad Shepherd*, Prologue, lines 15–17, *Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 7; Loxley, Groundwater, and Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 168.

<sup>21</sup> Julie Sanders, *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama 1620–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 86, 89, 94.

<sup>22</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and puissant Prince William Cavendish, Duke, Marquess and Earl of Newcastle* (London, 1667), 140.

<sup>23</sup> *The King and Queen's Entertainment at Bolsover*, lines 5–7, *Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 6; Timothy Raylor, " 'Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue': William Cavendish, Ben Jonson, and the Decorative Scheme of Bolsover Castle," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999): 402–39 at 412, 416.

statue of Venus as well as possessing a circular shape that “symbolises the perfect circle of love that links a husband and wife in the fashionable philosophy of Neoplatonism that Charles I’s court ... adopted.”<sup>24</sup> In the final section, Eros observes of love, “It is the place sure breeds it, where we are,” to which Anteros replies, “The King and Queen’s court, that is circular / And perfect.”<sup>25</sup>

And yet, in so far as the entertainment is taking place at court, defined as such by the presence of the king and queen, to just that extent it is not taking place in Bolsover. Unlike at Welbeck, there is very little sense here of geographical space beyond Philaethes’ qualification of his own description of the place as “the divine school of love”: “Which if you, brethren, should report and swear to, would hardly get credit above a fable here in Derbyshire, the region of ale.” The provincial location, rather than driving the entertainment as at Welbeck, is invoked only to represent the mundane perspective that would not credit the place’s true status as “an academy or court where all the true lessons of love are throughly read and taught.”<sup>26</sup> The most comic sequence in proceedings, featuring Colonel Vitruvius and the mechanics, is a scarcely veiled satire on Inigo Jones; just as Charles and Henrietta Maria brought the entertainment’s court setting with them, so to speak, when they came to Bolsover, so Jonson’s court rivalries also shape the piece.

The Neoplatonic ideas about love that inform the *Entertainment at Bolsover* had already been explored by Jonson five years earlier in *The New Inn*, where the character Lovel utters his description of love as “a spiritual coupling of two souls, / So much more excellent as it least relates / Unto the body; circular, eternal” (and much more besides) to the Court of Love over which Prudence presides. However, Beaufort’s stated preference for “a banquet o’ sense like that of Ovid” not only anticipates the imagery of the opening song at Bolsover but also creates a double image of love—spiritual and sensual—that chimes with the willingness to entertain contraries that can be discerned in the juxtaposition of the baroque Heaven Closet beside Cavendish’s chamber at Bolsover with the more Ovidian Elysium.<sup>27</sup>

Although *The New Inn* was written for the Blackfriars theatre, not for any specifically Cavendish auspices, its themes dovetail with the known interests of William Cavendish in a number of respects. It engages repeatedly with the concept of nobility, as exemplified in the opening scene when Lovel and the Host discuss the role of the noble household as an “academy of honour” and its fall from that ideal in the present age.<sup>28</sup> Cavendish’s obsession of *manège* informs both this conversation and, in a different key, the lengthy below-stairs discussion of the corrupt practices of ostlers. The Host’s veneration of Euclid as “The only fencer of name”—“He does it all by lines and angles”—although treated comically, overlaps intriguingly with Cavendish’s later interest in the

<sup>24</sup> Worsley, *Cavalier*, 95.

<sup>25</sup> *Entertainment at Bolsover*, lines 121–23.

<sup>26</sup> *Entertainment at Bolsover*, lines 128–33.

<sup>27</sup> *The New Inn*, 3.2.103–5, 124, *Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 6.

<sup>28</sup> *New Inn*, 1.3.57.

mathematics of swordsmanship, on which he had Thomas Hobbes write a treatise in the mid to late 1640s.<sup>29</sup> The Host's complaints that Lovel spends his time "poring through a multiplying glass / Upon a captived crab-louse or a cheese-mite" recall Cavendish's longstanding interest in lens manufacture.<sup>30</sup> And Anne Barton links the nostalgia for old-fashioned notions of nobility expressed by Lovel and the Host to Cavendish's neo-Elizabethanism as exemplified in *The Variety*.<sup>31</sup> Given the way Lady Frampul's praise of his swordsmanship, "his sword and arm were of a piece," and Lovel's own description of riding as "the centaurs' skill, the art of Thrace" both incorporate phrases from Jonson's epigram on Cavendish, it is tempting to wonder whether the character is intended as some sort of homage.<sup>32</sup>

However, the desire to make connections between Jonson's plays and historical individuals needs to be balanced with an awareness of the dramatist's own playfulness and tendency to misdirection. Critical response to Jonson's next work for the theatre, *The Magnetic Lady; or, Humours Reconciled*, exemplifies the problem. On the one hand the play has been read by Helen Ostovich as "a major tribute to the family of [Jonson's] best patron" and part of its source material as being "the Cavendish family 'romance.'" As Ostovich points out, Katherine Ogle was "the woman whom Jonson first described as 'magnetic'"; Cavendish's use of the same epithet to describe the widow Beaufield in *The Variety* (see the next section of this chapter) implies some kind of shared discourse of magnetism, a topic in which Cavendish was certainly interested. While Compass's skill in mathematics likens him both to William and, especially, to his brother Charles, Ostovich suggests that his friend, the more irascible Ironside, has the qualities of their father, the "spoils" of whose heroic victory over Sir John Stanhope and a group of hired killers Jonson saw at Welbeck.<sup>33</sup>

Other critics, however, have found a more autobiographical side to Compass, Anne Barton suggesting that he is "in some measure to be identified with Jonson himself." In the play, Compass's task is the metadramatic one of achieving a harmonious ending by drawing together the other characters' different humours. Jonson's Induction refers to this play as shutting up the circle of his career, giving it a biographical significance to which Compass's character name seems to speak. Barton also cites William Drummond's

<sup>29</sup> *New Inn*, 2.5.91–92; Timothy Raylor, "Thomas Hobbes and 'The Mathematical Demonstration of the Sword,'" *The Seventeenth Century* 15 (2000): 175–98.

<sup>30</sup> *New Inn*, 1.1.29–30; Timothy Raylor, "William Cavendish as a Patron of Philosophers and Scientists," in *Royalist Refugees: William and Margaret Cavendish in the Rubens House 1648–1660*, ed. Ben Van Beneden and Nora De Poorter (Schoten: BAI, 2006), 78–82, 79.

<sup>31</sup> Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 300–320.

<sup>32</sup> *New Inn*, 4.3.20, 1.3.61. For a nuanced account of this play in relation to Cavendish, see Nick Rowe, "'My Best Patron': William Cavendish and Jonson's Caroline Dramas," *The Seventeenth Century* 9 (1994): 197–212.

<sup>33</sup> See Ostovich's introduction to *The Magnetic Lady; or, Humours Reconciled*, in *Works of Ben Jonson*, 6:393, 400, 402, 408. On Stanhope, see Loxley, Groundwater, and Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 51.

note that Jonson chose as his personal impresa a broken compass; Ironside, in this reading, represents another side to Jonson's personality, less measured and more irrational, that is needed to complete the whole.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps, however, there is no need to choose between the two interpretations of *The Magnetic Lady*, the Cavendish one and the autobiographical one. As the Boy puts it in the Induction, the poet, "finding himself now near the close or shutting up of his circle, hath fancied to himself in idea this magnetic mistress. A lady, a brave bountiful housekeeper and a virtuous widow."<sup>35</sup> Thus Jonson's late-career self-fashioning seems to have been bound up with his relationship to the Cavendishes, including the woman of whom he had written "All circles had their spring and end / In her." Jonson's return to humours comedy with *The Magnetic Lady* is presented, however accurately, as a return to his own dramatic beginnings; if Lady Loadstone is in some sense a figuring of Katherine Ogle, "Old Lady Candish," as conceived in Jonson's epitaph, makes a very appropriate presiding genius.

## William Cavendish

The preceding section of this chapter identified some of the benefits that William Cavendish obtained through his patronage of Jonson, including memorials to family members, laudatory epigrams, and royal entertainments.<sup>36</sup> However, at a less strategic level there is abundant evidence that Cavendish simply liked the things that Jonson wrote: not only do his plays explore themes of interest to Cavendish, including nobility, experimental science, and provincial folklore, but an array of references to Jonson in Cavendish's writings attest to the significance the older writer held for him and to Jonson's influence on his own work. As Gerard Langbaine would write in 1691, this "*English Mecænas*" had a "particular kindness for that Great Master of Dramatick Poesy, the Excellent *Johnson*; and 'twas from him that he attain'd to a perfect Knowledge of what was to be accounted True Humour in Comedy."<sup>37</sup>

One tangible indication of Cavendish's personal interest in Jonson is the Newcastle Manuscript (British Library, MS Harley 4955), a folio volume transcribed by Cavendish's secretary John Rolleston in the early 1630s.<sup>38</sup> In addition to works of obvious family interest such as the Blackfriars, Welbeck, and Bolsover entertainments, it includes *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*, some twenty-six leaves of miscellaneous verse by Jonson dating back to around 1612, and other works by King James, John Donne, Thomas Carew, and

<sup>34</sup> Barton, *Ben Jonson*, 296; *Informations to William Drummond of Hawthornden*, lines 457–58, *Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 5.

<sup>35</sup> *Magnetic Lady*, Induction, lines 79–82.

<sup>36</sup> Cedric C. Brown offers a wide-ranging account of this topic in "Courtesies of Place and the Arts of Diplomacy in Ben Jonson's Last Two Entertainments for Royalty," *The Seventeenth Century* 9 (1994): 147–71.

<sup>37</sup> Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (London, 1691), 386.

<sup>38</sup> Hilton Kelliher, "Donne, Jonson, Richard Andrews and The Newcastle Manuscript," *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700* 4 (1993): 134–73 at 144, 150.

Richard Andrews. The Jonson on display here is not simply an object of patronage but a poet to be admired and enjoyed alongside other poets. The manuscript places Jonson as an important literary figure within the private space of Cavendish's household, his works made personal to Cavendish through processes of selection and transcription.

Jonson's textual presence within this environment is revealed in a different manner in the "private verse laments that Cavendish was to write on his passing in 1637."<sup>39</sup> Timothy Raylor has shown how manuscripts of one of these, "To Ben Jonson's Ghost," give us Cavendish's original draft and corrections, further substantial emendations in the hand of his chaplain Robert Payne, and Rolleston's transcription, which includes yet more minor changes. In resurrecting Jonson as shade, then, the poem also offers a glimpse of Jonson as material for the "process of collaborative composition" that Raylor reconstructs at Welbeck.<sup>40</sup> In addition, it represents an important example of Cavendish self-consciously engaging with Jonson's creative legacy. Jonson is compared positively both to ancient Romans ("Their witt, to Thine's as heauy as thy lead") and to the insubstantial wit of "our liueing Men"; he being gone, we have no poets, only wits. The poem concludes:

Rest then, in Peace, in our vast Mothers wombe,  
Thou art a Monument, without a Tombe.  
Is any Infidel? Let him but looke  
And read, Hee may be saued by thy Booke.<sup>41</sup>

There is a slightly double-edged quality to these lines: although "infidel" inscribes Jonson as a poetic deity, giving his works the quality of scripture, "saued by thy Booke" also alludes to his notorious escape from hanging for murder by pleading benefit of clergy. The reference to "our vast Mothers wombe," too, seems pointed in view of the earlier reference to Jonson's weight: the Earth needs to be vast in order to hold him. Finally, it is difficult to know how to take the description of Jonson as "a Monument, without a Tombe," which repeats a line from Jonson's prefatory verses to the 1623 Shakespeare Folio. As Raylor acknowledges, there is something appropriate in a memorial poem about Jonson recycling a memorial poem by Jonson. However, Raylor goes on to point to Cavendish's repeated "reliance on the crutches provided by Jonsonian conceits and Jonsonian plots" elsewhere in his writings, a phenomenon that he sees less as "imitation" than as "appropriation."<sup>42</sup> In this view of Jonson's relationship with Cavendish, the older writer becomes an unacknowledged, if posthumous, helper, his invisible labour akin to that of Payne and Rolleston.

One piece of evidence that Raylor adduces is the early drama *Wit's Triumvirate*, which survives in a manuscript transcribed by Rolleston with revisions by Cavendish and

<sup>39</sup> Kelliher, "Donne, Jonson," 158.

<sup>40</sup> Timothy Raylor, "Newcastle's Ghosts: Robert Payne, Ben Jonson, and the 'Cavendish Circle,'" in *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 92–114 at 108.

<sup>41</sup> Cited from Raylor, "Newcastle's Ghosts," 109.

<sup>42</sup> Raylor, "Newcastle's Ghosts," 113–14.

Payne and whose "Prologue before the King and Queen" is dated "1635."<sup>43</sup> The premise of this play is clearly taken from *The Alchemist*: three cheaters share a house in which, as a lawyer, a divine, and a physician, they minister to characters suffering from a range of humorous afflictions such as morbid fear of the dark, superstition, and hypochondria. As the play's modern editor observes, the shifting allegiances between the characters also recall *The Alchemist*, as does the presence of a disbelieving character who attempts to uncover the cheats' deceptions. And "the author follows Jonson's example in using dramatic satire, comic 'humor' characterization, and a 'norm' character," the sceptic Algebra.<sup>44</sup>

However, just as Cavendish in the elegy complicates his praise of Jonson with allusions to his weight and criminal past, so his use of Jonson in *Wit's Trumvirate* is less derivative than Raylor allows. The play is not so dramatically sophisticated as *The Alchemist*, consisting of episodic and unrelated interactions between individual cheaters and their gulls. While this may stem from Cavendish's lack of Jonson's expertise in plotting, it also reflects the play's different priorities. Much more than Jonson, Cavendish is interested in the gulls' delusions for their own sake, as with Fright's hallucinations:

FRIGHT. Then, Doctor, walking in my park, methought I saw—

CLYSTER. What, sir?

FRIGHT. The red dragon looking—

CLYSTER. How looking?

FRIGHT. Whom he might devour. And as I near it came, what do you think it was?

CLYSTER. A tree, some odd tree.

FRIGHT. Ay, by my troth, *deceptio visus*. A sleight,

I fear, of the old Juggler, the Great Deceiver.<sup>45</sup>

The love-melancholy and compulsive versifying of Phantsy, the horn-madness of Jealousia, the murders committed in dreams by the coward Conquest: all are recounted at unnecessary length, the focus being more on the sufferers themselves than on the means used to cheat them. This emphasis on pathology over drama informs the ending, where, instead of the characters being purged of their humours in Jonsonian manner, they are reassured by Algebra that their behaviour falls within the spectrum of normality: Sickly is told, for example, "you had a little too much care of your body, but most, sir, have a touch that way. Therefore, think you are well, and you are so, for none in this world hath perfect health."<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Kelliher, "Donne, Jonson," 150–52; Raylor, "Newcastle's Ghosts," 101; Cathryn Anne Nelson, "A Critical Edition of 'Wit's Trumvirate, or The Philosopher,'" PhD thesis, University of Arizona, 1970, 97.

<sup>44</sup> *Wit's Trumvirate*, 8–11, 1–2.

<sup>45</sup> *Wit's Trumvirate*, 1.2.43–51.

<sup>46</sup> *Wit's Trumvirate*, 5.4.73–77.

While *Wit's Triumvirate* is built on a Jonsonian premise, Cavendish uses the trio of cheaters and their humorous gulls for intellectual purposes very different from those of *The Alchemist*. There is one explicit mention of Jonson. When Phantasy explains that one can get a reputation as a playwright by putting "old jests into ballad rhyme" and patching them up with bits of old plays, Clyster responds, "But this is mean and poor, not worthy of a poet." Phantasy initially seems to agree: "Not of our kingdom's immortal honor and his own, our learned and most famous Jonson, our best poet."<sup>47</sup> This jars confusingly with his earlier lines, and, in fact, the sentence has been inserted into Rolleston's transcription in Cavendish's hand. The addition is difficult to interpret: it could be seen as a tribute made after Jonson's death in 1637, an apologetic gesture acknowledging Jonson's influence on the play, or, perhaps, a playful joke at Cavendish's own expense. Not only does the line appear in a conversation about making new plays out of old ones: Phantasy's later defence of writing for the stage, "as long as I am not mercenary but give it them, is it not as lawful for me to give them wit as noblemen and ladies to give them clothes?" seems to chime with Cavendish's own situation as aristocratic amateur.<sup>48</sup>

The two plays written for the Blackfriars before the Civil War and published during Cavendish's time in Antwerp, *The Country Captain* and *The Variety*, both include Jonsonian touches. In addition to those already mentioned in Matthew Steggle's chapter, I would note that in the former, the Prologue opposes audiences' "sight" to their "understandings," a Jonsonian contrast; the penitence of the would-be seducer Sir Francis Courtwell recalls Wittipoll in *The Devil is an Ass*, and the scene where Engine, the projector, vomits the items on which he has monopolies revisits the purge in *Poetaster*.<sup>49</sup> The dramatist James Shirley seems to have contributed to the writing of these two plays; however, Richard Brome in his verses "To my Lord of Newcastle, on his Play called *The Variety*" explicitly linked Cavendish with Jonson when he wrote that "all was such, to all that understood, / As knowing *Johnson*, swore By God 'twas good," while, as Richard Wood explains in the current volume, the play has been read as expressing a nostalgia for the age of Elizabeth, which Cavendish shared with the later Jonson.<sup>50</sup> The recurrent use of the language of "humours" clearly situates the drama in a Jonsonian idiom.<sup>51</sup>

As in *Wit's Triumvirate*, though, Cavendish's use of this idiom is far from slavish. Manly, although laudable, is not idealized to the extent of Lovel or Compass: his eccentricity of dress is a "humor," and his evocations of Elizabethan style are frequently ridiculous, as when he says of a lord and lady dancing the volta, "Marry as soon as he had ended his dance she would lye down as dead as a swing'd chicken, with the head under

<sup>47</sup> *Wit's Triumvirate*, 4.4.151, 164–68.

<sup>48</sup> *Wit's Triumvirate*, 4.4.209–12.

<sup>49</sup> William Cavendish, *The Countrie Captaine*, sig. A1r, in *The Countrie Captaine, and The Varietie* (London, 1649).

<sup>50</sup> On Shirley's contribution, see Hulse, "Cavendish, William"; for Brome's poem, see Richard Brome, *The Weeding of the Covent-Garden*, sig. A4r, in *Five Nevv Playes* (London, 1659).

<sup>51</sup> William Cavendish, *The Varietie*, 2, in *The Countrie Captaine, and The Varietie*.

the wing, so dissie was she, and so out of breath."<sup>52</sup> More impressive than a Bobadilla but more absurd than an Edward Knowell, Manly is hard to gauge, perhaps expressing Cavendish's own uneasy sense of his place in the Caroline court; Barton notes that in 1632 "he described himself sourly as a Lord of Misrule, for 'I take that title for an honor in these dayes.'"<sup>53</sup>

Barton finds proof of the play's identification with the age of Elizabeth in the fact that when another character, Simpleton, adopts a Jacobean manner, the effect is more self-evidently ridiculous: only a clown would dream of treating James's reign as a source of retro chic. It is therefore odd that one of Simpleton's affectations is to sing a piece from *The Devil is an Ass* and even more odd, given Cavendish's admiration for Jonson, that Manly chooses to mock it:

SIMP. Have you felt the wooll of Beaver?

MAN. —Or sheepes down ever?

SIM. —Have you smelt of the bud of the Rose?

MAN. —In his pudding hose.<sup>54</sup>

Simpleton goes on to sing verses from the ballads of Little Musgrave and Chevy Chase, so perhaps the overall effect is not so much to ridicule Jonson as—only a few years after his death—to place him in the literary past, alongside Shakespeare (whose plays are brought on stage in *The Country Captain*) and Marlowe (whose *Tamburlaine* Simpleton quotes in a later scene).<sup>55</sup> The episode marks a shift in Cavendish's use of Jonson: from imitation alone to a kind of literary curatorship.

This sense of the pastness of Jonson is even more evident in Cavendish's dramatic works after the Restoration. He continues to imitate: witness Master Furrs in *The Humorous Lovers*, "An old Gentleman very fearful of catching cold" who is said to wear "such a Turbant of Night-caps, that he is almost as tall as *Grantham* steeple" and who seems indebted to *Epicoene's* Morose.<sup>56</sup> But he also consigns Jonson to literary history. In *The Triumphant Widow, or The Medley of Humours*, characters discuss how to revive a poet who has fallen into a rapture: various Greek and Latin poets are suggested and rejected, then Shakespeare, then Beaumont and Fletcher:

DOCT. The last Remedy, like Pigeons to the soles of the feet, must be to apply my dear Friend Mr. *Johnson's* Works, but they must be apply'd to his head.

CODSH. Oh, have a care, Doctor, he hates *Ben. Johnson*, he has an Antipathy to him.

CRAMB. Oh, I hate *Johnson*, oh oh, dull dull, oh oh no Wit.

<sup>52</sup> *The Varietie*, 3, 43–44.

<sup>53</sup> Barton, *Ben Jonson*, 318.

<sup>54</sup> *The Varietie*, 57.

<sup>55</sup> *The Countreie Captain*, 25; *The Varietie*, 72.

<sup>56</sup> William Cavendish, *The Humorous Lovers* (London, 1677), sig. A3v, 9.

DOCT. 'Tis you are dull; he speaks now, but I have less hopes of him for this; dull! he was the Honour of his Nation, and the Poet of Poets, if any thing will do't, he will bring your Poet into his Wits again, and make him write Sense and Reason, and purifie his Language, and make him leave his foolish phantastical heroick Fustian.<sup>57</sup>

The Doctor's reference to "my dear Friend Mr. *Johnson*" may express Cavendish's personal affection, but Jonson, nearly four decades dead by the time the play was staged at Dorset Garden, is spoken of very much in the past tense, as well as being associated with worthy values of "Sense and Reason." The fact that the Doctor refers only to English dramatists who have been published in folio may say something, too, about the monumental status they have acquired. Jonson is now a material object, his Works—to be applied to the head. The public, canonical, national playwright embodied in the Works is a far cry from the friend (and client) whose writings were copied into the Newcastle Manuscript for Cavendish's private enjoyment, and the contrast between the two texts reflects the changing significance of Jonson for Cavendish over the decades: from entertainer and employee to influence, and finally to shorthand for a specific dramatic tradition with which Cavendish chose to identify himself.

### Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley

While Jonson is explicitly made a presiding genius in William Cavendish's dramatic writings, he occupies no such place in the work of William's daughters, Jane and Elizabeth. If anyone is given the role of external literary authority in *The Concealed Fancies*, it is Cavendish himself, aka Lord Calsindow, Luceny's "Alpha & Omega of Gouvernem'" (2.3).<sup>58</sup> As far as less obvious allusions go, the play seems to engage more creatively with Shakespeare (in particular *The Taming of the Shrew*) than with Jonson.<sup>59</sup> Alison Findlay, however, notes that the godlike descent from the sky of Courtley and Presumption recalls that of the Cupids in *Entertainment at Bolsover* and wonders whether "costumes from the Jonson entertainments were still in the Cavendish houses," available for reuse.<sup>60</sup> Elements of the play's structure and idiom are also Jonsonian. The

<sup>57</sup> William Cavendish, *The Triumphant Widow, or The Medley of Humours* (London, 1677), 60–61.

<sup>58</sup> Jane Cavendish, *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, ed. Alexandra G. Bennett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 103. See also Margaret J. M. Ezell, "'To Be Your Daughter in Your Pen': The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 51 (1988): 281–96.

<sup>59</sup> See Lisa Hopkins, "Judith Shakespeare's Reading: Teaching 'The Concealed Fancies,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (1996): 396–406.

<sup>60</sup> Alison Findlay, "'She Gave You the Civility of the House': Household Performance in 'The Concealed Fancies,'" in *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594–1998*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 1998), 259–71, 264.

word “humour” appears four times in the opening scene, and much of its characterization relies on the contrasting of humours: Courtley versus Presumption, Action versus Moderate, the enthusiastic Elder versus the discreet Younger Stellow. More specifically, I would argue for the pervasive influence of *The New Inn*, a play that is fundamentally about the concealed fancies of Lovel and Lady Frampul. Both include courting scenes where an appearance of disdain obscures characters’ real feelings; notably, the unusual word “courting-stock” appears in both (a search of Early English Books Online found *The New Inn* and *Cynthia’s Revels* as the only instances before 1656). And both place women firmly in charge of these scenes, a feature of Jonson’s play that may have appealed to the sisters. Finally, the way the action of *The New Inn* oscillates between above and below stairs anticipates the way *The Concealed Fancies* cuts between different social groupings: the two sets of sisters and their suitors, but also ushers, stewards, kitchen servants, and maidservants. The impression of two sprawling households seems to pick up on the way Jonson surveys the full extent of the Inn’s occupants and employees. If *The New Inn* was written with William Cavendish in mind, as I suggested earlier, that would make it an obvious reference point for his daughters; the fact that it had appeared in octavo in 1631 may also have made it more readily available to them than the plays of the second folio, published a decade later.

Marion Wynne-Davies has linked the rustic antemasque in *A Pastorall*, too, to Jonson, citing the “low comedy” of the Welbeck and Bolosover entertainments as an influence.<sup>61</sup> Another relevant text, though, may be *The Masque of Queens*, which (like *A Pastorall*) includes an antemasque of witches. There, Dame Ate enters with “a torch made of a dead man’s arm,” the Fourth Hag has brought a skull from a charnel-house, and the Sixth has “Kill’d an Infant, to have his fat”; the grotesque use of body parts is conventional, but Jonson’s text may be remembered in the following exchange between the prentice and the two other witches:

PRE. What’s the ingredience of your Perfume  
 BELL. All horrid things to burne i’ th Roome  
 HAG. As Childrens heads  
 BELL. Mens leggs  
 HAG. Weomens Armes  
 BELL. And little Barnes

Their injunction to her “that vs you shall not slight,” “For with vs you shall oynt and make a flight” also echoes the Jonsonian Hag’s opening charm calling on Ate “That she quickly anoint, and come away.”<sup>62</sup> However, while *The Masque of Queens* celebrates royalty, the

<sup>61</sup> Marion Wynne-Davies, “‘My Seeled Chamber and Dark Parlour Room’: The English Country House and Renaissance Women Dramatists,” in *Readings*, ed. Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, 60–68, 66.

<sup>62</sup> *Works of Jane Cavendish*, 80–81; *The Masque of Queens*, lines 79, 151, 34, *Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 3.

Cavendishes make *A Pastorall* speak to its Civil War context and their own fortunes, with the witches claiming responsibility for setting families against one another and capturing women.

### Margaret Cavendish

Ben Jonson's ghost, lamented by William Cavendish in 1637, makes another appearance in his prefatory poem to the second edition of Margaret Cavendish's *Poems, and Phancies* in 1664:

Your *New-born, Sublime Fancies*, and such store,  
May make our *Poets* blush, and Write no more:  
Nay, *Spencers Ghost* will haunt you in the Night,  
And *Johnson* rise, full fraught with *Venom's Spight*<sup>63</sup>

Having invoked Jonson as a point of reference in his own writings, he does the same when praising those of his wife; here, though, Jonson is ranked with Spenser, Beaumont, Fletcher, Shakespeare, and Chaucer as consigned to oblivion by her superior work. Margaret Cavendish herself is somewhat more conservative in her assessment of her oeuvre, but critics have noted the way she, too, uses Jonson and Shakespeare as a way of creating an authorial identity. In her letters to the readers of her 1662 *Playes*, Jonson is repeatedly mentioned. Acknowledging their length, she continues, "yet, I believe none of my Playes are so long as *Ben. Johnson's Fox*, or *Alchymist*, which in truth, are somewhat too long."<sup>64</sup> Defending their failure to observe the unity of time, she observes that "though *Ben. Johnson* as I have heard was of that opinion, that a Comedy cannot be good, nor is a natural or true Comedy, if it should present more than one dayes action, yet his Comedies that he hath published, could never be the actions of one day; for could any rational person think that the whole Play of the Fox could be the action of one day?"<sup>65</sup> Cavendish's use of Jonson here is ambiguous, identifying Jonson as an authority on drama only to note his plays' imperfections or absurdities. The same is true of her "General Prologue to all my Playes," where Cavendish contrasts her dramatic profusion, that "like to a common rout, / Gathers in throngs, and heedlesly runs out," with Jonson's plays, which "came forth ... Like Forein Emperors, which do appear / Unto their Subjects, not 'bove once a year." The plays themselves are "Master-pieces," imperial, but the praise of Jonson's slowness is equivocal, recalling Captain Tucca's accusation against Jonson's alter ego Horace in *Satiromastix*, "you and your Itchy Poetry breake out like Christmas, but once a year."<sup>66</sup> In fact, as Shannon Miller has argued, Cavendish invokes Jonson partly to distance herself from his example. With ostensible humility, she contrasts her poems with those of "former daies; / As Johnson, Shakespear, Beamont, Fletcher

<sup>63</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Poems, and Phancies* (London, 1664), sig. Ar2.

<sup>64</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Playes Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious and Excellent Princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London, 1662), sig. A3(2)v.

<sup>65</sup> Cavendish, *Playes*, sig. A4v.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Dekker, *Satiro-mastix, or The Vntrussing of the Humorous Poet* (London, 1602), sig. L3v.

writ; / Mine want their Learning, Reading, Language, Wit." A few lines earlier, however, Cavendish has observed that while Jonson's brain "was so strong, / He could conceive, or judge, what's right, what's wrong," "Yet Gentle *Shakespear* had a fluent Wit, / Although less Learning, yet full well he writ." In setting up Shakespeare's wit against Jonson's learning, Cavendish asserts the possibility of writing great drama without being able to translate "Latin phrases," implicitly aligning herself with Shakespeare in this regard: "By employing common comparisons between these two playwrights, Cavendish can deploy her account of Jonson's work to elevate her writings through association with the emerging canonical frontrunner."<sup>67</sup>

Beyond these prefatory materials, Jonson has been identified as an influence on Cavendish's drama. Erna Kelly finds echoes of humours comedy in *The Religious* and *The Matrimonial Trouble*, while Brandie Siegfried links the treatment of sense versus reason in *The Convent of Pleasure* to the "banquet of sense" topos as variously treated by Jonson and Shakespeare.<sup>68</sup> Julie Sanders considers the "Fragments ... of a Play which I did intend for my Blazing-World" published in *Plays, Never Before Printed* and finds in the half-human, half-animal characters suggestions of a "beast-fable" along the lines of *Volpone*.<sup>69</sup> And Lara Dodds has argued that, like her critical writings, Cavendish's dramatic works place Shakespeare and Jonson in dialogue with one another. In a nuanced and provocative reading, Dodds argues that in the multiple plots of *Loves Adventures* "Cavendish juxtaposes a clearly Shakespearean romantic comedy with two different explorations of Jonsonian humor."<sup>70</sup> This aspect of Cavendish studies promises to be a fertile ground for future research and can scarcely be done justice in the current brief survey.

However, it is *The Blazing World* that offers the most sustained explicit discussion of Jonson in Cavendish's writing outside the prefaces to *Plays*, when the Empress asks the Air Spirits summoned by the Fly-men about how things are in the world she has come from. After hearing the news and how her friends are doing, she asks about the state of experimental philosophy and whether anyone has "found out yet the Jews Cabbala." It seems that Dee and Kelly came nearest;

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<sup>67</sup> Cavendish, *Plays*, sigs. A7r–A7v; Shannon Miller, "'Thou Art a Monument, without a Tombe': Affiliation and Memorialization in Margaret Cavendish's 'Playes' and 'Plays, Never Before Printed,'" in *Cavendish and Shakespeare, Interconnections*, ed. Katherine Romack and James Fitzmaurice (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 7–28, 9.

<sup>68</sup> Erna Kelly, "Drama's Olio: A New Way to Serve Old Ingredients in 'The Religious' and 'The Matrimonial Trouble,'" in *Cavendish and Shakespeare*, ed. Romack and Fitzmaurice, 47–62; Brandie R. Siegfried, "Dining at the Table of Sense: Shakespeare, Cavendish, and 'The Convent of Pleasure,'" in *Cavendish and Shakespeare*, 63–83.

<sup>69</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "A Piece of a Play," in *Plays, Never Before Printed* (London, 1668), sig. A1r; Julie Sanders, "'A Woman Write a Play!' Jonsonian Strategies and the Dramatic Writings of Margaret Cavendish," in *Readings*, ed. Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, 293–305, 296.

<sup>70</sup> Lara Dodds, *The Literary Invention of Margaret Cavendish* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2013), 159–90, 161.

but yet they proved at last but meer Cheats, and were described by one of their own Country-men, a famous Poet, named *Ben. Johnson*, in a Play call'd *The Alchymist*, where he expressed *Kelly* by Capt. *Face*, and *Dee* by Dr. *Subtle*, and their two Wives by *Doll Common*, and the Widow; by the Spaniard in the Play, he meant the Spanish Ambassador, and by Sir *Epicure Mammon*, a Polish Lord. The Emperess remembered that she had seen the Play, and asked the Spirits whom he meant by the name of *Ananias*? Some Zealous Brethren, answered they, in *Holland*, *Germany*, and several other places. Then she asked them, Who was meant by the Druggist? Truly, answered the Spirits, we have forgot, it being so long since it was made and acted.<sup>71</sup>

As Sanders points out, *The Alchemist's* "peculiar investment in questions of the feigned and the actual, and in utopian and dystopian visions" made it an especially appropriate reference point for Cavendish's sci-fi romance.<sup>72</sup> Another point worth making about the Empress's discussion, though, is the sense of cultural distance it expresses. While the play is sufficiently current in the theatrical repertory for the Empress to have seen it, the moment when it was written and first acted (and the poet's intentions accessible) is so long ago that the Spirits have forgotten who Druggier was supposed to represent. In this respect, their position is strangely analogous to that of Cavendish's own husband: once able to ascertain Jonson's intentions directly, but now bedevilled by time and memory loss. This makes *The Blazing World* an appropriate place to end a survey of Jonson's relationship with the Cavendishes, for it reasserts something that was noted at the outset: the sheer longevity of their collective span. When he had taken part in Jonson-scripted entertainments in the Jacobean period, the teenaged Cavendish had been twenty-one years Jonson's junior, and as well as employing the poet, Cavendish would go on to learn from him as a dramatist in his own right. Decades later, however, after exile and the Restoration, Cavendish found in Jonson a writer who stood for a past that was distant but still tangible—the dramatic golden age of the 1590s and 1600s. It is easy to see why Cavendish might have wanted to assert his connection to such a figure. And, in view of the ambivalent respect towards Jonson that comes across in her own work, perhaps it makes sense to see Margaret's allusion in *The Blazing World* as her own wry comment on her husband's reminiscences.

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<sup>71</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (London, 1666), 65–66.

<sup>72</sup> Sanders, "A Woman Write a Play!," 296.

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## Chapter 8

# WILLIAM CAVENDISH: VIRTUE, VIRTUOSITY AND THE IMAGE OF THE COURTIER

Rachel Willie\*

The greatest family was the Earl of Newcastle's, a lord once so much loved in his county ... He had, indeed, through his great estate, and liberal hospitality and constant residence in his county, so endeared [the gentleman of the county] to him that no man was a greater prince than he in all that northern quarter, till a foolish ambition of glorious slavery carried him to court, where he ran himself much into debt to purchase neglects of the King and Queen, and scorns of the proud courtiers.

(Lucy Hutchinson)

All that can be said for the marquis is, that he was so utterly tired with a condition and employment so contrary to his humour, nature and education, that he did not at all consider the means or the way that would let him out of it, and free him forever from having more to do with it. It was a greater wonder that he sustained the vexation and fatigue of [the battlefield and generalship of the royalist troops] for so long, than that he broke from it with so little circumspection.

(Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon)<sup>1</sup>

The often-cited observations by the Parliamentary Lucy Hutchinson and the Royalist Earl of Clarendon that preface this chapter are well known to Cavendish scholars, but they are worth returning to again. They exemplify both Royalist and Parliamentary feeling with regard to William Cavendish and the ways in which his reputation diminished following his defeat at the Battle of Marston Moor in July 1644. Financially spent, and with his army seriously depleted and scattered, Cavendish set sail for Hamburg and fifteen years of exile, declaring that he would not “endure the laughter of the Court.”<sup>2</sup>

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\* I am grateful to Douglas Clark for his comments and to Niall Allsopp, Joseph Hone, Susan Wiseman, and all who attended the Literature and the Early Modern State Conference (University of Cambridge, 2019) for their helpful observations.

1 Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. N. H. Keeble (London: Phoenix, 2002), 84; Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, ed. W. D. Macray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888), 3:380–81.

2 Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince William Cavendish, Duke, Marquess and Earl of Newcastle* (London, 1667), 50. See also Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a Seventeenth-Century Playboy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 167; Diane Purkiss, *The English Civil War: A People's History* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), 336. On the Battle of Marston Moor, see also Peter Young, *Marston Moor, 1644: The Campaign and the Battle* (Kineton: Roundwood, 1970); Trevor Royle, *Civil War: The Wars of the Three Kingdoms, 1638–1660* (London: Abacus, 2004), 281–99; and Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 285–90.

For contemporaries, Cavendish placed the appearance of honour and fear of ridicule at the faction-fuelled court above actual honour and duty in continuing to fight for his king. Later critics have sought to temper this damning caricature of Cavendish's temperament.<sup>3</sup> However, as Elspeth Graham has deftly observed, although Cavendish's reasons for abandoning his generalship might be more complex than bruised personal vanity, the very fact that both Royalists and Parliamentarians presented him as a whimsical romantic not fit for the battlefield means that we ought to pay attention to these critiques.<sup>4</sup> As Graham contends, far from exposing Cavendish as a dilettante, the presentation of a romantic and poetic spirit married with military ability (and especially horsemanship) was a necessary part of Cavendish's attempts to restore his reputation in the decades after the Battle of Marston Moor.<sup>5</sup> Previously, Cavendish had appropriated other forms of self-fashioning that drew from nostalgic views of the Elizabethan period and romance: in 1632 a dissatisfied Cavendish presented himself as a lord of misrule, in opposition to what he saw as the modish, unpatriotic ways of the Caroline court and its lack of respect for the noble families of old.<sup>6</sup> Throughout his life, Cavendish clung to courtly notions of honour, yet he never quite belonged in courtly circles.

Honour was central to Cavendish's self-fashioning, even as contemporaries questioned his honour. It is also a recurring theme in his dramatic writing, demonstrating the performativity of office and of ceremony. In this context, Cavendish's self-imposed exile becomes a means through which honourable retreat is performed. Although Cavendish's reputation never fully recovered, far from evincing cowardice, Cavendish's exile and attempts at restoring his reputation demonstrate consistency with his strategies for bestowing and receiving patronage, self-fashioning as a courtier and playwright, presentations of courtliness, and what we know of his views on statecraft.

Contemporary criticism of Cavendish seems to point to him being an ambitious, self-aggrandizing fool who seeks preferment at court while knowing little of statecraft or the court through which he seeks worldly prestige. Hutchinson notes that he is a man of honour who holds considerable loyalty, influence, and respect in Nottingham and Derbyshire; prestige at home was squandered for ridicule abroad. Yet these endeavours to affirm his standing in the locality through fostering a reputation as a generous and lavish host fed into his designs at court. To great expense, Cavendish hosted Charles

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**3** For a detailed account of the reputational damage that it caused Cavendish, see John Barratt, *The Battle for York: Marston Moor 1644* (Stroud: Tempus, 2002), esp. 29, 76–80, 141–42, 154–56. According to Barratt, Cavendish was one of the more vilified commanders.

**4** Elspeth Graham, "An After-Game of Reputation: Systems of Representation, William Cavendish and the Battle of Marston Moor," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity in Seventeenth-Century England: William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Newcastle and his Political, Social and Cultural Connections*, ed. Peter Edwards and Elspeth Graham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 83–110, 86–87.

**5** Graham, "An After-Game of Reputation," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, ed. Edwards and Graham, especially 88.

**6** Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 195.

I at Welbeck in 1633 and both Charles and Henrietta Maria a year later at Bolsover Castle. Cavendish was Ben Jonson's last patron, and the hospitality included Jonson's final lavish entertainments.<sup>7</sup>

In 1638 Cavendish's efforts were rewarded and he was appointed governor to the future Charles II; this gave him control of the prince's household and established him as among the most influential aristocrats in the country.<sup>8</sup> However, for Hutchinson, it is better to reign in the north than to serve at court, and Cavendish's public and private afflictions all stem from a foolish and misguided ambition to serve a neglectful king. While Hutchinson perceives him as entering impotent servitude, Cavendish's model of the ideal courtier is predicated upon ideas of virtue, virtuosity, and nobleness. They informed his political thinking and governed his everyday life, even as he married and promoted his second wife, Margaret, who was anything but the model silent and obedient courtly noblewoman.<sup>9</sup> They also informed his literary patronage and his writing. In this chapter, I will examine how Thomas Hobbes, Baldassare Castiglione, and Niccolò Machiavelli informed Cavendish's political thinking, as articulated in his *Advice to King Charles II* (ca. 1659) and represented in his play *The Country Captain* (ca. 1639). This drama has largely been attributed to James Shirley due to his revisions of the original text; more recently, James Fitzmaurice has suggested that Cavendish as author and Shirley as editor highlight the collaborative interaction of author and editor.<sup>10</sup> As Matthew Steggle insightfully observes, Cavendish's dramas that were performed at the Blackfriars—while not political per se—are part of his self-fashioning and situate him at the heart of professional theatrical culture before the Civil War.<sup>11</sup> This places Cavendish's authorial persona at the heart of his dramatic writing, even if the texts were revised. Cavendish's performed and printed dramas were all collaborative: Shirley may have polished Cavendish's text, but, as we will see, this play is consistent with Cavendish's political writings on how a prince should govern. First, I will briefly outline how some aspects of masculine virtue and virtuosity are represented in early modern intellectual culture and how notions of the ideal courtier are figured in Cavendish's work.

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**7** For a discussion of these entertainments, see Cedric C. Brown, "Courtesies of Place and Arts of Diplomacy in Ben Jonson's Last Two Entertainments for Royalty," *The Seventeenth Century* 9 (1994): 141–71. See also Crosby Stevens on the relationship between the space of Bolsover, theatrical literature, art, biography, and Jonson's engagement with how these elements intertwine to develop the Cavendishes' iconography, and Tom Rutter on the literary relationship between the Cavendishes and Jonson (both in this volume).

**8** Worsley, *Cavalier*, 119–48.

**9** For a biography of Margaret Cavendish, see Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle: Royalist, Writer & Romantic* (London: Vintage, 2004).

**10** James Fitzmaurice, "Whimsy and Medieval Romance in the Life Writing of William Cavendish," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, ed. Edwards and Graham, 60–81, 80–81.

**11** See Matthew Steggle's chapter in this volume.

## Virtue, Virtuosity, and Nobleness

Governance and the ideal courtier in early modern Europe were predicated upon an understanding of masculine virtue. Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), translated into English by Thomas Hoby and eventually first published in 1561, perhaps most famously articulates the qualities of a wise courtier:

The final end of a Courtier, whereto al his good condicions and honest qualities tende, is to become *An Instructor and Teacher of his Prince or Lorde*, inclining him to virtuous practices: And to be franke and free with him, after he is once in fauour in matters touching his honour and estimation, always puttinge him in minde to folow vertue and to flee vice, opening vnto him the commodities of the one and inconueniencies of the other: And to shut his eares against flatterers, whiche are the first beginninge of self leeking and all ignorance, either of other outward thinges, or yet of her owne self.<sup>12</sup>

*The Courtier* is a complex text, and this has led scholars to question how it was read and understood. Peter Burke, for example, suggests that it might have been read for pleasure, in addition to being instructive.<sup>13</sup> Scholars have also illustrated how controversies regarding the text, author, and translator indicate that Castiglione's work garnered similar degrees of notoriety as Machiavelli.<sup>14</sup> In the passage quoted above, the ideal courtier fulfills a didactic function. Flatterers should be avoided, as they have cognitive and affective consequences on the prince's passions. Courtiers are entrusted to focus the prince's mind upon virtuous reflection to enable an honest, stable, and secure body natural and to maintain harmony in the body politic. The homosocial bonds between honest courtiers thus underpin political stability. Companionship and trust are central to an ordered body politic, as is the ability to ignore flatterers. In her discussion of how ecclesiastical advice to a monarch sheds light on early modern kingship, Jacqueline Rose notes that early modern counsel occurred not only as an exchange between counsellor and counselled but also within particular forums, and it was inflected by political

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**12** *The Courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio diuided into foure books. Very necessary and profitable for yonge gentilmen and gentilwomen abiding in court, palaice or place, done into English by Thomas Hoby* (London: Seres, 1561), sig. Zz4v.

**13** Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione's "Cortegio"* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995).

**14** For a brief overview of the various critical receptions of *The Courtier*, see the introduction to W. R. Albury's *Castiglione's Allegory* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). Hoby began translating the text in 1551 at a time when Italian culture was esteemed by Protestants, but following the death of Edward VI in 1553, some of Castiglione's admirers became politically and theologically controversial figures. Hoby never fully succeeded in his attempts at reconciliation with the Marian and Catholic government and the text was not printed until the accession of Elizabeth. See Mary Partridge, "Thomas Hoby's English Translation of Castiglione's 'Book of the Courtier,'" *The Historical Journal* 50 (2007): 769–86.

and religious contexts.<sup>15</sup> Although Rose is particularly focused upon advice-giving in sermons, and identifies and analyses the different modes of counsel that developed from humanist and religious intellectual thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, her study underpins how the need for the monarch to be virtuous and avoid flattery is returned to again and again throughout the early modern period. As will become apparent, Cavendish draws from these ongoing debates in his dramatic and political writings.

Virtue, therefore, lies at the heart of a well-ordered, organized, and harmonious state, but what does virtue mean in the context of the political and social world of the Stuart court and Cavendish's dramas performed at the Blackfriars playhouse? In the opening scene to *The Country Captain*, the eponymous captain, Underwit, announces that he has been promoted; this promotion occurred through recognition of his honour and without his resorting to bribery. Thomas, his servant, commends him for winning the captainship through his "desert and vertue," but Underwit counters that "the vertue of the commission is enough to make any man an officer without desert."<sup>16</sup> As Vimala Pasupathi has observed, running parallel to the way in which an actor plays a part, the titular captain is imbued with power as a consequence of office, making him something that he is not.<sup>17</sup> Pasupathi demonstrates how Cavendish utilizes Shakespeare and other printed books as a form of political commentary in the lead up to civil war and the light these texts shed on the status of Shakespeare and the Caroline book trade. A metatheatrical concern with drama is also integral to the play, which leads to questions regarding virtue and its fabrication.

To affirm his new role, Underwit seeks to look the part by purchasing the material artefacts of office, yet the play constantly returns to the ways that appearances can deceive. Underwit's stepfather Sir Richard Huntlove takes his second wife, Lady Huntlove, to the country, as he suspects her chastity is compromised by remaining in the town. He also invites Lady Huntlove's aspirant lover, Sir Francis Courtwell, who brings his kinsman, Master Courtwell. After a series of mishaps, Lady Huntlove and Sir Francis fail to have an assignation. The play ends with a repentant Sir Francis, and Master Courtwell is married to Lady Huntlove's unnamed sister. Underwit is married to Lady Huntlove's maid, Dorothy, whom he has been tricked into believing is the long-lost daughter of a nobleman. As Martin Butler notes, Huntlove admires Sir Francis, "a powerfull man at Court":<sup>18</sup> In comparison to the behaviour of the other libidinous gallants in the play, Sir Francis's endeavours to cuckold Huntlove are rigorously censured.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, Sir

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**15** Jacqueline Rose, "Kingship and Counsel in Early Modern England," *The Historical Journal* 54 (2011): 47–71 (esp. 70).

**16** William Cavendish, *The Country Captain*, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen (Oxford: Malone Society, 1999), fol. 2a, lines 39, 41.

**17** Vimala C. Pasupathi, "Arms and the Book: 'Workes,' 'Playes,' and 'Warlike Accoutrements' in William Cavendish's 'The Country Captain,'" *Philological Quarterly* 91 (2012): 277–303 at 277.

**18** *The Country Captain*, fol. 8a, line 278.

**19** Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, 196.

Francis and Lady Huntlove are thwarted when he stages a riding accident to allow him access to her but is really thrown from his horse and injured. He interprets this accident as a warning, which leads him to repent of his past actions. In seeking to cuckold Huntlove, Sir Francis has followed vice and fled virtue; he has broken the homosocial bonds of friendship and proves less adept in the saddle than he assumes. He thus lacks the qualities required of an ideal courtier, and this is emphasized through his horsemanship.

Cavendish was one of the most celebrated horsemen of his day: his first horsemanship manual was printed in French in 1658 and with a second English-language manual following in 1667. Through authorship and virtuosity in the saddle, Cavendish refashioned exile to be a mode of courtly virtue and honour before refining his work at the Restoration.<sup>20</sup> Cavendish writes, “there is nothing of more Use than *A Horse of Mannage*; nor any thing of more state, Manliness, or Pleasure, than Riding.”<sup>21</sup> He believed horses were rational animals and that mastery of the horse was fundamental to graceful movement in the saddle: the body of the man becoming one with the body of the horse exemplified a well-ordered state.<sup>22</sup> Virtuosity in the saddle is therefore symbolic of more than a man’s dexterity in riding. In this context, Sir Francis’s being thrown from a horse in *The Country Captain* underscores the knight’s inability to play the courtier: unable to keep command of his horse, he is incapable of advising and steering the prince to good governance. Cavendish, however, adds a caveat:

I have known many Presumptuous ignorant Fellows get Falls; but, as, if a good *Horseman* by Chance be Thrown, he doth not Lose all his *Horse-manship*: For it is a Mistake as Ridiculous as it is Common, to take Sitting Fast on Horse-back for the whole Art of *Horse-manship*.<sup>23</sup>

For Cavendish, not observing how a horse moves and not taking risks due to anxiety to keep firm in the saddle are as much equestrian sins as losing control and being thrown. As with good horsemanship, the ship of state requires good steering, but wise counsellors know the potential risks and limits of speaking truth to authority. Sir Francis’s fall leads him to repent his past misdeeds, implying a chastened courtier whose decision to flee vice and follow virtue offers a partial rehabilitation. In this respect, Sir Francis’s repentance not only evinces redemption from private vice but also the capacity to become a good courtier.

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**20** For a discussion of the relationship of the French- and English-language texts between each other, see Elaine Walker, *To Amaze the People with Pleasure and Delight: The Horsemanship Manuals of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle* (Xenophon, 2015). See also Elaine Walker’s chapter in this volume.

**21** William Cavendish, *A New Method, and Extraordinary Invention, to Dress Horses* (London: Milbourn, 1667), sigs. E1r–E1v.

**22** For a Hobbesian reading of Cavendish’s horsemanship, see chap. 1 of Monica Mattfeld, *Becoming Centaur: Eighteenth-Century Masculinity and English Horsemanship* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017).

**23** Cavendish, *A New Method*, sig. F1r.

Virtue is not only a quality that Sir Francis lacks. Virtue, the intoxicated Captain Sackbury insists, is “an Antient old gentlewoman, that is growne very poore, and nobodie knows where she dwells, very hard to find her out, especially for a Capt.”<sup>24</sup> These comments are made in a drunken scene where Sackbury claims to have sought and failed to find virtue in a brothel, but this statement is politically pertinent. Discontent over Charles I’s personal rule, war with Scotland, and unpopular reforms in Church worship were contributory factors to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642.<sup>25</sup> Virtue, grown poor, old, and lean, struggles to hold influence over pleasure-seeking courtiers. Order within the body politic breaks down, enabling discontent and intrigue to develop. An order of sorts is restored when Sir Francis falls from his horse, but the ancient old gentlewoman continues to be an elusive figure.

Virtue, then, extends beyond a consideration of the moral qualities of an individual or functioning as an internal compass for the enacting of good deeds; instead, it encompasses self-presentation and how an individual enacts their part. The virtues of Castiglione’s ideal courtier reach beyond the self to teach, instruct, and delight the prince. *The Country Captain* both supports and questions Castiglione’s view of courtly behaviour by taking a courtier away from the court and examining virtue in a non-courtly setting. The observations by Hutchinson that preface this chapter seem to suggest that Cavendish displayed all the virtues of a courtier in the country, but these qualities failed to translate to the court. Yet even in exile, as Ann Hughes and Julie Sanders note, he and Margaret Cavendish “maintained a defiantly aristocratic, ceremonial and theatrical presence despite precarious finances”; in Antwerp, the Cavendishes brought together exiled Royalists and the communities to which they had fled.<sup>26</sup> This culture of patronage was predicated upon the merging of new and old epistemologies, especially with regards to virtue, aesthetics, and virtuosity. Through collecting art, rearing handsome horses, and cultivating a circle that registered the importance of visual culture and ceremony, Cavendish established himself as a virtuous courtly connoisseur; he performed masculine virtue.<sup>27</sup>

For Cavendish, virtuosity and virtue thus become the central tenets in the identity formation of the ideal courtier: as cognate terms, virtue and virtuosity are inextricably

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**24** Cavendish, *The Country Captain*, fol. 45a, lines 1577–79.

**25** For an account of mid-seventeenth-century politics, see Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*.

**26** Ann Hughes and Julie Sanders, “Gender, Geography and Exile: Royalists and the Low Countries in the 1650s,” in *Royalists and Royalism during the Interregnum*, ed. Jason McElligott and David L. Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 128–48, 140. See also James Fitzmaurice’s chapter in this volume on Margaret Cavendish’s engagement with the intellectual culture of Antwerp.

**27** For more on the relationship between collecting, connoisseurship, and curiosity, see the introduction to *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, ed. Edwards and Graham, esp. 16–19. On the relationship between authorial self-fashioning and collecting, see Marjorie Swann, *Curiosities and Texts: The Culture of Collecting in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) and Marjorie Swann, “‘The Complete Angler’ and the Early Modern Culture of Collecting,” *English Literary Renaissance* 37 (2007): 100–17.

linked. In this presentation of subjectivity, the fashioning of a cultural circle following Cavendish's flight after the Battle of Marston Moor is not the manifestation of a vain ambition and a foolish pride. Instead, it demonstrates the limits of virtue. Far from demonstrating Cavendish's cowardice and lack of honour, his decision to go into exile becomes a point at which he can recover from military defeat by investing carefully in the forms of self-fashioning that will bring him honour.<sup>28</sup> Cavendish thus emerges as an opaque figure whose writings and methods for self-fashioning seem predicated upon notions of virtue and virtuosity that draw from Castiglione's presentation of the harmonious relationship between wise counsellor and prince as a cultured circle. However, his writings also gesture to another sixteenth-century Italian influence: Machiavelli.

### Political Pragmatism: Machiavellian Virtù

For Machiavelli, a prince may need to choose between virtue and self-preservation:

The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore, if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must be prepared not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need.<sup>29</sup>

The moralistic view of authority is questioned in detail in *The Prince*: virtue is not presented as a prerequisite for holding and maintaining office; political power resides in activity and not in authority and legitimacy. Yet Machiavelli still holds virtue in regard. In the *Discourses on Livy* (pub. 1531), Machiavelli contends that after conquering half the world, Rome's sense of security led to its downfall:

This security and this weakness of their enemies made the Roman people no longer regard virtue but favour in bestowing the consulate, lifting to that rank those who knew better how to entertain men rather than those who knew better how to conquer enemies. Afterward, from those who had more favour, they descended to giving it to those who had more power; so, through the defect in such an order, the good remained altogether excluded.<sup>30</sup>

While Machiavelli censures too much faith being placed in the individual virtue of a prince, he also criticizes an erroneous sense of security that leads to the abandonment of virtue in favour of rhetoricians who seek power for power's sake. Virtue, then, is not rejected, but instead he critiques the transferal of power to those who do not know how to use it and who propose laws that consolidate their power instead of working for the common good. As Fabio Raimondi comments, in Machiavelli, the transmission of virtue

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<sup>28</sup> For a detailed discussion of the methods adopted by Cavendish to restore his reputation after the Battle of Marston Moor; see Graham, "An After-Game of Reputation," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, ed. Edwards and Graham.

<sup>29</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1999), 49–50.

<sup>30</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. H. C. Mansfield and N. Tarcov, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1:18, 50.

is predicated upon free votes and the proper use of constitutional mechanisms.<sup>31</sup> But the English translation of “virtù” into “virtue” fails, perhaps, to encompass the semantic difficulties of Machiavellian *virtù*, which also extends beyond virtue and virtuosity to encompass action that is politically expedient.

Machiavelli’s reflections demonstrate the limits of civic virtue. Hutchinson’s observations regarding the character of Charles I chime with Machiavellian thought:

The face of the court was much changed in the change of the king, for King Charles was temperate and chaste and serious, so that the fools and bawds, mimics and catamites of the former court grew out of fashion, and the nobility and courtiers who did not quite abandon their debaucheries, had yet that reverence of the King to retire into corners to practice them. Men of learning and ingenuity in all arts were in esteem, and received encouragement from the King, who was a most excellent judge and a great lover of paintings, carvings, engravings and many other ingenuities ... But as in the primitive times it is observed that the best emperors were some of them stirred up by Satan to be the bitterest persecutors of the church, so this king was a worse encroacher upon the civil and spiritual liberties of his people by far than his father.<sup>32</sup>

Hutchinson presents Charles as the ideal virtuous and virtuosic prince. Out of respect for his serious and chaste temperament, licentious and debauched behaviour ceased to be an overt aspect of courtly life. These personal qualities are coupled with a keen eye for collecting and ingenuity. Charles thus appears to exemplify the virtuous prince and so the harmony symbolized by the temperate body natural at the centre of a virtuous court feeds through to the orderly body politic. Yet, in assessing Charles’s personal qualities and the power he has to command respect at court, Hutchinson points also to his failings as a king. For Hutchinson, the very personality traits that lead Charles to have the appearance of being a just, wise, and noble king mean that he fails to embody these qualities: his actions where policy is concerned betray him to be a persecuting tyrant. Hutchinson continues to lay the blame for the causes of the Civil War on Charles’s marriage to the Catholic Henrietta Maria. For all his appearance of chaste, courtly governance, in relinquishing responsibility to his wife, Charles ceased to be a virtuous prince and instead performed the role of the tyrant.

Disorder within the body politic is therefore blamed upon disorder in the royal household, despite its appearance of orderliness, but what is particularly noteworthy about the passage quoted above is the juxtaposition of virtue, virtuosity, nobleness, and tyranny. In presenting Charles as a perfect governor except for one major flaw, Hutchinson presents the limits of princely virtue. Castiglione’s ideal courtier and the ideal prince thus becomes unsustainable in the context of court intrigue and political division. In some respects, Hutchinson’s critique of Charles runs parallel with Machiavelli’s observations. Machiavelli presents the fall of Rome as happening, in part, because of the complacency of the ruling class. On July 6, 1637 Charles I told his nephew that if it was not for the

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**31** Fabio Raimondi, *Constituting Freedom: Machiavelli and Florence*, trans. Matthew Arminstead (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 22.

**32** Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 67.

misfortunes that had befallen the royal household of the Palatinate, he would be the “happiest King or Prince in all Christendom”; despite his personal rule causing disquiet and ongoing discontent growing stronger in Church and state, the *Calendar of State Papers* records this statement as “most true.”<sup>33</sup> With hindsight, Charles’s comment seems naive, but given how the Thirty Years’ War ravaged continental Europe, his observations may not be as ridiculous as they now seem: in comparison to his neighbours, Charles’s kingdoms had the appearance of relative stability.<sup>34</sup> Both Machiavelli and Hutchinson point to how an insular court that makes laws to consolidate power around those who have power (and seeks personal advantage from that power) can only cause the ruination of the state and the people over whom they govern. However virtuous Charles’s court may appear, this inability to allow the processes of power to function as they ought means that virtue is negated. Castiglione might assert that virtue is the route to political power, but Machiavellian *virtù* acknowledges that a leader needs to be versatile. Hutchinson’s assessment of Charles might appear to package him as the archetypal Machiavellian prince, yet Charles’s inability to respond to whatever fortune brings means he lacks the dexterity needed to govern. For Machiavelli, *virtù* enables a prince to adapt and to respond effectively to changing political events. If virtuosity is integral to virtue, then versatility is central to *virtù*. Machiavellian *virtù* is thus predicated upon a system of ethics that pushes the importance of the ruler having the political acumen to govern. As will become clear, these notions also inform Cavendish’s political writing.

This brief examination of Machiavelli and Castiglione only focuses upon *virtù* and virtue as they are relevant to understanding the configuration of patronage and power in Cavendish’s writing. What emerges from this discussion of early modern virtue is a complex system of ethics and political power where aesthetics and genuine emotional stability are an integral part of defining governance. Cavendish may have been dismissed by some contemporaries for being too much the poet immersed in the fantastical world of romance, but, as is becoming apparent, this self-fashioning was central to how Cavendish considered the ways in which a ruler presents him or herself to the subjects over whom they ruled. This is underscored in his plays and in the advice Cavendish gave to Charles II.

### When Fortune Turns Foul: Courtliness and Advice to an Exiled King

According to its one editor, Thomas Slaughter, sometime in late 1658 or early 1659 Cavendish penned a long letter of advice to Charles II.<sup>35</sup> The death of Oliver Cromwell on

<sup>33</sup> John Bruce, William Douglas Hamilton, and Sophia Crawford Lomas, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles I: 1637* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868), 287.

<sup>34</sup> For an account of the Thirty Years’ War, see Peter Wilson, *The Thirty Years’ War: Europe’s Tragedy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Thomas P. Slaughter, ed., *Ideology and Politics on the Eve of Restoration* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984). Conversely, Gloria Anzilotti dates the letter to 1651, but this view has

September 3, 1658 threw the state into uncertainty, which eventually led to an uneasy settlement and the recalling of Charles to assume the throne.<sup>36</sup> In anticipation of a restoration that was by no means certain, Cavendish reflects upon the failures of Stuart governance and sets out how he believes Charles should conduct himself if he wants to maintain power. Virtue, virtuosity, and versatility underpin Cavendish's counsel. Cavendish advises Charles to "hide [his] Armes, as much as [he] can, for people loves not the Cudgell, though [the] mastering of London, is some what perspicuous, & indeed cannot be helped."<sup>37</sup> As well as concealing arms, the king ought to keep command of the Church in addition to the state: the number of academics is to be reduced and the remaining scholars only to hold orthodox opinions; ministers should only preach once a week and not preach their own sermons unless they are approved by bishops; to prevent girls from being "Infected with a weavers Docterine" they are to attend approved schools and there should be no "petty or Gramer scooles, but such as the Bishops shall allow of & think Fitt."<sup>38</sup> Cavendish thus presents a blueprint for state control that encompasses the Church, before moving on to assess how the judiciary should be contained and how trade and pastime function to serve the commonwealth. Cavendish warns Charles II to avoid setting illegal taxes to solve the need for money, as it will only disgruntle the populace, and advises that his father and grandfather made too many Lords, which swelled the Upper House and made both it and the House of Commons factious. Cavendish also cautions against allowing the prerogative of the king to be questioned, rewarding enemies and not favouring friends, and unwisely choosing for office people who lack the aptitude for the role they are assigned.<sup>39</sup> In so doing, Cavendish suggests that the prince should take command of his own fortune, something that Machiavelli too proposes.

Unlike many early modern commentators, Machiavelli does not present Fortune as a neutral but capricious force. Instead, Fortune is malevolent and needs to be conquered. Cavendish thus seems to follow Machiavelli in seeking to contain Fortune, but there are also inflections that seem derived from Castiglione. Cavendish holds faction and flatterers at court responsible for the Civil War and lists ten errors that led to war. These errors all connect to the abuse of royal power that had become diluted due to the unwise delegation of duties. The sale of honours and a free press, in particular, are censured, despite press censorship being in operation before the abolition of the Star Chamber in 1641.<sup>40</sup> Cavendish's observations also shed light on virtue, virtuosity, and patronage as

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been dismissed by Conal Condren. See Condren, "The Date of Cavendish's 'Advice to Charles II,'" *Parergon* 17 (2000): 147–50. Cavendish in fact wrote two letters of advice, the first in 1639 (MS Harley 6988, fols. 111r–112v).

**36** For a detailed discussion of the Restoration and the complex politics of the period, see Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and his Kingdoms, 1660–1685* (London: Lane, 2005).

**37** Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*, 7.

**38** Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*, 16–17.

**39** Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*, 49–59.

**40** Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 196.

important elements for the maintenance of power. Castiglione's warning that a prince who fails to surround himself (or herself) with wise and courteous courtiers runs the risk of falling into ignorance that affects the body natural and, in turn, the body politic finds its mirror in Cavendish, who is more overtly preoccupied with how the absence of virtue affects the body politic. Ordering action above theoretical reading, Cavendish presents an ordered court, where rank and position are maintained, as the way to ensure stability and order in the body politic. This order is underpinned by valuing and rewarding loyalty.

Despite the Machiavellian undertone of the piece and elements that seem derived from Castiglione, most critics have followed the lead of Slaughter and have identified a Hobbesian influence.<sup>41</sup> Thomas Hobbes was Cavendish's friend and client and was in the household of the Chatsworth branch of the Cavendish family.<sup>42</sup> Hobbes dedicated the 1647 edition of his first book, *The Elements of Law* (first printed in Latin in 1640 and printed in English in 1651), to Cavendish.<sup>43</sup> Lisa Sarasohn presents a congenial sharing of ideas between patron and client: Hobbes gained honour from his relationship with Cavendish and reciprocated when in exile by boosting Cavendish's honour among some of the foremost European thinkers of the day.<sup>44</sup> A cross-fertilization of ideas between the two therefore seems inevitable.

Hobbes and Cavendish's relationship did not necessarily mean Royalists admired Hobbes. Quentin Skinner suggests that Hobbes went into exile four years before Cavendish because, after Cavendish was marginalized at court, Hobbes feared he no longer had a protector.<sup>45</sup> Hobbes, it would seem, was controversial even before he published *Leviathan* in 1651, and, as Skinner contends, he is the first to consciously argue that the person in possession of political power has a duty to maintain the state, which evolves as citizens surrender individual rights and subject themselves to the sovereign. In relinquishing these freedoms, humanist notions of active, virtuous citizenship are undermined and the assumption that, in a free state, sovereignty resides in the citizen body is challenged.<sup>46</sup> In order to live a contented life and to move from a state of

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<sup>41</sup> See Slaughter's introduction to Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*.

<sup>42</sup> Timothy Raylor, "Newcastle's Ghost: Robert Payne, Ben Jonson and the 'Cavendish Circle,'" in *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 92–114, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Norberto Bobbio, *Thomas Hobbes and the Natural Law Tradition*, trans. Daniela Gobetti (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 102.

<sup>44</sup> Lisa T. Sarasohn, "The Role of Honour in the Life of William Cavendish and the Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, ed. Edwards and Graham, 197–215 (esp. 198–204).

<sup>45</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 229.

<sup>46</sup> See Quentin Skinner, *Vision of Politics, Volume II: Renaissance Virtues Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and *Vision of Politics, Volume III: Hobbes and Civil Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

nature and continual war, a pact is made whereby the people submit their will to the sovereign to create unity. This results in the Leviathan, or the Commonwealth, or civil society. For Hobbes, the Leviathan is an “artificial soul” made up of the body politic and a covenant between sovereign and subject that gives the sovereign authority. If this covenant breaks down, individuals cease to be subjects and the Leviathan collapses back into a state of war.<sup>47</sup>

Hobbes and Machiavelli, as David Wootton notes, appear to have little in common, but there are overlaps between their political theories as well as major differences.<sup>48</sup> This might suggest that Hobbes dismisses Machiavellian *virtù*, but Wootton contends that Hobbes’s separation of ethics and politics offers some correlation with Machiavellian politics. In particular, Machiavellian *virtù* and Hobbesian virtue are, for Wootton, one and the same thing and Cavendish is influenced by both Hobbes and Machiavelli.<sup>49</sup> Wootton’s elegant compromise between two conflicting theories of statecraft demonstrates that, however novel Hobbes may have appeared to some observers in the seventeenth century and however much later commentators have identified his writing as marking the beginning of new ways of considering governance and the state, he was writing in a pan-European context that was intensely concerned with how rightful governance ought to be conducted. In the 1650s, many Royalists and radical Parliamentarians looked to Machiavelli to comprehend Oliver Cromwell’s rise to power.<sup>50</sup> These interventions and reflections on the relationship between governance and the right to govern demonstrate an anxiety to comprehend the extreme political shifts experienced in the seventeenth century. In this context, it comes as little surprise that Hobbes might draw from Machiavelli even as he is making different observations about state formation and the role of civic virtue within the state. These allusions and intertextual resonances emphasize how intellectual and political thought does not operate in a vacuum, but, instead, intellectual turns are pre-empted in the concepts that come before. That Cavendish should be influenced by Hobbes, a man with whom he had close links and who had various connections to branches of the Cavendish family, and that Cavendish should also draw from a sixteenth-century political writer who was the subject of careful consideration in the seventeenth century, therefore, comes as little surprise.

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**47** See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). For a brief discussion of Hobbes’s indebtedness to Epicurean thought in his formulation of authority, see Lisa Walters’s chapter in this volume. See also Andrew Duxfield’s chapter on Margaret Cavendish’s appropriation of, and departure from, Hobbesian thought in *The Blazing World* and *The Unnatural Favourite*.

**48** David Wootton, “Thomas Hobbes’s Machiavellian Moment,” in *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain*, ed. David R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 210–42.

**49** Wootton, “Thomas Hobbes’s Machiavellian Moment,” 230–21, 233.

**50** Wootton, “Thomas Hobbes’s Machiavellian Moment,” 214.

### “For Seremony & Order”:<sup>51</sup> Chivalry and Queen Elizabeth’s Day

We have thus seen how Cavendish’s letter to Charles evinces a mode of political thought and reflection that is intensely concerned with how the parts of the commonwealth slot together and can be controlled. But Cavendish is not only interested in the intellectual mechanisms to maintain order; he is also concerned with how holiday pastimes and ceremony can be utilized to enhance monarchical honour. Unlike Hobbes, Cavendish does not see power and right as parallel systems, and yet he simultaneously acknowledges how divine right systems of government might break down. The prince thus needs to control faction, live within their means, and graciously promote and reward friends. A good prince evinces virtue and virtuosity through demonstrating care in choosing those to whom they will be a patron. Central to this is the importance of ceremony and order:

your Majestie will be pleased to keepe itt [i.e., ceremony] upp strictly, in your owne, person, & Courte, to bee a presedent to the reste of your Nobles, & not to make your selfe to Cheape, by to much Familiarety, which as the proverb sayes, breeds Contempte But when you appeare, to shew your Selfe Gloryously, to your People; Like a God, for the Holly writt sayes, wee have calld you Goods—& when the people sees you thus, they will Downe of their knees, which is worship, & pray for you with trembling Feare, & Love, as they did to Queen Elizabeth, whose Government Is the beste precedent for Englandes Govermente, absolutely; only these Horrid times muste make some Litle adition To Sett things strayght, & so to keepe them,—And the Queen would Say God bless you my good people,—& though this Saying was no great matter, in it selfe, yet I assure you Majesties, itt went very farr with the people.<sup>52</sup>

Cavendish insists that everyone understands their place in the body politic and argues for the mystique of monarchy to be maintained. Frequently in the text, Cavendish cites Elizabeth I as the exemplary monarch. Such nostalgia for an Elizabethan past was not uncommon in the seventeenth century, and Cavendish frequently alludes to Elizabeth in his writing, but his idiosyncratic syntax and punctuation mean that we never fully learn what the little additions to Elizabethan ceremony are.<sup>53</sup> Instead, his main concern here is with how Charles can keep the support of the nobility and the gentry through the cognitive and psychological effects of ceremony.<sup>54</sup> Ultimately, it is the nobility and the

<sup>51</sup> Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*, 45.

<sup>52</sup> Cavendish, *Advice to Charles II*, 45.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Dobson and Nicola J. Watson discuss the broader cultural context that led to the sentimentalizing of Elizabeth in *England’s Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also John Watkins on the positive and negative afterlives of Elizabeth in *Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England: Literature, History Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Julia Walker “Bones of Contention: Posthumous Images of Elizabeth and Stuart Politics,” in *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Images of Gloriana*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 252–76.

<sup>54</sup> Niall Allsopp has noted how the 1639 letter considers how custom is beneficial to the prince and his 1659 letter is more concerned with the psychological effects and “epistemic power” of custom. Allsopp insightfully examines how William Cavendish’s political views evolve, partly in

gentry and not the law or the Church that will keep him in power. The branches of the body politic thus all serve a specific role to bolster support for the king: it is not private virtue but *virtù* that will maintain authority. But Cavendish's admiration of Elizabethan practices is a recurring concern in his plays: explicit and implicit references appear in *The Triumphant Widow* (1677), where the titular character serves as a proxy for Elizabeth and (belatedly) follows the example of the deceased queen by opting for a single life, but perhaps the most sustained engagement with the cult of Elizabeth occurs in *The Variety* (1641). In focusing upon movement and costume as signifiers of status, Barbara Ravelhofer has shown how *The Variety* indexes Elizabethanism as a way to restore harmony in the body politic.<sup>55</sup> However, as Richard Wood illustrates in this volume, the play not only references the cult of Elizabeth through costume and dance but also in how the courtier is cast. In the play, Cavendish prefigures some of his later advice to Charles and also alludes to Elizabeth's favourite, Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester: through their shared abilities in horsemanship, Cavendish and Leicester become situated within a Protestant chivalric tradition of courtly counsel and nobleness that challenges the reprinting of Elizabethan anti-Leicester libels in the 1640s.<sup>56</sup>

The whimsical, romantic, and poetic disposition of Cavendish, which Clarendon damned with faint praise, thus forms part of Cavendish's wider political strategy, a strategy that is concerned with how one should rule and govern and how one should be perceived to be ruling and governing. Hutchinson's observations that prefaced this chapter demonstrate how Cavendish's strategies for governance had success in his community but not further afield. The twin notions of virtue and virtuosity as central to nobleness are recurring themes in Cavendish's creative writing and are also central to his advice to Charles II. Yet these presentations of courtly nobleness came under increasing pressure as seventeenth-century politics presented competing narratives of statecraft. The realities of seventeenth-century politics and poetics destabilize attempts by Cavendish to cultivate a public persona as the ideal courtier. Instead, Cavendish becomes presented by his critics as a figure locked in a nostalgic admiration for a past mode of courtly behaviour that might never have been.

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collaboration with Margaret Cavendish (*Poetry and Sovereignty in the English Revolution*, forthcoming. I am grateful to Allsopp for sharing his unpublished research with me). The centrality of ceremony to Cavendish's political thinking remains consistent, even as he fleshes out how it has the appearance of being trifling yet remaining vital to maintaining the mystique of office.

**55** Barbara Ravelhofer, "Non-verbal Meaning in Caroline Private Theatre: William Cavendish's and James Shirley's 'The Varietie' (c. 1641)," *The Seventeenth Century* 21 (2006): 195–214.

**56** See Richard Wood's chapter. See also Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 21–24 for a discussion of the circulation of anti-Leicester libels in the 1640s.

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## Chapter 9

# HORSES AND HORSEMANSHIP IN THE LIFE OF WILLIAM CAVENDISH, DUKE OF NEWCASTLE

Elaine Walker

AMONG THE EUROPEAN nobility of the seventeenth century, mastery in the art of horsemanship was a mark of grace and accomplishment. As with swordsmanship, there were practical roots in battle, but in the covered riding house, or *manège*, the riding skills of the battlefield and the natural display movements of the stallion were refined for performance before an audience.<sup>1</sup>

Along with music and dancing, with which terms such as *capriole* and *corvetta* were shared, horsemanship demonstrated a cultured taste and background. Most importantly, the ability to control a mettlesome horse—always a stallion—revealed leadership skills vital in a man destined for military and court life. An appreciation of these skills crossed cultural and geographical boundaries, creating a common language and a community of horsemen. The iconography of the nobleman on horseback became, therefore, a physical and psychological thread woven through court culture.

For the 1st Duke of Newcastle, horsemanship went beyond a nobly defining pastime, providing the perfect model for the self-presentation he believed necessary for maintaining the royalist social order. As part of a lifetime in which horses were central, he wrote two horsemanship manuals, in 1658 and 1667.<sup>2</sup> These influential texts mark his place as a hugely significant figure in the Classical Riding tradition, which laid the foundations of modern dressage. They also establish him as the only English horseman to have made a seminal contribution to that tradition to the present day.<sup>3</sup>

While Newcastle's manuals are fully practical as training guides, which sets them apart from several others in the genre, they also have a unique subtext that encompasses his philosophy. He was a prolific writer, and the manuals are part of a large body of material in which horses and horsemanship offer an insight into his way of approaching the world. Horses also inevitably feature in many of the key moments in Newcastle's career discussed elsewhere in this collection. Therefore, this chapter will focus primarily on

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1 The terms "riding house" and "*manège*" or "mannage" are used by Newcastle for the building in which "*manège*" is practised. He also uses the term to encompass the training area, the practice, and the surrounding philosophy. This chapter refers to William Cavendish as "Newcastle" throughout.

2 William Cavendish, *La méthode nouvelle et invention extraordinaire de dresser les chevaux* (Antwerp: van Meurs, 1658); *A New Method, and Extraordinary Invention, to Dress Horses* (London: Milbourn, 1667), 13–14; subsequently referred to by date of publication.

3 Concerns over the standard of English riders were expressed by many authors over a long period of time, including both those in note 5 to this chapter.

the evidence in his own words that reveals horsemanship as a central philosophy that offered stability throughout the turbulent events of his life.

The foundation of his interest was laid by his birth, background, and upbringing. Unlike a friend who had put his money into land, Newcastle bought “a singing-boy for 50 l, a horse for 50 l and a dog for 2 l” with a boyhood windfall. His father was pleased, believing that the friend’s desire for property before the age of 20 indicated covetousness. This was perhaps a formative opinion. While Newcastle grew up to have a great love for the fine properties that defined his family, devoting a great deal of energy to the buildings for keeping and riding horses, his generosity suggests that he always avoided covetousness.<sup>4</sup>

A boyhood love of horses and fascination with the art of the riding house was not in itself unusual. A belief in the importance of the art had been spreading across Europe since the mid-1500s and was well established by the time Newcastle trained alongside the ill-fated Prince Henry. Their riding master was Monsieur St. Antoine, whose own training in the lineage of Giovanni Battista Pignatelli placed him at the centre of a flourishing courtly pursuit. Prince Henry’s love of horses was well known and they outnumbered all other types of gifts presented to him by foreign royalty and courtly visitors, while several books on horsemanship were dedicated to him.<sup>5</sup>

Roy Strong argues that Prince Henry’s premature death at the age of 18 ended a renaissance period for England.<sup>6</sup> A hankering for this style of life, with all the tradition and grace it entailed, is evident throughout Newcastle’s career. The importance of horsemanship as “fit and proper for a person of quality” to develop a “noble and heroic nature” was thus established very early in his development.<sup>7</sup>

With the arrival of St. Antoine, the art of horsemanship aspired to new heights in England, and Prince Henry erected the first ever purpose-built riding house between 1607 and 1609. Twelve years later, Newcastle built his own riding house at Welbeck, modelled on the prince’s building.<sup>8</sup> Like Prince Henry, Newcastle was interested not only in riding but also in the physical conformation and the bloodlines of fine horses. They shared a love of the Barbary horse, and Newcastle later wrote, “Quant aux Barbes, il faut que je confesse qu’ils song mes favoris.”<sup>9</sup> They were also knighted together in 1610, and Newcastle’s career might well have been very different had the young prince survived. Much of his later life was spent attempting to secure a long-term basis at court, perhaps

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<sup>4</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle*, ed. C. H. Firth (London: Nimmo, 1886), 21.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Gervase Markham’s *Cavalrice: or the English horseman* (1607) and Nicholas Morgan’s *The Perfection of Horse-manship* (1609).

<sup>6</sup> Roy Strong, *Henry: Prince of Wales and England’s Lost Renaissance* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 196.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 251–53.

<sup>9</sup> 1658, 16; “With regard to Barbary horses, I freely confess they are my favourites” (1743, 21).

in the hope of regaining lost ground. His belief that he had been repeatedly “cut down by Lady Fortune” and that “the wisest way for man was to have as little faith as he could in this world and as much as he could for the next world” was perhaps founded when the promise of the young prince was curtailed by his premature death.<sup>10</sup>

Newcastle received an academic education also, but he was not an enthusiastic scholar and left St. John’s College, Cambridge without graduating, having spent his time “taking more delight in sports than learning.”<sup>11</sup> However, the period of foreign travel considered essential to cultivate a refined young man would have been to his taste, especially de rigueur lessons at one of the continental riding academies.

When Newcastle undertook the European tour in 1612 with Sir Henry Wotton, horses were given as gifts for the Duke Charles Emmanuel of Savoy from King James. Newcastle also received a horse himself as a gift from the duke, who wished to keep him in Savoy to give him experience of court life and war. The giving and receiving of horses as gifts reflected their prestige among the nobility and remained a consistent feature of Newcastle’s generosity. The elegant and skillful handling necessary to enhance their beauty was therefore a highly valued measure of a man’s own grace.

Even without his great love of this art, a man such as Newcastle would consider himself incomplete without some appropriate skills. Horsemanship was quite different to racing, a sport growing in popularity throughout Newcastle’s life. While he took part, even setting up his own track,<sup>12</sup> racing is the subject of a bitter little verse written in his later years, which considers that, “Theye that keepe horse for race are mutch to blame” for promoting an activity “worthless of Honor.”<sup>13</sup> Hunting was traditionally popular among the nobility, but Newcastle was not greatly enthusiastic and Margaret Cavendish does not include hunting or racing among his interests. His secretary, John Rolleston, offers the astute comment that “for other delights, as those of running horses, hawking, hunting, &c, his Grace used them merely for society’s sake ... to please others.”<sup>14</sup>

Suitable skills for a gentleman had long been discussed in humanist writings, including those of Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Thomas Elyot. Sidney was taught that “no earthly thing bred such wonder to a Prince as to be a good horseman.”<sup>15</sup> A gentleman’s education was to be well rounded so that academic and practical skills advanced together, enhancing one another. In *The Boke Named the Governour*, Sir Thomas Elyot advises: “continuell studie without some maner of exercise, shortly exhausteth the spirites vitall, and hyndereth naturall decoction and digestion, wherby mannes body is

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<sup>10</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 253–54.

<sup>11</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 194.

<sup>12</sup> *Being Commanded by [...] to publish the following articles for his new course* (Oxford, 1662); Epistle to the Duchess of Newcastle, in Cavendish, *Life*, line 10, 372.

<sup>13</sup> University of Nottingham, Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections, Portland Manuscripts: PwV 25, fol. 138.

<sup>14</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 208, lxvii.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Sidney, *Defence of Poesie, Astrophil and Stella and Other Writings*, ed. Elizabeth Porges-Watson (London: Everyman, 1997), 83.

the soner corrupted and brought in to diuers sickenesis, and finallye the life is therby made shorter.”<sup>16</sup>

This belief in the value of physical exercise as well as study was one Newcastle seems to have embraced. He refers often to the wellbeing gained from riding, and his handwritten manuscript on horsemanship includes a list of the ages of notable horsemen as evidence of the art’s value in maintaining health.<sup>17</sup> Elyot suggests exercise to improve physical strength and hand-to-eye coordination, including skill at arms, but adds that “the most honorable exercise, in myne opinion, and that besemeth the astate of euery noble persone, is to ryde suerly and clene on a great horse and a roughe.”<sup>18</sup>

As an active, intelligent, but not academic man, fully aware of his own role as an aristocrat, Newcastle’s personal interest in horses provided the motivation to turn this useful exercise into a source of lifelong pleasure. While often criticized as a diletante, his attitude towards horsemanship provides an illustration of his capacity for dedication and focused attention. He had no patience with those who approached the art without due respect: “they would be the Finest men in the world, for All things, though they will take Pains for Nothing; and because, forsooth, they cannot Ride by Inspiration, without taking pains, therefore it is worth Nothing ... The next thing is, That they think it is a disgrace for a Gentleman to do any thing Well. What! Be a Rider. Why not? Many Kings and Princes think themselves Graced with being good Horsemen.”<sup>19</sup> This devotion to the skill of horsemanship goes far beyond aristocratic affectation.

Newcastle’s personal dedication and expertise surfaces repeatedly in anecdotal and historical evidence, across the genres of his own writing and most pointedly in the writing of Margaret Cavendish, as well as many later and less partial commentators. These included François de la Guérinière, perhaps the most influential of the classical horsemanship authors, who declared that Newcastle was “the greatest expert of his age” and that this would be the “unanimous sentiment of all connoisseurs.”<sup>20</sup>

The importance of self-presentation and noble display had become a key feature of aristocratic life in the context of the European courts, with horsemanship, horses, and images of horses forming a central part of this theatricality. The presentation of the horse in art offered, therefore, both a pleasure and an assertion of the status of the owner able to command and afford such beauty in flesh and on canvas. Newcastle’s manuals, as

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour* (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, n.d.), bk. 16; Elyot’s original 1531 text went through seven further editions in the sixteenth century.

<sup>17</sup> University of Nottingham, Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections, Portland Manuscripts, PwV 21, fols. 83v–84.

<sup>18</sup> Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*, bk. 17.

<sup>19</sup> 1667, 7.

<sup>20</sup> François Robichon de la Guérinière, *School of Horsemanship*, trans. Tracey Boucher (London: Allen, 1994), 87. Recent examples include Jean and Lily Froissard, *The Horseman’s International Book of Reference* (London: Paul, 1980); and Michael J. Stevens, *A Classical Riding Notebook* (Buckingham: Kenilworth, 1994).

records of art and works of art in themselves, fix his experience, status of ownership, and expertise in a way that would have had meaning among his peers.

Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton examine large tapestries as a readily portable “aspect of the ostentatious occasions on which men and women of distinction visited one another” to be “unpacked and displayed prominently at crucial moments of diplomatic negotiation and dynastic alliance-formation.”<sup>21</sup> Newcastle had tapestries made of several of the plates from his 1658 manual, including those in which he appears himself, and he also had several life-size portraits made of his horses. His awareness of and engagement with European modes of self-expression illustrate the centrality of court culture in his life. The plates of himself on horseback in the 1658 manual locate him in the context of aristocratic display both publicly and privately.

The cultural importance of noble display upon horseback also provided a potential occupation for his long years away from home after the collapse of all that he believed in, heralded by personally humiliating defeat at Marston Moor. During his exile from England, Newcastle missed his home greatly and felt, as he often did in his relations with the monarchy, undervalued and overlooked. Repeated attempts to assist in the plans for the return of his monarch to the throne as Charles II were frustrated, largely because Newcastle was outspoken in delicate situations. He settled in Antwerp, where he had found suitable and affordable accommodation for a long exile in the former home of the artist Rubens. Although happy in his second marriage, the burdens of maintaining his household and his inability to help his monarch led him to write, “My acquaintances hide themselves from me, and my friends and kindred stand afar off.”<sup>22</sup>

He turned to his great love, horsemanship, to occupy and establish himself as an aristocrat holding his head high although “banished his native country.”<sup>23</sup> This was an important statement of his ability to maintain his standards in a recognizably noble manner, particularly in the continental context of his exile. His riding house attracted a great many distinguished visitors from the continental nobility, and while he describes it as “my own private riding-house,”<sup>24</sup> it is likely that by some gentlemanly arrangement his financial situation was eased through the training of horses and riders.<sup>25</sup>

Newcastle’s dedication to his horses, appreciation of their beauty, and reluctance to part with them, even when in great financial difficulties, demonstrate his character as clearly as any of his artistic or philosophical enthusiasms. His wife, Margaret Cavendish, recalls that during his exile, “though he was then in distress for money, yet he would sooner have tried all other ways than parted with any of them; for I have

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<sup>21</sup> Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West* (London: Reaktion, 2000), 132–33.

<sup>22</sup> University of Nottingham, Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections, Portland Manuscripts: PwI, fol. 537, October 30, 1649.

<sup>23</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 123.

<sup>24</sup> 1667, sig. Bv.

<sup>25</sup> See 1658, 117 (1743, 67).

heard him say, that good horses are so rare, as not to be valued for money, and that he who would buy him out of his pleasure (meaning his horses), must pay dear for it." She was ideally positioned to bear witness to the high value placed on him by his horses, who "had a particular love for My Lord; for they seemed to rejoice whensoever he came into the stables, by their trampling action, and the noise they made."<sup>26</sup> In emblem books the horse is "one who does not know how to flatter." As such loyalty could not be feigned, this seemingly incidental observation is laden with meaning about his value.<sup>27</sup>

Having established himself as an expert, it was de rigueur that Newcastle should write one of the manuals that had become a defining feature of a master horseman's work. Therefore, alongside the displays of his art, he also recorded his expertise in the form of his first published instruction manual. To a man as hungry for public and royal recognition as Newcastle, the power of an individual contribution to history was a necessity. Therefore, in writing his book, he set out to establish a new standard in an art that served as a beautiful parallel to all that noble birth entailed.

This art had begun to develop in Renaissance Italy. In 1550, Federico Grisone published *Gli Ordini di cavalcare*, the first important horsemanship manual aimed primarily at the elite, rather than the military, horseman. Many of his readers would, of course, have been both. He also set the precedent for the riding manual itself as a feature of a master's work, and a huge array of manuals followed. Many were derivative or adapted translations of Grisone's work, so locating ownership of the material becomes difficult, especially as not all who were influential published their methods. Pignatelli trained under Cesare Fiaschi, then joined Grisone's academy in Naples to become the most celebrated instructor of his time, but he did not publish his own manual.<sup>28</sup> His influence, then, could only be interpreted through oral tradition, constantly filtered through the experience of those who followed him.

Newcastle, however, asserts repeatedly that his manuals represent his own method, "For which I have Left all Others,"<sup>29</sup> and are therefore entirely original. This is an arguable point, as he is part of a lineage of riders. However, his work makes many wholly individual contributions and moves the art forward in subtlety and refinement.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 100, 101.

<sup>27</sup> Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum liber*, Emblem 35; Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems* (1586) Alciato Project, [www.mun.ca/alciato/desc.html](http://www.mun.ca/alciato/desc.html) (accessed March 3, 2018); Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (New York: Octagon, 1978), 56–61.

<sup>28</sup> Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly discusses an unpublished manuscript by Pignatelli in *Triumphall Shews: Tournaments at German-Speaking Courts in Their European Context, 1650–1730* (Berlin: Mann, 1992), 76, but it is evident that Newcastle was not aware of this.

<sup>29</sup> 1667, 42.

<sup>30</sup> For further discussion of the originality of Newcastle's work and his contribution to the art, see Elaine Walker, *To Amaze the People with Pleasure and Delight: The Horsemanship manuals of William, Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle* (Virginia: Xenophon, 2015), 69–90, 167.

The first of Newcastle's horsemanship manuals, setting out his personal method of training, was written in English but published in French in 1658.<sup>31</sup> This is a lavish folio edition with forty-two very fine engraved plates after Abraham van Diepenbeeck. A more modest second manual in English followed in 1667 and was later translated into French, but the first manual was not published in English until 1743, surpassing the original in quality of production. It was this translation that made Newcastle's original manual widely accessible in his own country, half a century after his death and almost a full century after it first appeared. Such was its success that it was reprinted in 1748. Further editions in German and also Spanish were published before the end of the eighteenth century, and there were a number of adaptations and derivatives published, testifying to Newcastle's lasting influence more than the success of the original manuals themselves.

The history of the manuals can be confusing, especially as the titles differ only in detail. However, they are two separate, but related, texts, and Newcastle advises his reader that while each stands alone, to read "both together will questionless do best."<sup>32</sup> In 1743 John Brindley decided he would "oblige the Lovers of Horsemanship if I procured a Translation" of Newcastle's 1658 manual into English. However, he omitted some of the prefatory material while adding "several ornamental prints," an index, and a glossary. He then included the book in an anthology as "the First Volume of *A Complete System of Horsemanship*."<sup>33</sup> This has led to confusion over the title and provenance of Newcastle's manuals and their relationships with the second volume of Brindley's series, a translation of a French veterinary text, *La parfaite connoissance des chevaux*, by Gaspard de Saunier.<sup>34</sup>

Brindley's fine translation and largely faithful reproduction of Newcastle's original text has been reissued as a facsimile several times since the 1970s under the title *A General System of Horsemanship*.<sup>35</sup> However, this does not honour Newcastle's emphatic claim to have created a "méthode nouvelle et invention extraordinaire." The original title offers an immediate insight into the author whose reaction to the renaming of his definitive work as "general" can be imagined.

The moral purpose of horsemanship was in contention from the Renaissance onwards, and Newcastle bluntly states that those who misunderstand the value of these horses reveal that they "ne sont bons eux mesmes à quoy que ce soit"; "are good for nothing themselves."<sup>36</sup> He goes on in characteristically emphatic style in his second manual with a chapter entitled "That it is a very Impertinent Error, and of Great prejudice, to think the Mannage Useless." He comments resignedly also that "There are great

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31 R. S. Toole-Stott suggests that early copies lacking the engraved title (detailing the translation from the author's English into French) may have been in circulation in 1657 in *Circus and the Allied Arts: A World Bibliography* (Derby: Harper, 1960), 84.

32 1667, sigs. b–b2v.

33 1743, sig. A.

34 La Haye: Moetjens, 1734.

35 First issued by Allen, 1970.

36 1658, Avant-Propos; 1743, 14.

Disputes amongst Cavaliers about this Business” when it comes to choosing the best horse “Either for the War, or for Single-Combat, or for Any Thing Else.”<sup>37</sup>

A tension is apparent as riding moves from the battlefield to the riding house, largely, it seems, due to attempts, as made by Newcastle himself, to retain the links between the two. However, he does not suggest that the airs of the riding house are transferable to the battlefield but that “s’ils avoient quelques duëls, ou s’ils alloient à la guerre, ils reconnoïtroient leur faute; car ces chevaux là vont aussy bien à la soldade & à passades comme par haut, & les longues journées leur sont bien tost perdre tous les airs qui ne sont proprement que pour le plaisir. Qui plus est, ils en sont beaucoup plus propres à galoper, trotter, tourner, ou autre chose de cette nature, qui est pour l’usage.”<sup>38</sup>

The true value of the riding-house horse in war is his excellent and solid training, which makes him so skillful and responsive that “I will run him on Fire, Water, or Sword, and he shall Obey me.”<sup>39</sup> His ability to perform a capriole may be a bonus if the theory may be put into practice, but his swift obedience and dexterity makes him invaluable. It has become a popular idea today that the “airs-above-the-ground,” highly advanced leaps where all four of the horse’s hooves leave the ground at once, were originally intended for the battlefield. However, alongside Newcastle, other primary sources from the time also suggest otherwise, including Sir Thomas Blundeville and Antoine de Pluvinel.<sup>40</sup>

Newcastle’s horsemanship manuals are part of a considerable canon of writing, much of it published or intended for publication. There is also private correspondence and poetry, his book of advice to the future Charles II,<sup>41</sup> and two undated handwritten manuscripts of notes on horsemanship, in Newcastle’s own and a scribal hand.<sup>42</sup> His horsemanship manuals, however, offer the clearest insight into his motivation because they encompass so many aspects of personal philosophy reflected elsewhere. They are the only texts combining all the elements of his writing, being written for the public but with a deeply personal agenda, including a strong theatricality and the elevation of technique to art.

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**37** 1667, 5, 36.

**38** 1658, Avant-Propos; “If those gentlemen were to fight a duel or go to the wars, they would find their error; for these horses perform a journey, as well as they do the high airs; and the long marches occasionally make them soon forget those airs, which are calculated merely for pleasure; moreover, they are much fitter for galloping, trotting, wheeling, or anything else which is necessary” (1743, 14).

**39** 1667, 6.

**40** Thomas Blundeville, *A newe booke, containing the Arte of Ryding and breaking greate Horses* (London: Seres, 1560, Preface); Antoine de Pluvinel, *Le Maneige Royal*, trans. Hilda Nelson (Virginia: Xenophon, 2010 [London: Allen, 1989]), 89–90.

**41** Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Clarendon 109; subsequent references from the transcript included in S. Arthur Strong, ed., *A Catalogue of Letters [...] at Welbeck Abbey* (London: Murray, 1903), Appendix 1, 173–236, abbreviated to *Letters*. Unpublished material may be found in the Portland Collection, University of Nottingham, PwV 23–26 and the British Library Additional MSS 70499.

**42** University of Nottingham, Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections, Portland Manuscripts: PvW and PvW 22.

The key to their success as technical guides, however, is Newcastle's talent for putting the essentially practical into an accessible personal style recognizable from his many extant letters and other handwritten documents, as mentioned above. The strong impression of his own voice links them to his book of advice to the future Charles II. Like the horsemanship manuscripts, the "little book" is handwritten with erratic punctuation, digressions, and a sense of a lively face-to-face discussion in which the listener could actively take part if only the speaker would pause for breath.

His conversational style and strong opinions result in texts which are, while undoubtedly arrogant, full of a dynamic enthusiasm. The 1667 manual devotes nine pages to an energetic rebuttal of the "much Deceived" people who think "the Mannage is nothing but Tricks and Dancing." At the end, Newcastle declares: "Thus it is Proved, That there is nothing of more Use than A Horse of Mannage." His proof is usually that he believes it and his peers agree, including the king, the Duke of York, the Duke of "Mommorancy," the Prince of Condé, and the King of Spain.<sup>43</sup> Noble birth and sound judgement, for Newcastle, go hand in hand.

However, his expertise as displayed in the technical aspects of the manuals justifies such confidence. Newcastle approaches highly complicated exercises with great precision, so that when teaching the reader how to develop suppleness in the horse, he says: "Pull the inward Cavezone's Reyn Cross his Neck, not too High, your Knuckles towards his Neck, and Help him, with the outside Legg, and Reyn contrary."<sup>44</sup>

To the thinking rider for whom he writes, a subtle movement is being described with precision. Any inability to understand can reflect poorly only on the reader. All Newcastle's exercises are described in such refined detail, illustrating his ability as a writer in the difficult task of transferring practical skills to paper instructions. He also makes it clear that his method and opinions are not presented for discussion or consideration but as what he believes to be best, based on his long skill and experience.

Stephen Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning focuses on the sixteenth rather than the seventeenth century, yet many of the features he identifies apply to Newcastle. As a committed royalist, keenly aware of his own heritage, he found himself in a situation of exile while the locus of his self-definition, the monarchy, was in disarray. His emotional survival depended upon maintaining as much of that self-definition as possible. The riding house paralleled "the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment." Therefore, the horsemanship manuals function as "a manifestation of the concrete behavior" of their author, "the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped and as a reflection upon those codes."<sup>45</sup>

The writing style of the second manual has more focus on self-presentation in the context of Newcastle's exile and addresses directly issues which are implicit in

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<sup>43</sup> 1667, 5–14.

<sup>44</sup> 1667, 233.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 8–9.

the first manual with regard to his status while in Antwerp. Eight pages describe “the Honour I have receivd there,” and he claims that it would “fill a Volume, to repeat all the Commendations that were given to *Horses*, and to *Horse-manship* ... in my own private *Riding-House*.” He reveals himself as cultured and urbane in his courteous references to Antwerp’s inhabitants as “deservedly Famous, for their extraordinary Civilities to Strangers.” His graceful appreciation for the honour of the lords who came to see him ride or invited him to wait upon them offers the opportunity for some impressive name-dropping. During his exile he consistently represented all that nobility stood for and so attracted exalted company.<sup>46</sup>

An important feature of each manual is that it illustrates a previous era of his life. The 1658 manual, published in French for his continental peers, illustrates his family holdings, then lost to him but still “ma maison”<sup>47</sup> in his own eyes. His second manual, published in English “for the benefit of my countrymen”<sup>48</sup> after his return home, reminded his readers of the honour with which he was received during his exile.

Alongside his own writing, horses and horsemanship in Newcastle’s life are also evidenced in the writing of his second wife, Margaret Cavendish. In both manuals and in his play *The Witts Triumvate, or The Philosopher*, Newcastle parodies those who disparage the trained horse, and Cavendish uses her own work to add support.

In *Poems, and Fancies* (1653), she includes detailed references to horsemanship in the incongruous setting of “A Battel between King Oberon and the Pygmees.” In a poem of 278 lines, Cavendish devotes 53 to the value of trained horses in battle. She declares, “some think for War, it is an Aire unfit,” adding that “Many doe think [such horses] are only fit for pleasure,” or, even worse, of use to a coward who “by leaping high themselves can save.” She goes on to display her knowledge of Newcastle’s art: “Besides, all Airts in Warre are very fit, / As Curvets, Dimivoltoes, and Perwheet: / In going back, and forward, turning round, / Sideways, both high and low upon the ground.” She adds that without these skills, horses “May march strait forth, or in one place may stay,” which dangers she believes are overcome by training and courage in their rider.<sup>49</sup> Her enthusiasm and eagerness illustrate that both the terminology and the tensions surrounding riding were familiar to her. This offers an intriguing insight into the discussion of horsemanship in the everyday life of the Newcastle household, even though her elaborate defence of “horses of manage” takes her away from her own fairy characters, who ride not horses but grasshoppers. Somewhat ironically, it is also at odds with Newcastle’s assertion that the airts are not intended for war. However, her points about training establishing the leadership of the rider and the exercises creating a supple horse for use in battle are exactly in line with both manuals. Her desire to support him is indisputable.

Cross-references between their writings in relation to horses imply not only an interested and supportive wife but also a cross-pollination of ideas. Newcastle’s list of names

<sup>46</sup> 1667, sigs. A2b–Bv.

<sup>47</sup> 1658/1743, Plate 30.

<sup>48</sup> 1667, sig. B.

<sup>49</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies* (Menston: Scolar, 1972), 182–84.

for “Horses of Mannage” in the 1667 manual largely refer to temperament. Two that do not, however, are *Bell in Campo* and *Sans Pareil*, but these have an additional interest. In Margaret Cavendish’s first collection of plays (1662), *Bell in Campo* is the title of one, while Lady Sanspareille is the heroine of another.

Lady Victoria, the heroine of *Bell in Campo*, admires the horses chosen by the General of the Kingdom of Reformation, because “such horses ... are usefull in War ... as have been made subject to the hand and heel, that have been taught to Trot on the Hanches, to change, to Gallop, to stop,” all recognizably attributes that Newcastle desires in his horses.<sup>50</sup>

A prime example of the interweaving of writing practice is found in *The Life of the Duke* and the second horsemanship manual, both published in 1667. Several passages are so similar in both texts as to suggest that they were written in close relationship to one another, and both accounts of the days when Newcastle was feted by the continental nobility and Charles II rode in his riding house share almost all the material.<sup>51</sup> From the everyday to the fantastic, in small details and bold statements, links may be found between Newcastle, Cavendish, writing, and the art of *manège*.

None, though, is as wistful as may be found in Cavendish’s strange fantasy, *A Description of a New World, called the Blazing World*. In his poem to his wife on this elaborate work, published a year before his second horsemanship manual, Newcastle praises her ability to “make a World of Nothing, but pure Wit,” the creation of worlds in her head and on paper being undoubtedly a large feature of her writing. Newcastle and his riding house at Welbeck enjoy a touching cameo appearance in *The Blazing World*, when the Empress of the Blazing World is brought in spirit form by her friend and mentor, the Duchess of Newcastle, to watch the duke train his horses.

Being a woman of great perception, the Empress “was much pleased” with the art of *manège* and “commended it as a noble pastime, and an exercise fit and proper for noble and heroic persons.” Indeed, the Empress is so impressed that she reports back to her husband, who at once “built stables and riding-houses, and desired to have horses of manage, such as ... the Duke of Newcastle had.”<sup>52</sup>

It is notable that upon a single report the Emperor of the Blazing World accepts Newcastle as an expert, unlike those who were managing a new court for King Charles II without his assistance. Small wonder, perhaps, that Newcastle admires his wife’s ability to create from wit alone, considering the enormous amount of rebuilding he had to do after the Restoration in terms of property and reputation. This bitter irony is reinforced when the Emperor of the Blazing World asks “the form and structure of her lord and husband’s stables and riding house.” The Duchess sorrowfully replies that

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**50** Margaret Cavendish, *Playes Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious and Excellent Princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London: Martin, Allestrye, & Dicas, 1662); Lady Sanspareille appears in “Youth’s Glory and Death’s Banquet.”

**51** Cavendish, *Life*: 114–20; 1667, sigs. b–Bv.

**52** Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World and other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilley (London: Penguin, 1994), 121, 194, 219.

"they were but plain and ordinary" but "had my lord wealth, I am sure he would not spare it, in rendering his buildings as noble as could be made." Unencumbered by financial constraints, the Emperor shows the Duchess his own stables, "which were most stately and magnificent," richly bedecked with "several sorts of precious materials," with "the walls lined with cornelian," an amber floor, mother-of-pearl mangers, and crystal pillars, while the riding house "was lined with sapphires, topazes and the like." Even the floor "was all of golden sand, so finely sifted, that it was extremely soft, and not in the least hurtful to the horses' feet." This little detail within the sumptuous fantastical creation is one of numerous touches which demonstrate that Cavendish has real understanding, as coarse sand is abrasive and potentially damaging to the hoof. Contingencies for avoiding this would be very likely to come up for discussion when Newcastle was maintaining his own riding houses. The practical details Newcastle considers so important find their way into Cavendish's fantasy. This is both valuable to the study of horses in their lives and their writing practice and touching as an insight into their marriage. When she relates to her husband the luxury of this other-world riding house he has inspired and the "fine horses of the Blazing World," she wishes "you should not only have some of those horses, but such materials, as the Emperor has, to build your stables and riding-houses withal." Characteristically, Newcastle replies that, "he was sorry there was no passage between those two worlds; but said he, I have always found an obstruction to my good fortune."<sup>53</sup>

Further significant personal values and attitudes are reflected in the horsemanship writing, and some most interesting comparisons may be made with the "little book ... concerning the government of his dominions,"<sup>54</sup> written for Charles II.<sup>55</sup> This builds upon the advice written when Newcastle held the official guardian role of governor to Charles when he was still a small boy<sup>56</sup> and states: "Ther Is no oratorye In Itt, or anye thinge stolen out off Bookes, for I seldome or Ever reade anye, Butt these discourses are oute off my longe Experience,—to presente your Majestie with truthes which great monarkes seldom heares."<sup>57</sup>

In the 1667 manual, Newcastle claims similarly that "I have set down, as clearly as I could, without the Help of any other Logick, but what Nature hath taught me, all the Observations about Horses and Horsemanship."<sup>58</sup> His own life experience is always the basis of his expertise. In horsemanship, long years of studious application to the traditions of the art were disappointing until he began to work on his own method, "For which I have Left all others." As in his advice to the future king, he considers the method conceived and devised from his personal explorations rather than received ideas to be

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<sup>53</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 219–21.

<sup>54</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 186.

<sup>55</sup> *A Catalogue of Letters*, 173–236.

<sup>56</sup> Printed in Cavendish, *Life*, Appendix, 326–30.

<sup>57</sup> *A Catalogue of Letters*, 173.

<sup>58</sup> 1667, sig. Bv.

"as True, as it is New."<sup>59</sup> This conviction as to the unique truth of his ideas is reinforced repeatedly throughout the manuals, and a similar need to be seen as an indispensable authority is echoed in the "little book."

Newcastle sees a direct parallel between the horse and rider relationship and that of king and subjects. He offers the same advice to his monarch publicly in the dedication of the 1658 manual, using parallels of horses to subjects: "un Roy, etant bon Cavalier, scaura beaucoup mieux comme il faudra gouverner ses peuples, quand il faudra les recompenser, ou les châtier; quand il faudra leur tenir la main serree, ou quand la relacher; quand il faudra les aider doucement, ou en quel temps il sera convenable des les eperonner."<sup>60</sup>

His belief in this parallel illuminates much of Newcastle's urgency and frustration with those who do not understand the almost metaphysical undercurrent he sees in the semiotic value of the riding house. This is further illustrated by his view that "seremoneye though Itt Is nothinge In Itt selfe yett Itt doth Everythinge—For what Is a king more than a Subjecte butt for seremony." He thus advises the king to "shew your selfe Gloriouslye to your People Like a God,"<sup>61</sup> recalling the dedication "Au Roy" in the 1658 manual, which enthuses that "un Prince nest jamais accompagne de tant de majesté, mesmement sur son throne, comme ill est sur un beau cheval."<sup>62</sup>

This phrase is prefigured in the letter written to Charles in his childhood, explaining to him that nothing "preserves you Kings more than ceremony" including "rich furniture for horses" and reminding him that "in all triumphs whatsoever or public showing of yourself, you cannot put upon you too much king."<sup>63</sup> This echo of Shakespeare's *Henry V* is repeated with only slight variations in both manuals as well as in the advice book.<sup>64</sup>

In a mood of poignant nostalgia, he advises Charles to keep such spectacle alive, "which I assure your Majestie Is the moste Glorious sighte that Can bee seene & the moste manlieste." Clearly the king should also reinforce this glorious and manly image in his private diversions, so Newcastle advises "your Majestie to Ride your Horses off Manege twice a weeke which will Incourage Noble men to doe the like."<sup>65</sup> However, Newcastle probably exposed his own weakness in this longing for the old days. Charles does not

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**59** 1667, 42.

**60** 1658, "Au Roy"; "a King, being a good Cavalier, will know so much better how he will govern his people, when he should recompense them or chastise them; when he should keep them under a tight rein or when he should give them more freedom; when he should aid them gently or when it would be appropriate to spur them on" (Walker, *To Amaze the People*, 173; transcriptions and translations of all the prefatory material and verses from the 1658 manual are included in the Appendix, 169–85).

**61** *A Catalogue of Letters*, 210.

**62** "[A] Prince is never accompanied by so much majesty, even when on his throne, as he is when mounted on a beautiful horse" (Walker, *To Amaze the People*, 173).

**63** Cavendish, *Life*, 329.

**64** William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. T. W. Craik (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2002), 4.1.235–36.

**65** *A Catalogue of Letters*, 223–24.

seem to have paid much attention to his advice, and it is a sad irony that the “little book” simply reveals Newcastle to be, though shrewd and worldly, also an anachronism.

After his return home, he dedicated his energies to rebuilding his devastated estates and preferred quiet retirement over court life, even though he knew that “many believe I am disappointed.”<sup>66</sup> His homes at Bolsover and at Welbeck both remained dedicated to horsemanship. Visitors reported that his horses “exercise their gifts in his magnificent Riding House” and were “more extraordinary than are to be seen in Europe.”<sup>67</sup> For the staff at Welbeck, daily routine meant that “the horses were a Riding and we present as usual.”<sup>68</sup> Amid a life of upheaval, keeping and training horses required and provided consistency. Maintaining that training at a level to impress peers and guests could demonstrate Newcastle’s often overlooked abilities and perhaps also offer reassurance he needed himself.

Newcastle’s last great building project was at Nottingham Castle, which he managed to buy in a ruined condition when he was 83, only two years before his death. Although he did not survive to see the project completed, his plans were ambitious and show no lessening over time of his belief in noble display. Over the entrance to the castle, the remains of a statue of Newcastle on horseback may still be seen today.

Alongside historical events, solid evidence of the importance of horses and horsemanship in providing a paradigm for life exists in Newcastle’s own words, those of his wife, and the legacy of his building projects. His two manuals, however, offer the most direct contact with his wit and knowledge in a way untouched by time or opinion.

His own essential enjoyment of his art offers the most compelling evidence:

I beseech my Readers, to take in good part, That I have set down, as clearly as I could, without the Help of any other Logick, but what Nature hath taught me, all the Observations about Horses and Horsemanship; which I have made, by a long, and chargeable, though I must needs say, very pleasant, and satisfactory, Experience.<sup>69</sup>

Through all the events of his long life, any attempt to understand Newcastle’s motivation can only be successful when he is considered, above all else, as a horseman.

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<sup>66</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 131.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Royalist, Writer and Romantic* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003) 342.

<sup>68</sup> PwI 315, fol. 5.

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## Chapter 10

# MARGARET CAVENDISH AND THE CULTURAL MILIEU OF ANTWERP

James Fitzmaurice

### I

When the then Margaret Lucas arrived in Paris in November of 1644, she was a quiet but observant maid of honour to Queen Henrietta Maria. Margaret met and not long afterwards married William Cavendish, Marquess of Newcastle, a widower and a Royalist grandee who had been on the losing side at the Battle of Marston Moor. In her autobiography and in her drama, Margaret tells her readers that she was beset with bashfulness in Henrietta Maria's court, and it is probably true that during her early days in Paris she tended to watch and listen in silence. Nevertheless, and contrary to much of what has been written about her, Margaret was not paralyzed by fear into insensibility while at court. Her letters to her future husband show her sharing shrewd and even harsh observations of court politics.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the strong relationship that developed between the two provided a foundation for her daring marriage to her socially prominent wooer, a marriage that contravened the wishes of her royal mistress. If Margaret was quiet in large aristocratic gatherings in Paris, she was not overawed by those in power.

This chapter will provide evidence for the assertion made by Timothy Raylor that Cavendish did not endure a harmful exile on the Continent during the Interregnum, and it will establish instead that she benefited from participation in a rich intellectual and cultural environment in Antwerp. To this end, the chapter will concentrate on connections between the visual arts and architecture of the Low Countries and what is found in Cavendish's fiction published in *Natures Pictures* (1656). The chapter will conclude with a consideration of the restricted cultural environment available to Cavendish when she returned to England and took up residence in the north after the Restoration.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Margaret's letters to William are in *The Phanseys of William Cavendish, Marquess of Newcastle Addressed to Margaret Lucas and her Letters in Reply*, ed. Douglas Grant (London: Nonesuch, 1956) and in Appendix B of Anna Battigelli's *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998).

2 Timothy Raylor disagrees with those who see the Cavendishes as exiled to Antwerp. See "Exiles, Expatriates and Travellers: Towards a Cultural and Intellectual History of the English Abroad, 1640–1660," in *Literatures of Exile in the English Revolution and its Aftermath, 1640–1690*, ed. Philip Major (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 16–43, 19–21. Raylor's position is to be preferred over that taken by Emma L. E. Rees and others who believe that Cavendish endured "powerlessness" and, in the words

During 1648 and after a brief stay in Rotterdam, Margaret and William began living in Antwerp, where they became immersed in the cultural life of the city.<sup>3</sup> She writes that William made the decision to leave Rotterdam so as to avoid the “costs of keeping an open and noble table,” and she goes on to say that Antwerp contained only small numbers of English men and women.<sup>4</sup> We may imagine that in Antwerp William and Margaret found themselves with fewer unwanted Royalist dinner guests, but it was also the case that in Antwerp the couple was able to enter a more cosmopolitan environment, where art and architecture mattered a great deal and where topics of intellectual interest dominated drawing-room conversation.<sup>5</sup> Both she and William were appreciators of oil painting, and the move allowed them to set up residence in the architecturally significant Rubens House, which they rented from the painter’s widow. Lucy Worsley describes the building as “a Mannerist ... extravaganza,” and it included a new wing designed by Rubens himself (Figure 10.1).<sup>6</sup> The house was a place fit to entertain a king, which is precisely what happened when the Cavendishes played host to Charles II in 1658. On March 17, the structure was literally filled to capacity for a ball, poetry reading, and vocal performances.<sup>7</sup> Only the well-connected and the very lucky were able to gain entry.

Near to the Rubens House and situated on the Meir was the residence of the art-dealing Duarte family. John Loughman and John Michael Montias explain in *Public and Private Spaces* that “During this period, people tended to spend a greater deal of time in their homes, to conduct business and to entertain guests.”<sup>8</sup> Loughman and Montias focus on Amsterdam, but the mix of trade, especially in art, with sociability was no doubt true of Antwerp as well.<sup>9</sup> Margaret writes about having chatted in a “Frolick Humour” at a gathering at the Duarte home. Others present performed elaborate and

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of Rees, “triple exile.” Rees, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 5.

**3** Antwerp benefited from a shift in shipping to the Iberian Peninsula. See Gustaaf Asaert, A. De Vos, R. Legreve, Fernand Suykens, and Karel Veraghtert, ed., *Antwerp: A Port for all Seasons* (Antwerp: Ortelius, 1986).

**4** Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle*, ed. C. H. Firth (New York: Dutton, n.d.), 49.

**5** For English visitors, the Jesuit Chapel was Antwerp’s most important building. See Kees van Strien, *Touring the Low Countries: Accounts of British Travellers, 1660–1720* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 55.

**6** Lucy Worsley, “‘His Magnificent Buildings’: William Cavendish’s Patronage of Architecture,” in *Royalist Refugees: William and Margaret Cavendish in the Rubens House, 1648–1660*, ed. Ben Van Beneden and Nora De Poorter (Antwerp: Rubenshuis & Rubenarium, 2006), 101–4, 102.

**7** Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: The Extraordinary Life of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle: The First Woman to Live by the Pen* (New York: Basic, 2002), 221.

**8** John Loughman and John Michael Montias, *Public and Private Spaces: Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Houses* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1999), 71.

**9** Owen Feltham in *A Brief Character of the Low Countries* (1651) observes, tongue in cheek, that “The poorest [homes] are there furnished with pictures [i.e., oil paintings],” 19.



Figure 10.1. Frans Harrewyn after Jacques van Croes. View of Rubens's house in Antwerp in 1684. British Museum number 1868,0612.1384.

© The Trustees of the British Museum.

fashionable Italian songs, while Margaret made a point of singing English ballads in an unadorned musical style.<sup>10</sup> Generally speaking, however, she was less inclined to be the centre of attention and more likely to feel comfortable with individual or small-group interaction. Indeed, the assemblage of aristocrats at the Duarte residence probably was not especially large. She writes in her preface to *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1653) that much of her intellectual growth was fostered in "visiting and entertaining discourse," that is, in conversation conducted in intimate social settings.<sup>11</sup> Those social settings included English men and women living abroad but were not dominated by such people.

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *CCXI Sociable Letters* (London, 1664), 427.

<sup>11</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 184. Timothy de Paeppe suggests a connection between Diego Duarte and Margaret based on Stoic philosophy: "Diego Duarte II (1612–1691): A Converso's Experience in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp," *Jewish History* 24 (2010): 169–93, 181.

Margaret's interlocutors more frequently were important figures from the Continent like the Dutch philosopher and virtuoso scientist Constantijn Huygens.<sup>12</sup> She spent time in the presence of René Descartes but could not converse with him because, as she writes, she did not speak French and he was equally unskilled in English.<sup>13</sup> She would have known various friends of the Duartes, such as Béatrix de Cusance, Duchess of Lorraine, and the merchant Guilielmo Calandri.<sup>14</sup> She is likely to have made the easy river journey to Brussels to observe the salon of Béatrix at Beersel Castle. Béatrix was numbered among the guests at the exclusive entertainment at the Rubens House in March of 1658.<sup>15</sup> After Margaret's return to England at the beginning of the Restoration, she and William spent a brief time in London at Newcastle House, but before long they retired from court circles to live at Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire. At Welbeck, she had fewer opportunities for social and intellectual interaction with cultural elites and less exposure to newly available works of art or volumes on architecture. She would have heard about Christopher Wren's plans but missed most of the rebuilding of London after the great fire of 1666.

During this, the final period in her life, she would have discussed with William and his builders the renovations of the Terrace Range at Bolsover Castle and his plans to construct the Italianate palazzo that is Nottingham Castle. Husband and wife no doubt employed agents in London who sent prints of new artwork and sheaves of architectural drawings to Welbeck Abbey, but easy access to drawing-room conversation with men and women who were knowledgeable about art and architecture was never what it was when they lived in Antwerp.<sup>16</sup>

Many characters in Cavendish's fiction are observers, and, as with the newly arrived Margaret Lucas in Paris, they often spend time at court as outsiders. Some of these observers are travellers, young men who journey through foreign lands to achieve educational goals or to satisfy desire for knowledge. Cavendish's observers and also her narrators have a special association with art and architecture as subjects of study. Sometimes that association is shown explicitly, for example, in one observer's extended discussions of palace design and painting. On other occasions there is no obvious and direct connection

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**12** Letters between the two are published in Lisa Jardine's "Consorts of Viols, Theorbos, and Anglo-Dutch Voices," in *Going Dutch: How England Plundered Holland's Glory* (London: Harper Perennial, 2009), 175–204.

**13** Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 184.

**14** Timothy de Paepe, "Diego Duarte II," 183. De Paepe describes the Duarte circle. Line Cottage provides a listing of continental intellectual contacts in "A Bibliographical Note: Cyrano's 'Estates et Empires de la Lune' and Cavendish's 'Blazing World,'" in *God and Nature in the Thought of Margaret Cavendish*, ed. Brandie Siegfried and Lisa Sarasohn (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 107–20, 212–13.

**15** See James Fitzmaurice, "Margaret Cavendish, Richard Flecknoe, and Raillery at the Salon of Beatrix de Cusance," *English Studies* 92 (November 2011): 771–85.

**16** Virginia Woolf remarks that Margaret and William often critiqued one another's writing: *The Common Reader* (London: Hogarth, 1929), 102–3. Rees finds William's treatment of Margaret as an equal to be essential to her development as a writer: *Margaret Cavendish*, 3.

to the visual arts, but there are allusions to particular paintings and buildings associated with Antwerp. Cavendish's observers and narrators have something in common with modern-day sociologists: a keen attention to details of human behaviour and a habit of not rushing to make harsh judgements or to construct unpleasant evaluations. At the same time, there are implied judgements situated in narratorial choice of words and in the narrators' willingness to examine some topics in more depth than others. Cavendish's observers, while avoiding quick judgements, often render evaluations, some quite dubious, before their tales conclude. These judgements can reflect personality flaws, flaws that might qualify the observers as Jonsonian humour characters. When Cavendish's tales of observers are finished, there are likely to be unanswered questions. Did the observer see what the narrator saw? Did the observer notice and understand the implied judgements of the narrator? Should we, the readers, take what we are told at face value?

The complicated relationship of observer to narrator is in part a matter of narrative technique, a device that causes the reader to wonder what is transpiring in the head of the observer and to speculate about what will happen next in the plot line. In part, however, the complexity acts as an elaboration in fiction of Cavendish's developing critique of scientific method, as that method privileged observation over various mental processes, including reason. Cavendish had a particular view of reason, of which more later in this chapter. For Cavendish, observation was important but complex thought paramount. As Lisa Sarasohn puts it, "The more other investigators of nature limited their conclusions to what they could see, the more Cavendish credited the primacy of conception and reason."<sup>17</sup> After her return to England, Cavendish would use her scientific writing to state explicitly her positions on observation and reason *contra* Robert Boyle, Robert Hooke, and various members of the Royal Society.<sup>18</sup>

Cavendish probably would have been well acquainted while living in Antwerp with a position on observation later articulated by Robert Hooke in *Micrographia* (1665). Hooke writes, "It is now high time that [the science of nature] should return to the plainness and soundness of observations."<sup>19</sup> It is plainness from which Cavendish escapes into a world of complex intellectual discourse, a world that recognizes the legitimacy of self-contradiction in mental processes. Jay Stevenson writes that "Cavendish was self-reflexive and self-contradictory" in her construction

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<sup>17</sup> Lisa T. Sarasohn, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 190.

<sup>18</sup> It is important to remember that "the early Royal Society was less intellectually homogeneous than is sometimes thought." See Emma Wilkins, "Margaret Cavendish and the Royal Society," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society Journal of the History of Science* (May 14, 2014): online.

<sup>19</sup> See Lisa Walters's discussion of Hooke and Cavendish on the brain and fancy in "Optics and Authorship in Margaret Cavendish's 'Observations' and 'The Blazing World,'" *Viator* 45 (2014): 377–93 at 384. The quotation is from Robert Hooke, *Micrographia* (London, 1665), sig. blr.

of a philosophy of mind and that her readers “are ambiguously implicated in [her attendant] playfulness.”<sup>20</sup> That world of intellectual discourse included drawing rooms where Cavendish could match wits with Constantijn Huygens, and it probably extended to the salon at Beersel Castle, where she was able to converse with various guests and Béatrix de Cusance herself.

In the short fiction written while she lived in Antwerp, we find articulations of her positions on scientific matters, positions often folded into her observations of the visual arts.<sup>21</sup>

## II

Cavendish’s short story “The Observer,” published in *Natures Pictures* in 1656 and while she was resident in the Low Countries, includes an observer who sees and hears a great deal but who apparently does not consider what he has taken in until the tale draws to a close. This observer, named the Stranger, plans to investigate the forms of government of various countries, presumably out of a desire for knowledge. Once inside the royal palace, however, he becomes passive, and Cavendish’s readers do not know the degree to which this “observer” is actually observing. Rather her readers are given a great deal of information by her narrator about the social and architectural context through which the Stranger moves. The Stranger spends time among courtiers, first in the Long Gallery and then in the Presence Room, eventually making his way to the Privy Chamber, where he sees the king and queen from a distance.

He does not converse with anyone and is told to have supper at “the waiters’ table,” an apparent indignity which he accepts in silence and which leads to an unplanned but excellent opportunity for him to learn about current politics. The Stranger makes no comment, but the narrator describes talk among the serving men, who are unhappy with living under a long peace. War would provide the youth of the nation with an opportunity to “breed courage.” The narrator makes no explicit judgement on the wisdom of men wishing for war, though his choice to deal with the topic at length and in the way that he does allows for an implied evaluation.

They complained of their long Peace, saying, That Peace was good for nothing but to breed Laziness; and that the Youth of the Kingdom were degenerated, and become effeminate: concluding, That there ought to be a Warr.<sup>22</sup>

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**20** Jay Stevenson, “Imagining the Mind: Cavendish’s Hobbesian Allegories,” in *A Princely Brave Woman: Essays on Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle*, ed. Stephen Clucas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 143–55, 143.

**21** Cavendish also discusses observation and reason in *Poems, and Fancies* (1653) and includes a poem in which thoughts are travellers in that volume. Her *Philosophical Fancies* (1653) does not consider observation and does not mention observers or travellers.

**22** Margaret Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 2nd ed. of *Natures Pictures* (London, 1671), 170. I retain the more familiar title, *Natures Pictures*, in the main text.

Given Cavendish's loss of family members in the English Civil War and the repeated statements about the wastefulness of military conflict to be seen elsewhere in her writing, it is difficult to escape the implication that the waiters are foolhardy. While she admired courage on the battlefield, she thought that war itself was a pestilence. If war comes, these waiters will not enjoy it.

After supper at the waiters' table, the taciturn Stranger joins the ladies and gentlemen of the court for polite conversation in the Presence Room, and there he is recorded as saying nothing at all. Rather he stands near to two lords, one of whom, the narrator says, believes that the king is unaware of the self-serving designs of royal favourites. The king, who apparently employs unfair schemes of taxation, cannot see the danger that lurks around him. The narrator does not comment explicitly, but the fact that he records such talk suggests that the danger could be serious. The Stranger goes on to mingle with the court ladies and to listen to their false professions of friendship and to their backbiting chatter. There may be more to see and hear about the politics of the kingdom, but the Stranger suddenly becomes fearful of being "infected" while thus surrounded by the ladies. The no-longer-passive Stranger leaves the court in a rush. A more diligent observer than the Stranger would have risked "infection" and followed through in watching and listening, staying until he had seen all there was to see and heard all there was to hear. The Stranger, however, executes a sudden and unexpected shift from being non-judgemental to passing a judgement that is excessive and that renders him absurd. He flees in fear from the idle chatter of court ladies. In so doing, he gives a comic twist to the ending of Cavendish's tale. "The Observer," then, points up the limitations to be found in one case of passive, uncritical observation, and the story looks forward to her disagreements with Boyle, Hooke, and many of the men of the Royal Society.

The story of the Stranger includes architectural detail of the sort that Cavendish would have noted during her stays in Antwerp and would have seen recorded in paintings and prints. After the Stranger has gained entrance to the grounds of the palace, he is guided "through a great Courtyard, wherein were many walking and talking, like Merchants in an Exchange, or as a Court of Judicature."<sup>23</sup>

The narrator allows for the inference that the courtyard is a place where men and women usefully employ their time pursuing matters of business or law, a place for serious discourse and healthy socializing much like the English Bourse in Antwerp. The English Bourse was often visited by travellers and commonly appeared in paintings and prints (see [Figure 10.2](#)). The useless backbiting and false professions of friendship that the Stranger encounters stand in contrast to the social atmosphere of the Bourse. So, too, the scheming and flattery that he comes across among the men in the Gallery and the Privy Chamber.

Just after the Stranger has left the courtyard, the narrator provides additional information that invites inference.

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23 Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 170.

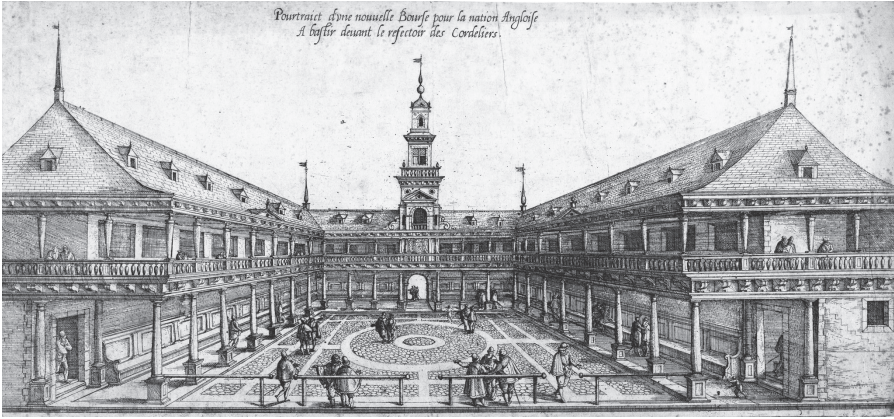


Figure 10.2. The English Bourse, Antwerp, 1670–1700. British Museum number Ee,8.100.  
© The Trustees of the British Museum.

And so up a pair of Stairs into a large Room, where was a Guard of Soldiers with Halberts, which were more for shew than safety; for the Halberts lay by, and great Jacks of Beer and Wine were in their hands.<sup>24</sup>

In the large room, the narrator says that the guards' weapons are mostly for show, and he notes that the guards themselves are heavily engaged in eating and drinking. An obvious inference is that a group of courtiers who feel aggrieved about taxes would be able to stage a coup without much resistance from these slack guardians. But this understanding of the situation is not without competition from others, for it probably was common to find guards drinking wine and beer in antechambers during times of peace. Further, is the talk of the lord about danger just talk of the sort that was always to be found in royal courts? Certainly, soldiers drinking as their weapons lie on a floor or are leaning up against a wall are a frequent subject in paintings and prints of the time (see [Figure 10.3](#)). The large room with the guards, then, both invites inference and provides an excellent example of the uncertainties and ambiguities of interpretation linked to observation.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 170.

<sup>25</sup> See Svetlana Aplers, "Bruegel's Festive Peasants," *Simiolus Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 6 (1972–73): 163–76 at 165. The guards need not necessarily be understood as derelict in duty. Walter S. Gibson writes that, "It is widely assumed that most of Bruegel's pictures express profound philosophical or moral concepts ... Unfortunately [this view is not] supported by what Bruegel's contemporaries thought about either peasants or personifications." W. S. Gibson, *Bruegel* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 11.



Figure 10.3. Christoph Murer, *Two Soldiers Drinking and a Bathing Scene Behind*. 1573–1614. British Museum number 1865,0311.166. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

## III

*Natures Pictures* contains, in addition to the story of the Stranger, a much longer piece called "The Tale of a Traveller." In "The Tale of a Traveller," Cavendish develops her central character in considerable depth and carries her story beyond the time in which the unnamed traveller is an observer in foreign lands. We see him return to his home country, try his hand at farming, and eventually marry.

From its outset, the story examines the way in which individuals develop intellectually, including through the use of observation. For many of Cavendish's female readers in particular, the opening of the story is made unsettling by the parents of the traveller. The parents have several daughters, whose education, the narrator implies, is ignored because these children are girls. The parents, "having none but daughters, at last was borne unto them a son, of whom they were very fond ... His education in the first place was ... by his Mothers Chambermayd, or the like."<sup>26</sup>

The boy who grows up to become the traveller does not fare especially well in his education as a child. By using the phrase "or the like" in describing the tutor, the narrator implies an off-hand attitude on the part of the parents towards children's intellectual development generally. That the tutor is probably a chambermaid simply reinforces the parents' undervaluing of education. The larger Cavendish family, by contrast, was very serious about the tutors it employed, and the Devonshire side engaged Thomas Hobbes to educate the future 2nd and 3rd Earls. Margaret's own tutoring, by a "decayed gentlewoman," was modest at best, and her joking about it probably conceals regret and even resentment.<sup>27</sup>

When the traveller is aged 10, he is sent to a "Free School," and what follows is, if anything, worse for his mental development than the time he spends with his tutor. At the free school, he is required to learn by rote and is frequently beaten for failures in recitation. When he turns 14 and until he is 18, he studies at a university, an activity which is intellectually rigorous but conducted in an unpleasant environment. The curriculum is thoroughly impractical: the boy spends his time "conversing more with the dead than with the living, in reading old Authors."<sup>28</sup> The point seems to be that, given the traveller's ineffective parents and his exposure to a mediocre system of formal education, the best way for him to become educated is to travel and observe.

At the age of 18, the boy, now a young man bent on travel, decides without any encouragement or direction from his mother and father to visit foreign countries "to see ... Varieties and Curiosities." Thus begins his self-education by watching and listening. After several years spent abroad, the young man decides to take stock of his "observations" and at the same time reminisce about the "curiosities" that he has seen.

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<sup>26</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 273.

<sup>27</sup> Margaret, without suggesting any failing on the part of her parents, says in Letter 175 of *Sociable Letters* that she was taught as a child by an "antient decayed gentlewoman." Cavendish, *CCXI Sociable Letters*, 367.

<sup>28</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 273.

The word “curiosities,” of course, was much associated with the Royal Society, whose members spent time examining what they took to be “curious,” that is, unusual or strange.

The young traveller begins to take stock by going over his enhanced understanding of architecture. He recalls what “Piles had been so built upon the least compass of Ground, that none was lost, but every foot employed, making no vacant corners, or useless places.”<sup>29</sup>

In a sudden and abrupt about-face, however, the traveller decides that this new knowledge has no practical value because he is not wealthy enough to be able to use it in constructing a house for himself. Any sort of observation that might have been made by the Stranger in “The Observer” becomes lost as a result of a main personality flaw: his fearfulness. The detailed and astute observations that the traveller makes in his tale are likewise lost, but as a result of a different personality defect: the traveller shows himself to be a malcontent or, as we might say today, a man who is inclined to see the worst in everything.

The traveller goes on to recall that he had considered using what he had learned about architecture to become a surveyor of buildings, perhaps a little as was the case with Inigo Jones, but decided against this course of action, saying, “But, since I cannot build for my Humour, Fancy, nor Fame; I will not trouble my self for the pleasure of others.”<sup>30</sup> Inigo Jones, as Surveyor-General of the King’s Works to James I, designed important structures, such as the Queen’s House in Greenwich. Along the way, Jones gained enormous prestige, so it is not difficult to conclude that the traveller, as a malcontent, misses out on what could have been an interesting and enviable career in building for royalty. He certainly would have been in a position to gain “fame.”

When he has finished considering what he has learned about architecture, the traveller describes time spent with gambling and with “mistresses and the like,” but he has no sense of the morality or immorality of these activities. Rather, as a non-judgemental and practical person, he observes that if he goes to a bawdy house, “for a short Pleasure [he will get] a lasting Disease: for the Pox is seldom got out of the Bones.”<sup>31</sup> He has learned by observation that a small amount of pleasure leads to a great deal of pain, indeed, pain that has a specific location in the human body.

As the tale progresses, the traveller continues to examine at length his life spent abroad as a watcher and listener. He recalls his visits to law courts and parliaments as an outsider, where he maintained his stance as an observer. Although he became actively involved as a soldier in a foreign army, he seems to have done so mostly in order to observe what happens in war. He now finds all of the institutions with which he came into contact of dubious merit and usefulness. Of his wartime experience, he regrets his days spent “killing those that never did [him] harm” less as a moral failing and more as a waste of time.<sup>32</sup> As is always the case, he tends to steer away from moral judgements. He sums up years of travel as follows:

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<sup>29</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 517.

<sup>30</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 516.

<sup>31</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 520.

<sup>32</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 520.

Have I not spent a great Sum of Money, endangered my Life both by Sea and Land, wasted my Youth, wearied my Limbs, exhausted my Spirits with tedious Journeys ... lying in Lowsie Inns, eating stinking Meat[?]<sup>33</sup>

With this summary statement, the traveller ceases his survey of the knowledge he has gained in his journeys and resolves to return to his native country.

Upon his return, the traveller, now called the Gentleman, becomes involved in the management of farmland, and he chooses to live in a farmhouse, rather than in a building that is more grand. His interest in architecture seems to have evaporated. The narrator writes a good deal about the clothes that the former traveller chooses to wear as a gentleman farmer, probably implying that the rustic attire signals just a little too much naive enthusiasm for country life. It is as though the expert on foreign architecture has turned into one of Shakespeare's rural clowns in "Frieze Breeches." The Gentleman, who has been dismissive of what he observed in his travels, sets intellectual activity of any kind aside and immerses himself in a warm, bucolic glow: "He returned to his own Countrey, where ... he ... [clothed] himself (... in a Frieze Jerkin, and a pair of Frieze Breeches, a Frieze pair of Mittins, and a Frieze Mountier-Cap)."<sup>34</sup>

For a time, the Gentleman is a thoroughly happy man, one who no longer shows any signs of being a malcontent. He is surrounded by farm workers who are reminiscent of peasants in paintings by Peter Bruegel, the elder (ca. 1525–1569). Not only was Cavendish's Antwerp well stocked with paintings by Bruegel, her readers in England would have been familiar with such paintings, though most often through copies and prints. Generations of Bruegel family members produced large numbers of copies and also created original paintings on their ancestor's themes of peasant life.<sup>35</sup>

One might even say that at this point in the story Cavendish the author becomes an observer who recalls her experience with Low Countries art and shares what she has seen with her readers. Rather than understanding herself as an exile from England in "The Tale of a Traveller," she revels in the pleasures that accrue to those who are fortunate enough able to enjoy the visual arts of Antwerp. Along the way, she invokes a favourite topic of the Bruegel family, the harvest (see [Figure 10.4](#)).

In the Summer-time [the Gentleman] would be up with the Lark ... and at Noon would sit down on his Sheafs of Corn or Hay-cocks, eating Bread and Cheese ... tossing the black-Leather Bottle, drinking the Healths of the Countrey-Lasses and Good-wives.<sup>36</sup>

The Gentleman, now a figure in a painting, loses himself in country living, and the tale pauses to give itself over to visual rhapsody.

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**33** Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 523.

**34** Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 524.

**35** Cavendish's stay in Antwerp occurred just at the end of a rise in numbers of art dealers in the Low Countries in the first half of the seventeenth century. John Michael Montias, "Art Dealers in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 18 (1988): 244–56 at 245.

**36** Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 525.



Figure 10.4. Hieronymus Cock, after Pieter Bruegel and by Pieter van der Heyden. *The Four Seasons: Summer*. 1570. Museum number F,1.24. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

The long and glowing evocation of the pleasures of country living, however, is merely a prelude to disillusionment, for eventually the Gentleman realizes that he sorely needs to give some thought to his financial situation:

And after he had followed this way of Husbandry two or three years ... [he] found that he was rather behind hand than before hand in his estate, and that his husbandry did not amount so high, as the rents he had got from his tenants.<sup>37</sup>

The Bruegel-inspired country idyll comes to an end, the enthusiasm of the Gentleman is transformed into disenchantment, and he is beset by a “choleric” or “melancholy” humour.<sup>38</sup> A conclusion that might be drawn from the Gentleman’s years spent as a farmer is that thoughtless pleasure, while enjoyable, is still thoughtless and is likely to lead to trouble. More importantly in terms of the story, the wealth of education that the Gentleman has received as an observer, especially in art and architecture, is lost

<sup>37</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 526.

<sup>38</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 526.

during his rural idyll. Although the Gentleman becomes choleric at discovering his financial miscalculations as a farmer, he does not return to being a malcontent and, in fact, develops a cautiously optimistic outlook regarding his future. He comes to believe that, with the right wife, he will be able to create a happy life for himself.

The Gentleman does go on to marry and his marriage is indeed happy, a good fortune that comes about in spite of the nature of his plans for choosing a wife. He is overly precise in his specifications, so much so that the marriage is in danger of being based on inflexible husbandly prescription.

I will get me a Wife, who shall not be so handsome as to be proud of her Beauty, seeking ways to shew it to the World; and whilst she strives to shew her self, out of a desire to have all Eyes gaze at her, and to incaptivate all Hearts, she may chance to be catch'd in Love's Net her self with some flattering Youth, or ignorant Coxcomb, who are only crafty to lay Lime-twigs to catch simple Women.<sup>39</sup>

The Gentleman adheres to the commonly held belief that beautiful women are simple-minded, self-regarding, and easy prey for seducers. He also plans to have a wife who is subject to his "will." She is to understand what he thinks. He has no such obligation to her. She must have "a modest Countenance [and only] so much wit ... as to learn the rules of [his] will."<sup>40</sup>

Although the Gentleman has been a careful observer, he is lacking in reason as that faculty was understood by Cavendish. Reason, for her, included good judgement and openness to consideration of the ideas of others. Jacqueline Broad explains that Cavendish was a believer in being intellectually flexible. Broad quotes a preface to *Philosophical Letters* (1664) in which Cavendish says, "whomsoever can bring most rational and reasonable arguments shall have my vote, although it be against my own opinion."<sup>41</sup> It is certainly possible to argue that Cavendish was less flexible than she claims to be in this passage, but it is clear that Cavendish did not want to be thought of as an intellectual dogmatist.

The Gentleman's marriage turns out well, then, because the woman he marries, while taking account of observation, gives primacy to reason and does not align with his specifications for a wife. In her first conversation with her husband-to-be, she characterizes herself as an observer, but one who embraces reason: "I will not bar my Eyes, but they shall stand as open, as free, though not the only passage to my Heart. And I wish Reason may rule the Objects of my Affections, that are gathered together."<sup>42</sup>

The Gentleman and his thoughtful bride-to-be go on to fall in love. She is quite shy, but he does not bully her, as one might have expected, and the story concludes in a rosy

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<sup>39</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 531.

<sup>40</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 531.

<sup>41</sup> Jacqueline Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41. Broad cites *Philosophical Letters* (London, 1664) "A Preface to the Reader," sigs. B1r–v.

<sup>42</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 539.

glow a little akin to what he felt as a gentleman farmer. The Gentleman "made her Mistris of his Estate; and whil'st he governed his outward Affairs, she governed the Family at home ... they lived neat and cleanly, loved passionately, thrived moderately, and happy they lived, and piously died."<sup>43</sup>

This ending, with its stock phrase "piously died," is a little too sweet and conventional to be taken at face value, especially given Cavendish's views about unimaginative traditionalist thinking to be found in organized religion.<sup>44</sup> If not at face value, how should we understand the story's conclusion?

The ending of "The Tale of a Traveller" is not entirely serious. The Gentleman's shy wife points in a playfully comic way towards the personality that Cavendish associated with herself. The Gentleman's wife also partakes of Cavendish's willingness to be self-contradictory in the exploration of mental processes. In an instance of apparent self-contradiction, the wife is said by Cavendish to be a sceptic whose death is pious. This apparent self-contraction, one might guess, is the sort of thinking that Jay Stevenson had in mind.

#### IV

When she returned to England after her long stay on the Continent, Margaret Cavendish's life provided far fewer opportunities for observation of the visual arts. She and William retired to Welbeck Abbey, where there were only a few regular guests with whom to discuss various topics of intellectual interest. Lynn Hulse notes that the dramatist Thomas Shadwell was a frequent visitor, but Shadwell was William's associate and not Margaret's.<sup>45</sup> The single great exception to the rule of life limited to Nottinghamshire occurred in spring of 1667, when the couple paid an extended visit to London. A play by William was performed, and the city was abuzz with talk of Margaret, who was a grand presence at the Royal Society in May. For whatever reason, after they left London, they did not return.

Margaret may have found the lack of a group of intellectuals with whom to converse vexing and might have made her unhappiness known in the presence of senior household staff.<sup>46</sup> Whatever the case, it is likely that she created a remedy in the society of her own waiting ladies and, of course, in her conversation with her husband.<sup>47</sup> She writes

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<sup>43</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 544.

<sup>44</sup> In her drama, only the uneducated lower classes are professedly Christian. Her upper-class characters invoke Roman gods. See James Fitzmaurice, "Paganism, Christianity, and the Faculty of Fancy in the Writing of Margaret Cavendish," in Siegfried and Sarasohn, *God and Nature in the Thought of Margaret Cavendish*, 77–92.

<sup>45</sup> Lynn Hulse, "Cavendish, William, 1st Duke of Newcastle upon Tyne (bap. 1593, d. 1676)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online), January 6, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> A steward wrote that Margaret would "break up the family and go to rant at London" if she were able. Douglas Grant, *Margaret the First* (London: Hart-Davis, 1957), 233.

<sup>47</sup> See note 16 for the views of Virginia Woolf.

that she did not set the waiting ladies to tasks of cooking fashionable desserts as did other aristocratic women. Rather she and these young women sat and read together.<sup>48</sup> She also encouraged them to write, “which may make their Li[ves] Happy.” During this period she composed *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668), a comedy about an aristocratic woman and her female entourage. It is tempting to speculate that *Convent*, which contains plays within the play, reflects actual practice, in which Margaret and her ladies read aloud or acted out scenes.<sup>49</sup>

When all was said and done, however, Nottinghamshire was unable to provide the sort of environment that had existed in Antwerp. Cavendish needed a way to create serious intellectual dialogue and turned to correspondence with learned men, including the Anglican divine Joseph Glanvill. Glanvill carefully read Cavendish’s writing on religion and did what he could to warn her against what he called the “appearance” of atheism. According to Katie Whitaker, he argued *contra* Cavendish’s scepticism in *Plus Ultra* (1668), though without naming Cavendish as his intellectual adversary.<sup>50</sup> For her part, Cavendish tried to convince Glanvill that malevolent supernatural forces were not active in the world. Glanvill was a firm believer in the existence of witches, a topic on which he published a great deal. Cavendish’s other correspondents included the noted Cambridge Platonist Henry More, who also believed in witches, and her old friend, the physician and natural philosopher Walter Charleton.<sup>51</sup> Henry More either did not take Cavendish’s work seriously or did not want to be seen as doing so when writing to Anne Conway.<sup>52</sup> *Philosophical Letters*, which Cavendish published in 1664, creates an imaginary female correspondent, to whom Cavendish writes about the published work of More, as well as that of Hobbes, Descartes, and van Helmont. It is a chatty volume that mimics the atmosphere of a salon while engaging with scientific topics. It is quite possible that it was read by many who took its ideas seriously but who, like Glanvill, were afraid of damaging their reputations by engaging with its author by name in print.

Further evidence of the response to Cavendish’s writing during this period can be found in Whitaker’s suggestion that arguments belonging to Cavendish were employed by Henry Stubb in an attack on the Royal Society printed in 1670.<sup>53</sup> The arguments, unsurprisingly, were not acknowledged as deriving from Cavendish. The closest she came to being part of an open and equal intellectual dispute conducted in print came with Du Verger’s *Humble Reflections*, but that volume was printed in 1658 and largely forgotten by the time that Cavendish arrived in the north of England.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> See the preface to *Sociable Letters*, “To His Excellency the Lord Marquess of Newcastle” and especially Letter 150 (311).

<sup>49</sup> In Letter 80 of *Sociable Letters* (164), Cavendish discusses “Relation, Reading, and Observation.”

<sup>50</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 317–19.

<sup>51</sup> Charleton engages with her philosophy in a letter of May 3, 1667, which is printed in *A Collection of Letters and Poems* (London, 1678), 92.

<sup>52</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 315.

<sup>53</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 315.

<sup>54</sup> Whitaker believes that the author was a Catholic Englishwoman (*Mad Madge*, 316).

Cavendish published *The Blazing World* in 1668, but this long piece of fiction is driven less by narrative movement than “The Observer” or “The Tale of a Traveller.” It does, however, include a female character who becomes resident in a foreign land, or, to be exact, a foreign world. This character, who is something of a stand-in for Cavendish, is not detached observer. The character, who becomes the foreign world’s Empress, takes the time to design and build two chapels. The chapels do not seem to have any connection with actual religious buildings and rather are intended by the Empress as devices to hoodwink the Blazing World’s population with spectacle.<sup>55</sup> The observation of architecture and the writing of short fiction were now largely parts of a past life for Cavendish, but that past life had been good to her. Her time spent as an observer and, especially, an interlocutor in small-group conversation in Antwerp had prepared her for the letters she would write to people like Glanvill and provided a basis for the guidance in reading that she would give to her maids of honour. She explains in *Sociable Letters* that reading and writing will bring happiness to her waiting ladies, but it is probably true that these activities at the very least gave Cavendish herself pleasure in a life that had become more obscure than she would have wanted.

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<sup>55</sup> In a footnote in her edition of *A Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview, 2016), Sara Mendelson connects the chapels to the writings of Machiavelli and Hobbes (102).

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## Chapter 11

# EPICURUS AND GENDER IN THE BRITISH NEWCASTLE CIRCLE: CHARLETON, HOBBES AND MARGARET CAVENDISH

Lisa Walters

RECENT SCHOLARSHIP HAS increasingly been investigating the important role of Epicurean philosophy within the Renaissance intellectual milieu. While Reid Barbour demonstrates how Epicureanism was an influence in Stuart England,<sup>1</sup> Adam Rzepka points out that “Lucretius’s dissemination in England was remarkably fragmentary” and it was not until the 1650s that atomism, inspired by Epicurus, “became a pervasive public factor in the development of the English sciences.”<sup>2</sup> The Newcastle circle was particularly instrumental in rekindling Epicurean philosophy throughout Europe during the mid-seventeenth century. Catherine Wilson explains that the “Cavendish salon in Paris in the mid-1640s, overseen by Margaret, her husband William, and his brother, the mathematician Charles Cavendish, was the center of a revival of Epicureanism led by Hobbes and Gassendi.”<sup>3</sup> Richard Kroll notes that Pierre Gassendi was “the age’s single most important catalyst in the neo-Epicurean revival.”<sup>4</sup> However, less attention is given to how British members of the Newcastle circle such as Walter Charleton, Thomas Hobbes, and Margaret Cavendish assimilated and modified Epicurean ideas, thereby contributing to significant changes in the intellectual landscape of seventeenth-century Britain.<sup>5</sup> This included an increased interest by women in natural philosophy. Wilson notes that women such as Margaret Cavendish, Lucy Hutchinson, and Aphra Behn were particularly drawn to Epicurean philosophy, but the “attraction of women to Epicureanism is a topic that has been little explored and even less explained.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, scholarship, to date, has neglected the significant role that women had in introducing Epicurean atomism to Britain. This chapter aims to address this neglected issue, as it investigates the ways

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1 Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).

2 Adam Rzepka, “Discourse Ex Nihilo,” in *Dynamic Reading: Studies in the Reception of Epicureanism*, ed. Brooke Holmes and W. H. Shearin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 113–32, 113–14.

3 Catherine Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.

4 Richard Kroll, *The Material Word: Literate Culture in The Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 15.

5 Charleton was a friend and correspondent of both Hobbes and Margaret Cavendish.

6 Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 262.

that Charleton, Hobbes, and Margaret Cavendish explore a central element of Epicurean philosophy: pleasure. In doing so, these thinkers reconsider the meaning of justice, marriage, and sexuality in ways that opened up different avenues for conceptualizing gender, which may have been appealing to women intellectuals. Hence this article will argue not only that the Newcastle circle was influential in paving the way for women's broader participation in philosophy but also that their exploration of Epicurean ethics held significant implications for gender.

Walter Charleton was the first person to publish English translations of Epicurean philosophy when he published *The Darknes of Atheism Dispelled* (1652) and *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charletoniana* (1654), which were selective translations from Gassendi's *Animadversiones*, published in 1648.<sup>7</sup> Around the same time, in 1653, Margaret Cavendish published a philosophical treatise titled *Philosophical Fancies* as well as *Poems, and Fancies* (1653), the latter being a literary text modelled after Lucretius's *De rerum natura* as it explored atomism, science, and nature mostly in poetic form. Nonetheless, Cavendish receives little recognition for being the first person to put forward an original theory of Epicurean atomism in Britain.<sup>8</sup> Although Cavendish, despite her prolific writings, is generally not regarded as a figure that was influential in the seventeenth-century intellectual milieu, the evidence suggests otherwise. To overlook her influence is to obstruct a broader view of the Newcastle circle's influence upon seventeenth-century science, literature, and culture. Her Epicurean texts clearly created a stir and inspired a number of her contemporaries. While discussing her "Incomparable POEMS," based upon Epicurean ideas, George Etherege wrote in a poem that Cavendish's "Fame" in her own "Countrey has no Bounds!"<sup>9</sup> In 1653, the very year her atomic philosophy and poetry was first published, Robert Creyghtone enthusiastically initiated a correspondence with Cavendish, asserting that if "those Antients [were] now alive, who first discoursed of Atomes, Matter, Form, and other Ingredients of the Worlds Fabrick, they would hang their Heads, confounded to see a Lady of most Honourable Extraction, in Prime of youth, amidst a thousand fasheries of greatness, say more of their own Mysteries."<sup>10</sup> During the same year, Dorothy Osborne also explained that she had not read Cavendish yet but was aware that her books were being discussed and was desperate for a copy: "let me ask you if you have seen a book of poems newly come out, made by my Lady Newcastle? For God's sake if you meet with it send it me; they say 'tis ten times more extravagant than her dress. Sure, the poor woman is a little distracted, she

<sup>7</sup> Lisa Sarasohn, *Gassendi's Ethics: Freedom in a Mechanistic Universe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 173.

<sup>8</sup> For an account of Cavendish's atomism, see chap. 2 of Lisa T. Sarasohn, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish: Reason and Fancy during the Scientific Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 34–53.

<sup>9</sup> George Etherege, "To the most Illustrious and most Excellent Princess," in *Letters and Poems in Honour of the Incomparable Princess, Margaret, Dutchess of Newcastle*, ed. William Cavendish (London, 1676), 153.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Creyghtone, "Utrecht, Dec. 2. 1653," in *Letters and Poems*, ed. William Cavendish, 87.

could never be so ridiculous as to venture at writing books, and in verse too.”<sup>11</sup> Although Osborne was incredulous about a woman having the audacity to publish philosophical ideas about atoms in verse, Cavendish later would be the first woman invited to attend a session of the Royal Society, an event that drew large crowds of people.

It is important to recognize, as Lisa Sarasohn points out, that women “did not write natural philosophy in the seventeenth century. To do so was not only revolutionary but even unnatural, a complete blurring of the gendered characteristic considered inherent in the male and female.”<sup>12</sup> While it is true that women contributed to the Republic of Letters and figured prominently in salons,<sup>13</sup> before Cavendish, British women did not publish philosophical treatises about natural philosophy. Nonetheless, a number of men in the Newcastle circle broke convention by encouraging Cavendish’s intellectual pursuits. Her husband William and her brother-in-law Charles mentored and educated her.<sup>14</sup> Hence Cavendish thanked Charles in a preface to her first publication, *Philosophical Fancies* (1653), and dedicated *Poems, and Fancies* to him, referring to Charles as her “patron” who provided the work with “Protection.”<sup>15</sup> In addition, her husband endorsed both publications on the frontpieces. Thus both Cavendish brothers publicly endorsed the first treatises of natural philosophy published by a woman in Britain. Charleton, who encouraged Cavendish’s work in his correspondences with her,<sup>16</sup> also publicly endorsed Cavendish’s work to the Royal Society when he explained to his male peers that Cavendish has “Convinced the world, by her own heroic example, that no studies are too hard for her softer sex, and that ladies are capable of our admiration as well for their science as for their beauty.”<sup>17</sup> Anna Battigelli argues that Cavendish herself suggests in *The Worlds Olio* (1655) that the Newcastle salon was a crucial influence upon her writings.<sup>18</sup> Sadly for us, Hobbes and Descartes did not correspond directly about philosophy with Cavendish, but John Evelyn, another associate of the Newcastle circle, who in

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**11** Dorothy Osborne, “Letter 17,” in *Letters from Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple, 1652–54*, ed. Edward Abbott Parry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 96, 97.

**12** Sarasohn, *Natural Philosophy*, 15.

**13** See Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). For details about women’s involvement in Parisian salons, see Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 30–32.

**14** Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 46.

**15** Margaret Cavendish, “To Sir Charles Cavendish,” in *Philosophical Fancies* (London, 1653) and Margaret Cavendish, “The Epistle Dedicatory: To Sir Charles Cavendish,” in *Poems, and Fancies* (London, 1653).

**16** Charleton’s letters to Cavendish can be found in *Letters and Poems*, ed. William Cavendish, 1676.

**17** Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: The Extraordinary Life of Margaret Cavendish* (New York: Basic, 2002), 315.

**18** Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish*, 46. Cavendish discusses how if it were not for the conversations she was exposed to, “I should never have writ of so many things.” Margaret Cavendish, “The Epistle,” in *The World’s Olio* (London, 1655).

1656 translated the first book of Lucretius, asserted that Cavendish demonstrates that "There is no sex in the mind."<sup>19</sup>

With the encouragement of men in the Newcastle circle, Cavendish became a pioneer in changing women's relation to philosophy. For example, Lucy Hutchinson was the first person to translate the entire *De rerum natura* by Lucretius into English. Although Hutchinson was translating *De rerum natura* in the 1650s, she was most probably directly influenced by Cavendish's atomist texts published in 1653. Wilson suggests that "it is conceivable that Hutchinson herself showed Cavendish some passages from her secret Lucretius translation, or that Cavendish encouraged Hutchinson's interests, for the two women knew each other."<sup>20</sup> However, Dmitri Levitin argues that Hutchinson began her translation by as late as 1658,<sup>21</sup> so it is more likely that Cavendish was the figure that influenced Hutchinson, particularly since Cavendish was the first English woman to publish a philosophical treatise in 1653.<sup>22</sup> Another man from the Newcastle circle who encouraged women's interest in Epicureanism was John Evelyn, whose wife, Mary, designed the frontpiece of his translation of Lucretius in 1656, thereby participating in the introduction of Epicurean ideas to a mass readership.<sup>23</sup>

Following Lucy Hutchinson's translation of Lucretius, in 1682 Thomas Creech published another translation, which was immediately reprinted the following year. Aphra Behn not only wrote a poem for Creech's second edition, she also translated Bernard de Fontenelle's *A Discovery of New Worlds* (1688), which explored the Epicurean theory of multiple worlds. Epicurus (341–270 BCE) argued that atoms can produce infinite worlds that resemble our own or that can be entirely unlike our own, so that "there is no obstacle to the unlimitedness of worlds."<sup>24</sup> The numerous translations of Lucretius that were emerging during this period, as well as the interest in the possibility of multiple worlds, demonstrate that Epicurean ideas were increasingly gaining popularity in Britain for both men and women, in part due to the influence of the Newcastle circle, including Margaret Cavendish.

While it is true that women were important correspondents in the Republic of Letters, and the Cambridge Platonist Henry More encouraged and mentored Ann Conway as early as 1650 (her philosophical treatise was published posthumously in 1690), nonetheless, the Newcastle men were unusually open and encouraging of women's

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 315.

<sup>20</sup> Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 28.

<sup>21</sup> Dmitri Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science: Histories of Philosophy in England, c. 1640–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 335.

<sup>22</sup> Cavendish also published the first English biography written by a woman, a trend then followed by Hutchinson, who later wrote a biography of her husband.

<sup>23</sup> It is significant that Charleton, a prominent member of the Royal Society, later translated Cavendish's biography into Latin, thereby showing his public support not only for William but also for Cavendish's other intellectual endeavours.

<sup>24</sup> Epicurus, "Letter to Herodotus," in *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writing and Testimonials*, trans. and ed. Brand Inwood and L. P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 8.

pursuit of philosophy. Hence it is important to recognize their contribution not only to Epicurean thought and modernity but also to women's involvement in philosophy. Most of Margaret Cavendish's publications include a flattering approval of her writing by William in the front matter, and he contributed passages to one of the most feminist texts of the early modern period, *The Convent of Pleasure*, which will be discussed hereafter in this chapter. Cavendish, Hutchinson, Behn, and Mary Evelyn, as well as eighteenth-century women such as Delarivier Manley, Eliza Haywood, and Frances Burney, were all influenced and drawn to Epicurean philosophy.<sup>25</sup> Yet scholarship has paid little attention to the relations between Epicurean philosophy and women. Epicurus himself allowed women and slaves into his philosophical school, later drawing contempt from Cicero, who, according to a 1683 English translation, referred to an Epicurean woman, Leontium, as a "little Strumpet" and "Slut," who "dar'd to Write against Wise Theophrastus" even though he admitted she had "a neat, Attique stile" of writing.<sup>26</sup> As Barbour notes, the "tendency of Epicureanism to challenge or ignore established cultural boundaries was familiar to anyone who had read Cicero's disgust with the presence of philosophizing women in the Garden."<sup>27</sup> Like Epicurus and other men in the Newcastle circle, Pierre Gassendi advocated women's ability to pursue philosophy. Anne R. Larsen explains Gassendi's belief that "that women are equal in nature to men, hold the same gifts, and surpass in intelligence many of the best philosophers."<sup>28</sup> The origins of such attitudes can perhaps be traced back to Epicurus himself, who, according to Kroll, "proposed the bonding of all, even women and slaves, by a friendship carried out within the confines of Epicurus's famous garden."<sup>29</sup> Perhaps this is one of the reasons, as Line Cottagnies argues in [Chapter 19](#) of this volume, that through Cavendish's "confrontation with Epicureanism" she "was able to forge empowering intellectual tools and gain the authority she sought."<sup>30</sup>

Epicurean philosophy itself was conducive to rethinking gender relations, even though it was associated with atheism and debauchery. As Wilson argues, the "atomist recognizes no natural rulers or natural subject; there are only particles constantly in motion, some of which have coalesced into living bodies moved by appetite and

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**25** G. Gabrielle Starr, "Cavendish, Aesthetics, and the Anti-Platonic Line," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39 (2006): 295–308 at 301.

**26** Cicero, *Three Books Touching the Nature of the Gods, Done Into English* (London, 1683), 52. Leontium may have been a leader in the Epicurean community. See Joan E. Taylor, *Jewish Women Philosophers of First-Century Alexandria: Philo's "Therapeutae" Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 203.

**27** Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics*, 60.

**28** Anne R. Larsen, *Anna Maria Van Schurman, "The Star of Utrecht": The Education Vision and Reception of a Savante* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 96.

**29** Kroll, *Material Word*, 9.

**30** In [Chapter 19](#) of this volume, Line Cottagnies compares Cavendish's *Poems, and Fancies* with *The Convent of Pleasure*, discussing how both texts engage with Epicureanism in different ways.

aversion.”<sup>31</sup> Without a premise justifying natural rulers, men are not natural rulers over women. Hence Epicureanism, according to Barbour, “threaten[ed] to undermine the theology, cosmology, and morality so dear to Christian culture” in early modernity.<sup>32</sup> Epicurus had argued that the world was composed of material atoms that were in a constant state of motion moving through a void where “atoms move continuously for all time.”<sup>33</sup> Epicurean philosophy was particularly controversial on account of the argument that it was best for people to avoid mental pain by removing the fear of death and punishment from gods.<sup>34</sup> Epicurus, who further held that the soul was material, argued against the likelihood of the soul’s survival after death and punishment in the afterlife, which he believed provoked great anxiety among humanity.<sup>35</sup> Hence, as Francis Bacon asserted, the ancient atomism was the “Schoole which is most accused of Atheisme.”<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, Gassendi, who was a French priest, was instrumental in reworking Epicurus’s ideas so that they were acceptable to Christian sentiments. For example, David Norbrook explains that Gassendi “challenged stereotypes of the debauched pleasure-seeker with a sustained defence of Epicurean moral philosophy, which he integrated with a Christian pursuit of blessedness.”<sup>37</sup> In his translation of Gassendi, Charleton claims to convert “the poisonous part of Epicurus” into a Christian philosophy.<sup>38</sup> In doing so, he claims that “Atoms were ... created by God.”<sup>39</sup> Charleton, according to Robert Kargon, tried to demonstrate that atomism was “purged” of heresies.<sup>40</sup> In doing so, he influenced Robert Boyle, one of the founders of modern chemistry, who admitted that the “antient Corpuscularian philosophers ... doctrine in most other points, though not in all, we are most inclinable to.”<sup>41</sup> Kargon argues that Boyle’s “basic approach, both in content and style, is that of the Epicureans,” further noting that the “Royal Society, which Boyle participated in founding, provided a willing and interested public for the essays which he published.”<sup>42</sup> Hence the

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31 Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 185.

32 Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics*, 2.

33 Epicurus, “Letter to Herodotus,” 7.

34 D. S. Hutchinson, “Introduction,” in *The Epicurus Reader*, trans. and ed. Inwood and Gerson, vi–x; see also Epicurus, “Letter to Menoeceus,” *The Epicurus Reader*, trans. and ed. Inwood and Gerson, 29.

35 Hutchinson, ix; see also Epicurus, “Letter to Herodotus,” 13–18.

36 Francis Bacon, “Of Atheism,” in *The Essaies of Sr. Francis Bacon* (London, 1613).

37 David Norbrook, “Atheists and Republicans: Interpreting Lucretius in Revolutionary England,” in *Lucretius and the Early Modern*, ed. David Norbrook, Stephen Harrison, and Philip Hardie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 223–58, 225.

38 Walter Charleton, *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charletoniana* (London, 1654), 126.

39 Charleton, *Physiologia*, 126.

40 Robert Kargon, “Walter Charleton, Robert Boyle, and the Acceptance of Epicurean Atomism in England,” *Isis* 55 (1964): 184–92 at 185.

41 Robert Boyle, *The Origine of Formes and Qualities* (Oxford, 1666), 4.

42 Kargon, “Walter Charleton,” 190, 192.

Newcastle circle's facilitation of Epicureanism was an important influence upon the Royal Society and for the foundations of chemistry.

While the Newcastle circle might not receive the full attention that it deserves for its influence upon seventeenth-century science, its influence is also significant because atomism itself held many ethical implications. An examination of the ethics of Charleton, Hobbes, and Cavendish shows how an understanding of how ideas that were influenced by Epicureanism could facilitate different understandings of gender. Pleasure and pain are the crux of Epicurean philosophy insofar as obtaining pleasure and eliminating pain are deemed the highest good.<sup>43</sup> For Epicureans, some pleasures and desires, such as eating and sleeping, are natural and necessary, and some are natural but unnecessary. Hence it is a philosophy of moderation, since removing pain often indicates removing many unnecessary desires and short-term pleasures. As Barbour explains, for Epicureans, "the happiest life is a physically painless one of mental tranquility in the garden among friends. Far from the violent extremities of gluttony or lechery, then, this painless tranquility is what the Epicureans mean by elevating natural and necessary pleasure to the status of the greatest good."<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Lucretius contends that humans do not require wealth, since "our bodies profit nothing / From riches or noble birth or glory of kingdom, / We must believe our minds also gain nothing."<sup>45</sup> He further explains that our "needs / Are small indeed: things that take the pain away, / And ... simple pleasures."<sup>46</sup> Consequently, Epicureans recommended a life of retreat away from power, politics, and wealth. Such a philosophy may have been appealing to Royalists in the Newcastle circle who had been exiled from power and their estates during the civil war. In *Epicurus's Morals* (1656), Charleton advised people to "live not only privately, but even obscurely and concealed in some secure corner" in order to avoid "Greatnesse, or Power, or Honours."<sup>47</sup> He further explains that "Pleasure," which is the "Highest of Goods,"<sup>48</sup> can lead the Christian individual into a more virtuous and peaceful life:

we esteem all pleasures to be a reall good, and all pain to be a reall evil; yet we do not therefore affirm, that we ought, at all times, to pursue that, and avoid this. For, it is good for us, to sustain some pains, that we may afterward enjoy more abundant pleasures; and expedient to abstain from some pleasures, that we may not by them incurre more grievous pains.<sup>49</sup>

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**43** Epicurus explains that the "removal of all feeling of pain is the limit of the magnitude of pleasures." Epicurus, "The Principal Doctrines," in *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writing and Testimonials*, trans. and ed. Brand Inwood and L. P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 32.

**44** Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics*, 14.

**45** Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. Ronald Melville, ed. Don Fowler and Peta Fowler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), bk. 2, lines 37–39.

**46** Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, bk. 2, lines 20–22.

**47** Walter Charleton, *Epicurus's Morals* (London, 1656), 92.

**48** Charleton, *Epicurus's Morals*, 19.

**49** Charleton, *Epicurus's Morals*, 15.

The Epicurean focus upon pleasure does not mean that individuals are to openly embrace all pleasures and selfishly avoid all pain, but it instead encourages individuals to consider and calculate which pleasures are harmless insofar as they do not induce pain. According to Charleton, the result is quite a moderate and even ascetic lifestyle, since “it is not perpetuall Feastings and Drinkings; it is not the love of, and Familiarity with beautifull boyes and women ... that can make a Happy life: But, it is Reason, with Sobriety, and consequently a serene Mind; investigating the Causes, why this Object is to be Elected, and that to be Rejected.”<sup>50</sup> Charleton contends that pleasure lies in a sober and “serene Mind” insofar as gluttony and debauchery often lead to pain or discomfort.

While Gassendi and Charleton worked to demonstrate that Epicurus was compatible with Christianity, Thomas Hobbes, who is considered the founder of modern political philosophy, drew considerably from Epicureanism to formulate his theory regarding the origins of political authority. David Norbrook argues that “Hobbes cast his own work as self-consciously modern and innovative and made it very hard to trace his debts to earlier thinkers.”<sup>51</sup> However, there are many signs that the hedonistic and utilitarian sides of Epicureanism were important to him.<sup>52</sup> Hobbes, for example, is not generally understood as an Epicurean, yet his political philosophy argues that human passions such as “Appetite, Desire, Love, Aversion, Hate, Joy, and Griefe” are merely manifestations of pleasure or pain.<sup>53</sup> For Hobbes, “Pleasure ... is the apparence, or sense of Good; and Molestation or Displeasure, the apparence, or sense of Evill.”<sup>54</sup> Like Charleton, Hobbes argues that virtue or what is deemed “good” ultimately is derived from pleasure, while that which is painful is interpreted as “evill,” ultimately providing a foundation of ethics that shares a similar view of pleasure and pain with Epicureanism. Hobbes also articulates Charleton’s position that gluttony “and other pleasures of Sense” detract from true pleasure, as it “take[s] away the care of knowing causes; which is a Lust of the mind, that ... exceedeth the short vehemence of any carnall Pleasure.”<sup>55</sup> Yet Hobbes starkly contrasts his philosophy with Epicureanism in his contention that humans will always experience fear as well as desire, which situates people in a constant state of anxiety.<sup>56</sup> While Epicureans cautioned against joining society and the public world, Hobbes maintains that the origin of society itself is fear: a painful emotional state. The

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<sup>50</sup> Charleton, *Epicurus’s Morals*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> Norbrook, “Atheists and Republicans,” 225.

<sup>52</sup> Norbrook further explains that “Hobbes probably borrowed from Gassendi’s work in progress in the 1640s, which had shown knowledge of Hobbes’s *De Cive* and ... a letter from Gassendi was prefaced to a subsequent edition. Samuel Sorbière, who brought this edition to press, praised Hobbes in words directly borrowed from Lucretius’s praise of Epicurus,” 225.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 2nd ed., ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 40–41.

<sup>54</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 40.

<sup>55</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 42.

<sup>56</sup> Hobbes argues that there is “a perpetuall and restless desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death.” *Leviathan*, 70.

state of nature necessitates a social contract otherwise there is "continuell feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short."<sup>57</sup> While Epicureans encouraged people to retreat from the public world with friends, for Hobbes, humans, in their natural state, are not social creatures, but their "continuell feare" drives them to create social bonds. So for Hobbes "there is no such thing as perpetual Tranquillity of mind ... because Life ... can never be without Desire, nor without Feare."<sup>58</sup> People nonetheless create contracts in order to lessen their fear and suffering, providing a secular view of the origins of society. Wilson maintains that "the central premises of the Epicurean system were its denial that any supernatural agents engage in the design, generation, maintenance, or moral regulation of the world."<sup>59</sup> Social order, morality, and justice do not derive from God or a metaphysical hierarchy but are contingent upon reciprocal agreements or pacts based upon self-preservation: Epicurus claims "there was no justice or injustice" for "nations which were unable or unwilling to make pacts about neither harming one another nor being harmed."<sup>60</sup> Hence Hobbes builds his contract theory upon Epicurus's claim that justice derives from "pacts," in a world without natural moral order. Social contracts, justice, and hence human society are a covenant or a form of "Art," an artificial construct, which could provide justification for different ways for humans to organize themselves. Hence Hobbes reconceptualizes traditional understandings of the origin of authority and society, which held implications for early modern understandings of gender. For example, Hobbes's understanding of authority contradicts traditional patriarchalism, which held that monarchical authority was not only derived from God but was fatherly in origin.<sup>61</sup> Breaking political convention that held that power originated from fathers, Hobbes more radically contends that authority originally derived from mothers in the state of nature.<sup>62</sup>

While Hobbes contends that power originally derives from women, Cavendish also reworks Epicurus's understanding of justice to rethink the nature of authority. Epicurus claims there has never been an absolute justice, since the "justice of nature is a pledge of reciprocal usefulness, [i.e.,] neither to harm one another nor be harmed."<sup>63</sup> Justice is relative insofar as it involves an agreement between two parties and should provide against harm. The notion that justice is simply an agreement not to cause harm potentially allows for a critique of structural injustice. For example, the plays-within-plays within Cavendish's play *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668) suggest that for women, English laws were not made to be "reciprocal" to avoid "harm" to all parties. Indeed, the plays

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<sup>57</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 89.

<sup>58</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 46.

<sup>59</sup> Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 37.

<sup>60</sup> Epicurus, "Principal Doctrines," 35.

<sup>61</sup> Robert Filmer, for example, explains that the first kings were simply fathers of families. Robert Filmer, "Patriarcha," *Patriarcha and Other Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 10.

<sup>62</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 140.

<sup>63</sup> Epicurus, "Principal Doctrines," 35.

depict multiple ways in which women can be harmed under marital law, including domestic abuse, neglect, and irresponsible husbands spending wives' personal finances while their families starve.<sup>64</sup> These plays-within-plays portray one of the most negative assessments of marriage in the early modern England. Tim Stretton has explained how Renaissance law indeed permitted husbands to beat their wives.<sup>65</sup> Besides this, when a woman married, she in theory lost all of her personal property to her husband, though daily practice was not always consistent with juridical theory.<sup>66</sup> Hence the plays-within-plays portray socioeconomic problems that wives could potentially face, but do not assume that patriarchal authority is just or natural, since the protagonist, Lady Happy, structures her convent to achieve pleasure—thereby eliminating men from her life:

she hath avoided the company of Men, by retirement, meerly, because she would enjoy the variety of Pleasures, which are in Nature; of which, she says, Men are Obstructors; for, instead of increasing Pleasure, they produce Pain; and, instead of giving Content, they increase Trouble; instead of making the Femal-Sex Happy, they make them Miserable.<sup>67</sup>

For Lady Happy, women must separate from men in order to experience Epicurean tranquility. To emphasize this point, a character named Monsieur Take-Pleasure is one of Lady Happy's most vocal suitors. The miserable depiction of marriage in the play indicates that wives cannot experience Epicurean notions of justice due to oppressive laws that disadvantage women. According to Hobbes, justice is subjective, since what "one man calleth Wisdome, what another calleth feare; and one cruelty, what another justice."<sup>68</sup> Yet Cavendish, more so than Hobbes, draws attention to the social implications of Epicurean notions of justice. Wilson argues that the "philosophically and morally attractive features of Epicureanism were its integration of human beings into the natural world, the postulate of human equality that it implied, and the notion that pain and pleasure, both psychological and physical, mattered, regardless of who was experiencing them and what that person's status or merits might be."<sup>69</sup> Indeed, the women performing the plays-within-plays assume their pleasure matters as they critique marital laws hindering women's ability to experience justice as well as Epicurean pleasure and tranquility.

Cavendish explores how Epicurean ethics opens up possibilities for rethinking gender throughout *The Convent of Pleasure*. In view of Cavendish's significant contribution to English atomism, it is odd that scholarship has not explored in detail how the adherents of Cavendish's convent worship Epicurean principles rather than a Christian

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<sup>64</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "The Convent of Pleasure (1668)," in *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*, ed. Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview, 2000), 97–135, 111–17.

<sup>65</sup> Tim Stretton, *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 198.

<sup>66</sup> Stretton, *Women Waging Law*, 129–35.

<sup>67</sup> Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 104.

<sup>68</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 31.

<sup>69</sup> Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, 37.

deity. The aptly named Lady Happy declares she would prefer to “serve Nature” over gods.<sup>70</sup> The devotees in the Convent retreat from the public world, since “none can enjoy those Pleasures They have, unless they live such a retired or retreated life free from the Worlds vexations.”<sup>71</sup> Although Lady Happy claims to live moderately by Nature’s cycles, as her feasts are “not luxurious mak[ing] a wast,”<sup>72</sup> the women nonetheless eat “savory Sauces” and embrace luxurious items such as “Beds of Velvet” and “Gilt Plate” as well as fine clothes made of fine materials such as “Silk.”<sup>73</sup> Considering Lady Happy’s assertions that she is not concerned with power or politics, perhaps the play suggests that individuals can still participate in Epicurean pleasure while enjoying the aesthetics of beautiful objects (even if they are costly). While Charleton held that “to be content with little, is the highest preferment,” since “great riches without moderation, are but great poverty,”<sup>74</sup> Lady Happy suggests that Epicurean pleasure can be sensual insofar as the purpose of these expensive items is to help the senses experience pleasure.

Cavendish’s view of wealth is more in line with Hobbes’s philosophy. While Hobbes bases his political philosophy on Epicurean concerns about pleasure/pain, he challenges the foundational ethics of Epicureanism in his assertion that “Felicity of this life” is “Continual successe in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continuall prospering,” though an individual can never fully experience tranquility.<sup>75</sup> Hobbes takes an opposite position from Epicureanism regarding which lifestyles induce happiness and peace. For example, Charleton contends that wealthy men with “fair” wives often “live full of Anxiety and Complaining, having their minds perpetually on the rack of cares, sollicitude, and fears: so as they cannot but confesse, that they lead lives truly miserable.”<sup>76</sup> Lady Happy takes up a position closer to Hobbes in her assertion that only the wealthy can experience Epicurean tranquility. When discussing “Women that are poor,” she claims that they “have not means to buy delights, and maintain pleasures.”<sup>77</sup> Pleasure, for Lady Happy, derives not only from a separation from men but from purchasing delightful objects that please the senses. For example, the poor would be unable to please their senses with delicious food and soft clothing. Since Lady Happy’s view of pleasure is one that embraces sensual pleasure, she further contends that poor women “having not means to please themselves, they must serve only to please others” and “are only fit for Men.”<sup>78</sup> Like Hobbes, who held that happiness derives from “continuall prospering,” Lady Happy critiques Epicurean definitions of

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**70** Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 100.

**71** Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 107.

**72** Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 101.

**73** Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 105.

**74** Charleton, *Epicurus’s Morals*, 98.

**75** Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 46.

**76** Charleton, *Epicurus’s Morals*, 3.

**77** Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 101.

**78** Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 101.

pleasure as she asserts that pleasure is a site of class privilege that only the wealthy can experience.

The upheaval of the Civil War probably inspired thinkers such as Hobbes and Cavendish to reconsider society and the origins of justice. Indeed, Charleton argues that the Civil War caused a widespread disillusionment insofar that he claimed "our late Warrs and Schisms ... brought the Civil Law into contempt."<sup>79</sup> As traditional ways of thinking and organizing society were questioned in the wake of the temporary abolishment of the monarchy, perhaps the unpredictability of atomic motion was appealing to those who had experienced the chaos of civil war. Yet Epicurean atomism also supported the belief in free will. For example, Lucretius, like other Epicureans, believed that "atoms must / Swerve slightly."<sup>80</sup> The unpredictable swerve of atomic particles causes physical change, which in turn provides a philosophical basis for free will. For example, following Epicurus, Lucretius contends that atomic swerves "break the bonds of fate."<sup>81</sup> Stephen Greenblatt explains that "[e]verything comes into being as a result of a swerve," for there is no divine scheme or an "end or purpose to existence, only ceaseless creation and destruction, governed entirely by chance."<sup>82</sup> Since the universe is not based upon or structured by a hierarchical ontology such as an Aristotelian Great Chain of Being, societies can be constructed in diverse ways. Barbour explains that "in theological and ethical terms, the Epicurean argument for freedom declares that since the gods are minding themselves, it is left to human beings to shape their own destinies."<sup>83</sup> Hence, as Hobbes suggests, justice is subjective. Similarly, Cavendish reworks Epicurean notions of justice, applying them to women's socioeconomic circumstances as she portrays women creating their own female separatist utopian society in which women occupy positions they generally could not experience in the early modern world. The convent has "Women-Physicians, Surgeons and Apothecaries, and [Lady Happy] is the chief Confessor her self, and gives what Indulgences or Absolutions she pleaseth."<sup>84</sup> In this Epicurean convent, that worships Nature rather than God, Lady Happy serves as a priest for her community; a role that women today still cannot occupy in many religions. Erin Bonin contends that the play can be seen as utopian, but "[i]n contrast to Thomas More and his seventeenth-century imitators," Cavendish's play does not "depend upon carefully controlled heterosexual reproductive economies. Because such utopian narratives valorize natural law and depend upon patriarchal paradigms for marriage, family, and the state, they seldom question women's nature and place."<sup>85</sup> Similarly, while Charleton may have encouraged

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<sup>79</sup> Walter Charleton, *The Immortality of the Human Soul* (London, 1659), 50.

<sup>80</sup> Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, bk. 2, lines 242–43.

<sup>81</sup> Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, bk. 2, line 254.

<sup>82</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began* (London: Vintage, 2012), 188.

<sup>83</sup> Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics*, 94.

<sup>84</sup> Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 103.

<sup>85</sup> Erin Bonin, "Margaret Cavendish's Dramatic Utopias and the Politics of Gender," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 40 (2000): 339–54 at 339.

Cavendish as a philosopher, he assumes a male readership of his Epicurean texts, as he advises his male readers that if they must have a wife, “then are you so to dispose your Wife, as that she may be loving and complacent to you, and a partner in your Cares: and to take such care for your Children.”<sup>86</sup> Charleton’s advice indicates a belief that a wife would focus foremost upon childrearing and being “complacent” to their husbands rather than seeking Epicurean pleasure themselves.

In contrast, Cavendish’s plays-within-the-play serve as fragmented windows into the social conditions that allowed wives to suffer. Charleton had recommended that a wise man should not be ignorant of the tumults of the world but should, “as from a Watch-Tower,” look from a distance at those who do not follow the Epicurean pursuit of pleasure; “Not that it is delightful, to see others afflicted with Evils; but, to see our selves not to be involved in those Evills.”<sup>87</sup> As if heeding Charleton’s advice, Lady Happy and her women create plays-within-plays in order to create such a tower from which to observe what happens to married women outside the convent who cannot live a life structured according to Epicurean ethics.

In placing Cavendish in dialogue with Charleton and Hobbes, we gain a better view of the play’s complex engagement with the Epicurean revival as well as the revival’s implications for women. Indeed, Cavendish’s critique of marriage is in line with traditional Epicurean views upon marriage and sexuality. Paul W. Ludwig argues that “[l]ove ... was a profound disturbance: hence the Epicureans recommended that people partake of a limited amount of sex to prevent their desire from being sublimated into love.”<sup>88</sup> Although there is some scholarly debate concerning to what extent Epicurus discouraged sex and marriage among his followers, Tad Brennan explains how many of his translators, including Gassendi, believed Epicurus “to be sounding a cautious note about sex. The desire for sex is natural.”<sup>89</sup> However, “it is not necessary; no pain ensues on its non-satisfaction. And sexual activity frequently has harmful consequences,” so that “the Epicurean calculator will seldom, perhaps never, judge it prudent to pursue sexual pleasures.”<sup>90</sup> Epicurus explains that “[n]o one was ever the better for sexual indulgence ... Nor, again, will the wise man marry and rear a family ... Occasionally he may marry owing to special circumstances in his life.”<sup>91</sup> Charleton takes up a similar position in his assertion that pleasure “is not the love of, and Familiarity with beautifull boyes and women.”<sup>92</sup>

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**86** Charleton, *Epicurus’s Morals*, 56.

**87** Charleton, *Epicurus’s Morals*, 5–6.

**88** Paul W. Ludwig, *Eros and Polis: Desire and Community in Greek Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 225.

**89** Tad Brennan, “Epicurus on Sex, Marriage, and Children,” *Classical Philology* 91 (1996): 346–52 at 349, 346.

**90** Brennan, “Epicurus on Sex,” 346.

**91** Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R. D. Hicks, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 645.

**92** Charleton, *Epicurus’s Morals*, 23.

Although Cavendish by all accounts was happily married herself and her husband contributed verses of his own to the play,<sup>93</sup> Lady Happy's rejection of marriage and men builds upon Epicureanism, which was traditionally sceptical of love and marriage. While discussing Lucretius's views of love, William Fitzgerald contends that his "discussion of love brings up two of the most important themes in Epicurean moral philosophy, namely pleasure and freedom. What makes love problematical for Lucretius is that it relates these two entities in a mutually exclusive way: pleasure and desire frequently deprive the lover of his freedom; and, finally, this deprivation of freedom destroys his pleasure too."<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, Charleton explains that although Epicurean men should avoid marriage, if they do marry, they still might experience pleasure, since "there is no reason why ... a man ought to abstain from the legitimate and moderate pleasures of the marriage bed."<sup>95</sup> In contrast, Lady Happy applies the "Epicurean calculator" to marriage and concludes that it would not lead to a woman's pleasure: "Put the case I should Marry the best of Men, if any best there be; yet would a Marry'd life have more crosses and sorrows then pleasure, freedom, or happiness."<sup>96</sup>

As the play explores Epicureanism in relation to women, it provides a sophisticated commentary upon gender. If it were performed, the Prince would be a male actor, pretending to be a woman, who pretends to be a man during the convent's entertainments, creating significant layers of gender confusion. Unlike Shakespeare's cross-dressed heroines who announce their intentions to disguise themselves, the audience or reader of *The Convent of Pleasure* is left unaware of the Princess's true identity until the conclusion, when Madam Mediator announces to the women in alarm, "you're all betrayed, undone, undone; for there is a man disguised in the Convent, search and you'll find it."<sup>97</sup> As a result, the women "all skip from each other, as afraid of each other."<sup>98</sup> Cavendish's text points to the constructed and performative nature of gender, since the Princess's disguise was successful insofar as the women as well as the audience were unaware of his true gender throughout his performance. It is significant that Cavendish's text represents gender as fluid and performative while investigating Epicurean philosophy in relation to women, as it assumes that women's pleasures are not inherently different from men's, nor are women's pleasures based upon marriage or childrearing. For example, the plays-within-plays demonstrate an Epicurean scepticism of marriage, sex, and childrearing. Indeed, Lady Happy, who begins as a loquacious character, becomes increasingly silent as she develops a relationship with the "Princess." Once the Prince has declared his true identity, he requests that "the Councillors of this State" allow him

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<sup>93</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 86.

<sup>94</sup> William Fitzgerald, "Lucretius' Cure for Love in the 'De Rerum Natura,'" *The Classical World* 78 (1984): 73–86 at 73.

<sup>95</sup> Charleton, *Epicurus's Morals*, 83.

<sup>96</sup> Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 98.

<sup>97</sup> Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 128.

<sup>98</sup> Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 128.

to “marry this Lady; otherwise, tell them I will have her by force of Arms.”<sup>99</sup> Worryingly, he does not ask for her input or consent. Even more troubling, as soon as they marry, the Prince assumes ownership over her convent, flippantly giving the convent away without asking permission or advice from Lady Happy. Although the play is a comedy, the most sinister aspects of the plays-within-plays have manifested in the conclusion, as Lady Happy is left without property rights, autonomy, or a voice. Earlier she had proclaimed that women would be “mad to live with Men, who make the Female sex their slaves; but I will not be so inslaved, but will live retired from their Company.”<sup>100</sup> However, by the conclusion, she has literally lost her name (and happiness) as she assumes her husband’s and loses her Epicurean utopia.

While many commentators have explored *The Convent of Pleasure’s* critique of marriage and patriarchy as well as its allusions to same-sex desire, it is surprising that these ideas have not been situated in the context of Epicurean philosophy. A closer look at Cavendish’s engagement with Epicureanism demonstrates how she was responding to and thus in conversation with the wider Newcastle intellectual circle and their interest in Epicurean ideas. In particular, situating the play in the context of Charleton and Hobbes sheds light on how Epicurean ideas were being used to rethink the nature and origins of authority and justice, which held significant implications for the status of women. Perhaps the social upheaval of the English Civil War and the temporary abolition of the monarchy helped pave the way for members of the Newcastle circle to explore Epicurean notions of pleasure, justice, and marriage. As Cavendish demonstrates in her play, such ideas open up new avenues for thinking about gender and how society could be organized. Perhaps these are some of the reasons why a number of seventeenth-century English women such as Cavendish, Hutchinson, Evelyn, Behn, and later eighteenth-century women authors were attracted to this philosophy and helped disseminate its principles. Hence Epicurean ideas concerning pleasure, justice, and authority, as well as some members of the Newcastle circle’s unusual support of Margaret Cavendish as a philosopher, were a major influence upon English women’s entrance into natural philosophy.

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<sup>99</sup> Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*, 129.

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## Chapter 12

# JANE CAVENDISH AND ELIZABETH BRACKLEY'S MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

Sara Mueller\*

JANE CAVENDISH AND Elizabeth Brackley's works are preserved in two manuscript collections: one held at the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford (Rawlinson MS Poet. 16) and the other at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University (Osborn MS b.233). The two manuscripts share much in common, including over eighty poems and Cavendish and Brackley's masque, *A Pastorall*. The manuscripts are both in the same hand, probably that of John Rolleston, the secretary employed by Cavendish and Brackley's father, William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle.<sup>1</sup> Both manuscripts are also handsomely bound presentation volumes, and there are few substantial variants among the many works they share. The small number of corrections and strikeouts found in the Beinecke manuscript appear in their corrected form in the Bodleian manuscript, which suggests that the Beinecke manuscript may have served as the Bodleian manuscript's copy text.<sup>2</sup> In addition to including nearly all of the contents of the Beinecke manuscript, the Bodleian manuscript contains eight additional poems and the unique copy of Cavendish and Brackley's most well-known work, a play called *The concealed Fansyes*.

The manuscripts share so many similarities that when I edited Cavendish and Brackley's dramatic works for *Women's Household Drama: "Loves Victorie," "A Pastorall," and "The concealed Fansyes"* (2018) with Marta Straznicky, we considered doing a side-by-side transcription of *A Pastorall* but determined that this was unnecessary given

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\* My thinking about the two manuscripts discussed in this chapter is deeply indebted to Marta Straznicky and Elizabeth Hageman. I thank them both for their mentorship.

1 Ben Jonson, ed. C. H. Herford, P. Simpson, and E. Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925–52), 7:767 first identified Rolleston as the likely scribe of Rawlinson MS Poet. 16. Lynn Hulse, "The King's Entertainment," *Viator* 26 (1995): 355–405 at 361 has also done extensive work on Rolleston's hand and describes him as the volume's scribe as well. See also Hilton Kelliher, "Donne, Jonson, Richard Andrews, and The Newcastle Manuscript," *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700* 4 (1993): 134–73 at 153. Jane Cavendish, *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, ed. Alexandra Bennett (London: Routledge, 2017), 14, suggests that the manuscripts could be in the hand of Jane Cavendish herself. Marion Wynne-Davies, "'My Fine Delitue Tomb': Liberating Sisterly Voices during the Civil War," in *Female Communities 1600–1800*, ed. Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 111–28, 127n8, makes the same suggestion.

2 Alexandra Bennett, "'Now Let My Language Speak': The Authorship, Rewriting, and Audience(s) of Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 11 (2005): 1–13 at 7–10.

the few significant variants between the two manuscripts.<sup>3</sup> Alexandra Bennett's recent *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish* also does not include a side-by-side transcription. Yet despite the many similarities between the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts, they diverge in important ways that have not yet been fully elaborated in scholarly analyses of Cavendish and Brackley's works. In this chapter, I aim to tease out some of these differences to help better situate discussions of the two extant manuscript collections. To date, Margaret Ezell has done a thorough analysis of the Bodleian manuscript and Alexandra Bennett and Marie-Louise Coolahan have done the same for the Beinecke manuscript, but even with this careful and important scholarship, we are only starting to think through what the textual differences between the two volumes might reveal.<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Higginbotham, in a 2017 comparative study of the two manuscripts, has suggested that Cavendish and Brackley may have specifically tailored their manuscripts to particular audiences, raising fascinating possibilities for some of the choices made in each of the manuscripts.<sup>5</sup> But I would like to suggest that we should consider the inconsistent strategies used across Cavendish and Brackley's two manuscript collections further. The readings that emerge from this discussion of the differences between the two manuscripts are at times speculative and, in some cases, contradictory, an outcome that accords with the complex nature of manuscript production and circulation in the period. By reading the two manuscript collections in this way, I suggest that we can open up new avenues of discussion about authorship and performance in Cavendish and Brackley's works that are grounded in the textual realities of both of their manuscript collections.

Before we compare the two manuscripts, it is important to acknowledge that there is much we do not and cannot know about both manuscripts and their circumstances of production and circulation. For a start, we do not know when the works included in either of the manuscript collections were written. Many of the events described focus on the early to mid-1640s after Elizabeth's marriage to John Egerton, Lord Brackley in 1641; during the English Civil War when the sisters were garrisoned in their family home; and in the midst of the exile of Cavendish and Brackley's father, William Cavendish, then Marquess of Newcastle, who fled to the continent after leading the Royalist army to its

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3 Marta Straznicky and Sara Mueller, ed., *Women's Household Drama: "Loves Victorie," "A Pastorall," and "The concealed Fansyes"* (Toronto: Iter, 2018).

4 Margaret Ezell, "'To Be Your Daughter in Your Pen': The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish," in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 51 (1988): 281–96; Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 1–13; and Marie-Louise Coolahan, "Presentation Volume of Jane Cavendish's Poetry," in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Poetry*, ed. Jill Seal Millman and Gillian Wright (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 87–89.

5 Jennifer Higginbotham, "Exilic Inspiration and the Captive Life: The Literary Political Alliances of the Cavendish Sisters," in *The Politics of Female Alliance in Early Modern England*, ed. Christina Luckyj and Niamh J. O'Leary (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 225–46, 225–28 argues that the Beinecke manuscript was specifically tailored to Newcastle and was presented to him as a gift. In the case of the Bodleian manuscript, she suggests that the sisters commissioned the manuscript to "shift away from the Beinecke's emphasis on the sisters' father as a singular Royalist military hero and toward an emphasis on female familial and political alliances."

loss at Marston Moor in 1644. We also know that Cavendish and Brackley lived together at their family estates, Welbeck Abbey and Bolsolver Castle, until the mid-1640s, when Brackley went to live with her husband.<sup>6</sup> All of these factors suggest, but do not prove, that the majority of the works were written in the early to mid-1640s.<sup>7</sup> Along with this uncertainty in dating, we also do not know when either of the manuscripts were compiled or who compiled them. Furthermore, while it is impossible to say who read either of the manuscripts or who may have been in the audience if either of Cavendish and Brackley's dramatic works were ever performed, we do know from the copious dedications to Newcastle that the volume sought his readership, as well as that of the broader Cavendish circle, something both Ezell and Higginbotham have discussed at length.<sup>8</sup> Also, while Bennett has established persuasively that the Beinecke manuscript very probably predates the Bodleian manuscript, we cannot say by how much.<sup>9</sup> Finally, and critically, we do not know what kind of involvement Cavendish and/or Brackley had in the production or compilation of either of the manuscripts.

Despite all that is unknown, it is abundantly clear from a study of the two manuscripts that they differ dramatically in their presentation of authorship. The Beinecke manuscript begins with a dedication of the volume to Newcastle that is signed by Jane Cavendish alone:

My Lord

As nature owne my creation from you, & my selfe my—  
Education; soe duety invites mee to dedicate my workes  
to you, as the onely Patterne of Judgement, that can  
make mee happy if these fanceys may "owne sense they" [illegible deletion] wayte  
upon your Lo:<sup>pp</sup> as the Center of witt, I humbly thanke yo<sup>r</sup>  
Lo:<sup>pp</sup>; & if a distinction of Judgement, God reward your Lo:<sup>p</sup>  
For in a word, what I have of good, is wholly derived  
from you, as the soule of bounty and this booke desires  
noe other purchas, then a smyle from yo:<sup>ur</sup> Lo:<sup>pp</sup> or a—  
word of like, w<sup>ch</sup> will glorifie your creature; That  
is affectionately

You Lo:<sup>pps</sup> most obliged  
obedient  
Daughter  
Jane Cavendysshe<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High, and Puissant Prince William Cavendish, Duke, Marquess, and Earl of Newcastle* (London, 1667), 95.

<sup>7</sup> Kelliher, "The Newcastle Manuscript," 153, notes that "when the first prologue [of *The concealed Fancies*] says 'And I did tell the Poett plainly truth / It looks like .18. or .22. youth' it is evidently referring to the relative ages of the two ladies: Jane would have been twenty-two and Elizabeth eighteen in 1643 or 1644."

<sup>8</sup> Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter," 284–86, and Higginbotham, "Exilic Inspiration," 227. See also Sarah C. E. Ross, "Coteries, Circles, Networks: The Cavendish Circle and Civil War Women's Writing," in *A History of Women's Writing*, ed. Patricia Phillippy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 332–47, 337–39, and Hero Chalmers, "The Cavendishes and their Poetry," in the present volume.

<sup>9</sup> Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 8–11.

<sup>10</sup> Osborn MS b.233, 2.

Here, Cavendish explicitly refers to “my works,” dedicating them to her father. She does not mention her sister, but she also does not clarify what “workes” she speaks of, other than to call them “fansyes.” The focus of the dedication is instead on Cavendish’s desire that the volume will please her father, who we know took an interest in the literary education of his children.<sup>11</sup>

The Beinecke dedication stands in sharp contrast to the Bodleian manuscript, which, after an incomplete table of contents that was probably added at a later date, begins with a title page that trumpets the sisters’ collaborative authorship of the entire volume.<sup>12</sup> The title of the volume reads as such:

POEMS  
SONGS  
a  
PASTORALL  
and a PLAY  
by the  
R<sup>t</sup> Hon<sup>ble</sup> the  
Lady  
JANE CAVENDISH  
and  
Lady  
ELIZABETH BRACKLEY<sup>13</sup>

Importantly, following its title page, the Bodleian manuscript jumps directly to what is the second poem in the Beinecke manuscript, “The Greate Example,” omitting Cavendish’s dedication. This fundamental difference between how the two manuscripts present their own authorship raises many questions, particularly given how many works they share in common. Why does the volume held by the Bodleian Library strongly suggest that the whole volume is collaborative while the Beinecke does not? Why does the Bodleian manuscript, if it did use the Beinecke manuscript as its copy text, omit the dedication with Jane Cavendish’s statement that the volume includes “my workes”?

The scholarship that has considered this contradiction between the two manuscripts has only partially answered these questions. For Ezell, in her 1988 landmark article that focuses on the Bodleian manuscript alone, the manuscript is an intrinsically collaborative piece of work:

The prominent display of the author’s names on the title page indicates that the women had no desire to hide their literary accomplishments. These pieces were not “closet”

<sup>11</sup> Ezell, “To Be Your Daughter,” 293–94.

<sup>12</sup> Ezell, “To Be Your Daughter,” 282, argues that this table of contents is in a “sprawling eighteenth century hand.” A complete table of contents in the hand of Brackley’s husband, John Egerton, is included at the end of the volume, as was the norm in the seventeenth century.

<sup>13</sup> Rawlinson MS Poet. 16. As Ezell, “To Be Your Daughter,” 282, notes, “And a PLAY” is squeezed in with lighter ink, suggesting that the title page was composed before *The concealed Fansyes* was written and that it was added onto the title page of the volume at a later date.

poems in the sense that they were hidden and anonymous. On the other hand, few of the pieces are specifically attributed. Since the individual pieces, with the exception of the scenes in the pastoral, were not signed, the volume suggests a collaborative and cooperative effort rather than pieces of individual workmanship. This implies the authors do not seem to have felt much anxiety over being recognized, or not, for individual literary accomplishments. Poetry here is not the unique, original product of a lone artistic soul; with only a few exceptions, the poems do not “belong” to an individual.<sup>14</sup>

Conversely, in a short piece describing the Beinecke manuscript, Marie-Louise Coolahan describes the volume’s presentation of authorship very differently. She finds that:

The Beinecke copy’s two dedications reveal that Jane is the sole author of the poetry collected in both volumes; the manuscript opens on a dedicatory epistle to her father signed by Jane ..., and closes on a poem entitled “Upon the right honorable the Lady Jane Cavendish on her book of verses”—unattributed, but possibly composed by the scribe.<sup>15</sup>

Bennett finds similarly, writing that

Scholars have long referred to all of the works in the Oxford manuscript as being co-written by the sisters, but it is notable that though there are numerous poems in both manuscripts addressed to, and written about, Cavendish family members both living and dead, not a single poem is written to or about Jane herself. The combination of these facts suggests, I would contend, that Jane was the sole author of the verses in each volume, and that only *A Pastorall* in each collection ..., and *The Concealed Fancies* in the Oxford MS ... are collaborative.<sup>16</sup>

Ezell’s reading of the Bodleian manuscript in isolation is absolutely persuasive, and Coolahan and Bennett’s account of Cavendish’s role as sole author of the poems may certainly be correct as well.<sup>17</sup> Their description of the authorship of the poems is widely accepted by scholars, including in Hero Chalmers’s discussion of how the poems are situated in relation to works by others in the Cavendish family elsewhere in this volume.<sup>18</sup> But I would like to suggest, given the complexities of the evidence that emerge from a comparative analysis of the two manuscripts, that it may be worthwhile to be cautious in attributing authorship in the manuscripts.

That is, I argue that a comparison of the two manuscripts puts into question some of the assumptions that have recently coalesced in the scholarship of Cavendish and Brackley’s works, particularly the notion that the poems included in both volumes are the sole creation of Jane Cavendish. While I will make no claim about who actually

<sup>14</sup> Ezell, “To Be Your Daughter,” 284.

<sup>15</sup> Coolahan, “Presentation Volume,” 87.

<sup>16</sup> Bennett, “Now Let My Language Speak,” 6.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Cavendish, *Collected Works*, 28.

<sup>18</sup> Chalmers, “The Cavendishes and their Poetry.” See also Kate Chedgoy, “Cavalier and She-Majesty: The Cultural Politics of Gender in Jane Cavendish’s Poetry,” *The Seventeenth Century* 32 (2018): 393–412.

authored what in the two volumes, nor will I speculate on what the compiler or compilers of the manuscripts actually intended, I will work through the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts to suggest that their authorship might be best described just as it comes across in the juxtaposition of the Beinecke dedication and the Bodleian title page above: as complex, shifting, and inconsistent.

To start, I would argue that it is possible to read Cavendish's dedication at the beginning of the Beinecke manuscript differently. This is not to say that Bennett and Coolahan's reading of it is incorrect; I want to suggest instead that there is some evidence to point to an alternative reading of the poems. One very obvious point to make about the dedication is that it is written at the start of the Beinecke manuscript. Given that we know from manuscript studies about the shifting nature of many manuscript collections, it is impossible to say at what stage of the manuscript's preparation the dedication was included in the volume.<sup>19</sup> As Arthur Marotti notes, "in manuscript circulation texts were inherently malleable, escaping authorial control to enter a social world in which recipients casually transcribed, revised, supplemented, and answered them, not particularly worried about changing an authorial original."<sup>20</sup> If the dedication was among the very first items to be included in the manuscript, then it is not at all certain that all of the subsequent works that were included align with its claims. This is especially relevant since there is significant evidence that the Beinecke manuscript is incomplete, or at least was not completed as its compiler may have envisioned completing it. Coolahan notes that

the large quantity of blank pages suggests that the scribe never completed the compilation as first planned. Perhaps the scribe had originally intended to transcribe *The concealed Fansyes* in the lengthy gap between the pastoral play and the dedicatory verses.<sup>21</sup>

Given this, it may be possible that the dedication was copied at an earlier date than the works transcribed later on in the volume. The first pages of the Beinecke manuscript—including the page that includes the dedication—are more damaged than the rest of the manuscript, which may indicate that they were prepared earlier or at a different time than the rest of the manuscript. Another factor to consider is that the paper used in the Beinecke manuscript came from two different stocks, potentially a further indication

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<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Patricia Pender and Rosalind Smith, "Introduction: Early Modern Women's Material Texts: Production, Transmission, and Reception," in *Material Cultures of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1–13, 2–5.

<sup>20</sup> Arthur F. Marotti, "Malleable and Fixed Texts: Manuscript and Printed Miscellanies and the Transmission of Lyric Poetry in the English Renaissance," in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the English Renaissance Text Society*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Text and Studies and Renaissance English Text Society, 1993), 159–74, 160.

<sup>21</sup> Coolahan, "Presentation Volume," 88. Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 12, argues persuasively that the number of available pages in the Beinecke manuscript are insufficient to fit the whole of the *The concealed Fansyes*.

that the manuscript was compiled over time.<sup>22</sup> If this is the case, Cavendish's claim in the dedication that these are "my workes" may not in fact apply to the volume as a whole. Perhaps, then, the explanation for why this dedication was omitted from the Bodleian manuscript when it was copied from the Beinecke manuscript is that the dedication no longer reflected the reality of what the volume had become.

In addition, the early pages of the Beinecke manuscript also show signs of revision. The first six poems in the Beinecke manuscript feature dedications to particular family members; these dedications are all squeezed into the available space (often just "Uncle" or "Brother" written at the start of the poem between the title and the rest of the verse). This suggests that these additions may have been included after the manuscript was initially copied.<sup>23</sup> The effort to squeeze in dedications to particular family members in the opening poems could be evidence of a desire to tailor the manuscript for a particular set of readers or to alter what the earlier parts of the manuscript do, further raising the possibility that the aims of the volume may have changed from when it was initially conceived.

To suggest that the Beinecke dedication was written before the full volume took shape is entirely speculative, but this speculation is reinforced by the fact that whatever the dedication says, the Beinecke manuscript also explicitly presents itself—at least in part—as a collaborative work. In *A Pastorall*, in the left-hand margin, each new scene is marked with the initials J.C. or E.B., clearly denoting which sister authored it. Denoting authorship in a collaborative work in this way is highly unusual, and it has generally been read as an attempt to clarify which contributions are Brackley's in the volume, on the understanding that Cavendish authored the rest of the works. As Bennett writes, "it is problematic to assume that Jane would lay such confident and entire claim to the works in the Yale volume if they were not hers without at least noting somewhere, as in the margins of *A Pastorall*, that her sister had written some of them."<sup>24</sup> Notably, the attribution of authorship also appears in the Bodleian manuscript's transcription of *A Pastorall*, so in copying the Bodleian manuscript from the Beinecke manuscript, the scribe elected to remove Cavendish's dedication and to retain *A Pastorall*'s distinctive attribution of authorship. Bennett has also suggested that attributing authorship in this way is an artifact of Cavendish and Brackley's writing process, and imagines the possibility that the sisters traded off on writing scenes to pass the time while they were garrisoned

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**22** The paper used in the Beinecke manuscript has two different watermarks, one with a flag, similar to Heawood 147, and the other with a letter or initial, similar to Heawood 3100. The Bodleian manuscript is copied all on the same paper, which has a watermark similar to Heawood 1287 that features a double-headed eagle and the letters LC.

**23** The six opening poems from Osborn MS b.233 are "The Great Example," dedicated to "the Marquesse of Newcastle" (3); "Passions Love to my Lord my Father," dedicated to Newcastle again (3); "On my sweete brother Charles," with "Brother" squeezed in before the first verse (4); "On my sweete brother Henry," again with "Brother" squeezed in before the first verse (4); "On my Lo: my father the Marquess of Newcastle," dedicated to "My Lord" (4); and "On my Noble Uncle S<sup>r</sup> Charles Cavendish Knight," with "Uncle" added before the first line (5).

**24** Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 6.

in their family home.<sup>25</sup> Since this method of attributing individual scenes is repeated in *A Pastorall* in the Bodleian manuscript—where the entire volume is presented as collaborative—then perhaps this decision to denote the authorship of individual scenes was indeed a part of the composition process that the scribe chose to include for the benefit of readers rather than an attempt to credit Brackley for her contributions to a volume largely authored by Cavendish.

What is more, even if the dedication at the start of the Beinecke manuscript was written at the same time as the rest of the manuscript, I would suggest that we could possibly read Cavendish's statement that she dedicates "my workes" to Newcastle differently. The volume unquestionably contains Cavendish's "workes," but does this necessarily mean that it does not contain Brackley's "workes" as well? It is worthwhile to look at how Cavendish and Brackley describe their authorship in the several other dedications included in the two manuscripts, including the two dedications to *A Pastorall*, which are included in both the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts, and the three prologues of *The concealed Fancies* from the Bodleian manuscript. In these prologues the sisters at times describe work that is elsewhere presented as collaborative in individual terms, as in Cavendish's Beinecke dedication, while at other times they describe their work as "ours." For instance, in the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts, *A Pastorall* is preceded by two dedications, where the sisters each speak in individual terms of how they dedicate their work to their father and hope to receive his approval:

My Lord

After the deuty of a Verse,  
Give leave now to rehearse;  
A Pastorall; then if but give  
Your smile, I sweare, I live,  
In happyness, For if this may  
Your favour have, 'twill ne're decay  
Now let my language speake & say  
If you bee pleas'd, I have my pay.

That passionately am  
your Lo:<sup>pps</sup>

most affectionate, and obedient  
Daughter  
Jane Cavendyshe.

My Lord

This Pastorall could not owne weake  
But my intrest which makes mee speake.  
To begg you'l not condem the best  
For thi'll, but chase it, to it rest  
Where I shall owne the word submitt,  
Unto your Judgement of pure witt.  
your Lo:<sup>pps</sup> most affectionate and obliged  
Daughter.  
Elizabeth Brackley<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Cavendish, *Collected Works*, 29.

<sup>26</sup> Osborn MS b.233, 32–33.

In the explicitly collaborative *A Pastorall*, the sisters do not once in their dedications refer to their works in anything other than individual terms. Instead, they speak of “my language,” in the case of Cavendish’s dedication, or “my intrist,” in Brackley’s.

The prologues to *The concealed Fansyes*, conversely, do use strongly collaborative language:

A Prologe to the Stage.

Ladies I beseech you blush not to see  
That I speake a Prologe being a Shee  
For it becomes as well if votes cry Eye  
Why then should I, a Petticote cry fye,  
Gentlemen if soe you allow, is witt  
Why then not speake, I pray your patience sitt  
And now to tell you trueth of our new Play  
It doth become a womans witt the very way  
And I did tell the Poett plainly trueth  
It lookes like ·18· or ·22· youth  
Or els it could not bee, as ’tis but well  
I’le say noe more untill yo<sup>r</sup> hands Playes tell

The second Prologe spoke by a Woman.

Though a second Prologe spoke to our Play  
I will speake trueth, ’tis woman all y<sup>e</sup> way  
For you’ll not see a Plott in any Act  
Nor any ridged, high, ignoble fact  
Feareing you’ll sensure mee now full of Tongue  
It is not fitt, that I should speake too longe.

A perticuler Prologe to your Lo:<sup>pp</sup>

My Lord  
If that your judgement doth approve of wee,  
I pray you smile, that all may truely see,  
You like, & doe approve, of what wee say,  
And then each one will freely give their pay,  
If then your quicker witt doth crowne our Play  
Your health shalbee our word today:<sup>27</sup>

Here the prologues speak more than once of “our play,” a way of speaking of a collaborative work that more comfortably accords with modern conceptions of coauthorship than Cavendish’s dedication at the start of the Beinecke manuscript and the *A Pastorall* dedications.

Since the sisters demonstrate different ways of writing about their collaborative works, it is harder to read the dedication at the start of the Beinecke manuscript straightforwardly as a claim of sole authorship on the part of Jane Cavendish. It is certainly true that there is no dedication from Brackley paired with Cavendish’s at the start of the Beinecke manuscript, a fact that may confirm the supposition that Cavendish was

<sup>27</sup> Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 87–88.

the sole author of the poems. But given the evidence that the Beinecke volume evolved over time, as well as the different methods that the sisters used to describe their collaborative contributions, I am not convinced that the absence of a dedication from Brackley at the start of the Beinecke manuscript is enough to make the argument that she had no role in writing the poems. There is no way to answer this question of who authored what in the manuscripts definitively, but given the shifting depiction of authorship across both manuscripts, the most justifiable approach may be to simply embrace the manuscripts' heterogeneous presentation of authorship.

As mentioned above, another key piece of evidence that has been put forward to claim that the poems are the work of Jane Cavendish alone comes from the poems themselves. There are, without question, numerous poems that appear to come from the perspective of Cavendish herself, such as "On my sweete Sister Brackley,"<sup>28</sup> "On my Sister Brackleys Picture,"<sup>29</sup> and "The angry curs,"<sup>30</sup> which is included in the Bodleian manuscript alone and expresses frustration on the part of the speaker about Brackley's departure to live with her husband. Yet while many of the poems are clearly attributable to Jane Cavendish and her personal circumstances, many are not. As Ezell notes of the poems,

The contents of the volume confirm in tone and subject that it was envisioned as having a public or social dimension. The general intent of these pieces is to praise virtue and lament the conditions brought on by the war. The virtues of the king and queen and prince of Wales are applauded as well as those of family members. The praise tends to be of a generic, not a personal nature; men are praised for courage and constancy, women for wit and sweetness. The terms are so conventional and so general one is left with a type rather than an individual; the subjects are held up as absolutes, the perfection of the virtues they embody.<sup>31</sup>

Even for the poems that do appear to be more personal in tone, why must we limit the poems to straightforwardly autobiographical readings? Given the well-documented interest in *The concealed Fancies* in playing with identity and in reimagining and recasting domestic life in a fictional setting, is it reasonable to rule out that some of the poems that appear to be autobiographical actually imagine entirely fictional events?<sup>32</sup> Just as many of the resonances of occasional household theatre are lost when that work is taken out its context, so can those same resonances be lost in occasional verse that was designed for circulation to a known audience.

At the conclusion of the Beinecke manuscript, there is a final piece of evidence that may speak to Cavendish as the sole author of the poems. The volume concludes with a verse that is dedicated to Jane Cavendish alone and describes the book as "her book of verses." It reads:

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**28** Osborn MS b.233, 13.

**29** Osborn MS b.233, 24.

**30** Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 25.

**31** Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter," 285.

**32** See, for instance, Alison Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 53; Lisa Hopkins, "Play Houses: Drama at Bolsover and Welbeck," in *Early Theatre* 2 (1999): 25–44 at 25–28.

Upon the right honourable the Lady Jane Caven=  
 =dish her book of verses  
 Madame at first I scarcely could beleive  
 That you soe wittyly could tyme deceive  
 Or that in garrison your muse durst stay  
 When that shee heard the drumms and cannon play  
 Shee knew her modest and most innocent straine  
 Could with none better then your self remaine  
 The Issue of your braine I lyke soe well  
 That whether I shall your other soe yet cannot tell  
 If both prove lyke soe modest chast and witty  
 That you should want an equall match 'twere pittty.<sup>33</sup>

The author of these verses is unknown, as is the hand who wrote them into the manuscript, though both Rolleston and Newcastle have been suggested as possible authors.<sup>34</sup> We do not know when the verse was written, nor do we know what state of completion the manuscript was in when it was written (it appears many blank pages after the end of *A Pastorall*). Bennett has investigated the poem thoroughly and concludes that

the hand is neither Elizabeth's [Brackley's], William's [Newcastle's], nor that of Elizabeth's husband, John Egerton ... Did Jane manage to send this copy to her father, and did he have a secretary write out a poem in response? Did she show the text to someone else in her family or literary circle? Some possible candidates include the living addresses of specific verses in each text, among them her uncle Charles Cavendish, Henry Ogle, Richard Pypes, and Lady Alice Egerton.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, the lines "The Issue of your braine I lyke soe well / That whether I shall your other soe yet cannot tell," while obscure, raise some interesting interpretive possibilities. Bennett wonders if the phrase "your other" refers to Cavendish's future children.<sup>36</sup> I wonder if it might allude to some future artistic work. In this reading, the author of this verse approves of what he or she has seen so far and speculates on whether future "issues of your braine" will similarly find approval. Whatever the verse's meanings, I would suggest that we know little about it and its circumstances of composition, and that, in concert with the other uncertainties discussed above, it can only uncomfortably be taken as evidence of Cavendish's sole authorship of the poems.

We cannot know the writing process for these poems, and the two extant manuscripts leave evidence of a variable process of collaboration and an imprecision about crediting

**33** Osborn MS b.233, 77.

**34** Elizabeth Clarke, "The Garrisoned Muse: Women's Use of Religious Lyric in the Civil War Period," in *The English Civil Wars in the Literary Imagination*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 130–43, 133. Higginbotham, "Exilic Inspiration," 226, suggests that the Beinecke manuscript was intended for Newcastle when in exile in France and that this verse was his own. Coolahan, "Presentation Volume," 87, suggests the scribe as the possible author.

**35** Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 12.

**36** Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 12.

authorship. Critically for this discussion, there is no significant difference stylistically between the scenes attributed to Brackley and the scenes attributed to Cavendish in *A Pastorall*. Whatever their writing process was, the two were able to weave their works together seamlessly, a fact that should be taken into account in analyses of the poems. I have chosen throughout to describe the works discussed here as being by "Cavendish and Brackley," but there is every possibility that this is inaccurate. But, given the conflicting evidence, I have made this choice to be as open as possible in describing the authorship of the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts. For all of the above reasons, I argue that it is preferable to follow what the manuscripts tell us and preserve their ambiguous and imprecise understanding of their own authorship.

Before concluding, I would like to suggest that, in addition to providing valuable context to the presentation of authorship in Cavendish and Brackley's two manuscript collections, comparing the two manuscripts can also shed new light on the inconsistent presentation of playreading and performance between Cavendish and Brackley's two dramatic works. Much attention has been given to the potential performance of *A Pastorall* and *The concealed Fansyes*. Alison Findlay and Lisa Hopkins in particular have demonstrated the possibilities within the plays for household performance, especially for *The concealed Fansyes*, a play that consciously places itself within the dramatic tradition of Jonson and that features numerous ambitious scenes, including a masque where the characters are drawn up using stage machineries common in court masque.<sup>37</sup> While there is no evidence that the plays were ever performed, through careful textual and spatial analysis, Findlay and Hopkins have both teased out some of the important ways in which Cavendish and Brackley's work envisions performance. To add to this discussion, I would like to draw attention to a few textual details that emerge from a comparison of the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts that further speak to the investment in the text of *The concealed Fansyes* in the possibility of its own performance.

There are significant inconsistencies between the presentation of *A Pastorall*, which is transcribed using very similar strategies and in both the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts, and *The concealed Fansyes*, which, as mentioned above, appears in the Bodleian manuscript alone. It is notable that the two dramatic works in the Bodleian manuscript are presented differently because the volume is so uniform in significant ways: its pages are neatly and extravagantly ruled, its layout is consistent, and it is all copied on the same paper stock. Yet *The concealed Fansyes* is presented as a work intended for performance in a way that *A Pastorall* is not. Instead, *A Pastorall* is very much presented as a text for reading, and it includes numerous elements that would only be evident to a reader of the masque.

As discussed above, both copies of *A Pastorall* attribute authorship of each scene to either J.C. or E.B., a textual element that would only be discernable to readers of the work. In this same vein, *A Pastorall* also features a running header at the top of each page that gives the work's title throughout, leaves copious amounts of white space, and makes limited use of scenery and stage properties. All of these factors that cater for readers

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<sup>37</sup> Findlay, *Playing Spaces*, 44–53, and Lisa Hopkins, "Play Houses," 24–44.

do not mean that *A Pastorall* was not performed: it has stage directions, uses shortened speech prefixes, and includes some stage properties, such as the broomsticks the witches in 1 Antemasque speak of riding when they “oynt and make a flight.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the stage directions of *A Pastorall* show that attention was paid to the performance of the work, as in the opening stage direction: “Witches the nombre being five / The Hagg being first.”<sup>39</sup> Since only three witches speak in 1 Antemasque, the authors apparently thought through how the work would appear on stage.

Yet the differences between *A Pastorall*'s dedication and *The concealed Fanyes*' prologues substantiate the argument that *The concealed Fanyes* is far more explicitly presented as a performance text than *A Pastorall*. As discussed above, *A Pastorall* begins with two signed dedications to Newcastle from the two sisters. These dedications are not part of the performance text but instead seek the approval of Newcastle as a reader. Cavendish's dedication to *A Pastorall* even refers to the experience of the reader of the volume. She writes: “After the deuty of a verse / Give leave now to rehearse / A Pastorall.”<sup>40</sup> Here, Cavendish appears to guide her reader through the transition from reading the volume's poems to the masque that is to follow. *The concealed Fanyes*, in contrast, begins with “A Prologue to the Stage” that directly addresses audience members, seeking their applause or “hands Plays.”<sup>41</sup> The prologues speak only to a performance context and make no effort to engage a reading audience. Of Newcastle in the prologue specifically dedicated to him, the sisters seek his smile, a form of endorsement that itself has a performative dimension. They ask for his “smile, that all may truely see / You like, & doe approve, of what wee say.”<sup>42</sup> *The concealed Fanyes* also dispenses with the attribution of scenes to J.C. or E.B. and leaves its running header blank after the first page. Following its prologues, *The concealed Fanyes* includes a blank chart that takes up a full page labeled “The Actors.” That the chart is blank may indicate that the play had not been performed at the time the manuscript was produced (if it was ever performed). But that the compiler saw fit to rule and leave a space for the performers to be listed here at all is notable, and it demonstrates that performance was certainly envisioned as a possibility when the manuscript was transcribed. There is no commensurate page in *A Pastorall*.

It may also be worth noting in this context that there are significant differences between the transcription of *The concealed Fanyes* from the Beinecke manuscript and the rest of the Bodleian manuscript that may have some bearing on how *The concealed Fanyes* was a work that was written to be performed. As became very apparent to me when transcribing the two plays, the language of *A Pastorall* features far fewer contractions and short forms than that of *The concealed Fanyes*. Although *The concealed Fanyes* is in the same hand as the rest of the Bodleian manuscript and the Beinecke

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38 Osborn MS b.233, 55.

39 Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 52.

40 Osborn MS b.233, 43.

41 Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 87.

42 Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 88.

manuscript, it consistently features short forms and contractions, particularly for the words “yo<sup>r</sup>” and “y<sup>e</sup>” in a way the rest of the Bodleian manuscript does not. These elements are seen at a high rate of frequency throughout *The concealed Fansyes* and rarely in the Beinecke manuscript or in the parts of the Bodleian manuscript that were probably copied from the Beinecke manuscript. Compare, for instance, the use of contractions at the end of Act 1 of *The concealed Fansyes*:

CO: Give mee leave then passionately to begg a salute, & I will never see you more unlesse I may be answered w<sup>th</sup> more mildnes, for now every word you speake is a rack unto my soule, therefore give mee once more leave to begg the favour of yo<sup>r</sup> Lipps.

LU: When did you heare my Lipps were soe rude, as to come w<sup>th</sup>in distance of yo<sup>r</sup> sex, & to confirme you there is noethinge I hate more then a Country Gentleman, who must ever salute comeing & goeing, or else hee will whisper to his next—Neighbour. I am proud, & I sweare, I would rather cut my Lipps of then sufferr you a salute.<sup>43</sup>

Conversely, in both the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts, *A Pastorall* does not use contractions for the word “your,” as here:

CHA: Tell hir noe more your fancyes dreame  
Nor in your Cupps hir health in flame  
But if you speake let it bee witt  
Soe by you shee, may darr to sitt.

I would not have you hir prophane  
With formall speeches which proves lame  
For in love sure it is a sinn  
If not by sword your Mistris winn<sup>44</sup>

The Beinecke manuscript does sometimes use the contraction “w<sup>ch</sup>” and often shortens Lordship to “Lo:<sup>pp</sup>.” It uses contractions for “yo<sup>r</sup>” only very rarely, and the few instances these contractions are used are mostly in the titles of poems. For instance, a contraction is used in “A Songe in answeare to yo<sup>r</sup> Lo<sup>p</sup> Sayter,” where it helps make room for the full title of the poem to be included in its ruled header.<sup>45</sup>

While it is difficult to state with any certainty what the significance of this difference between *The concealed Fansyes* and the rest of the two manuscripts might be, I suggest that the large number of contractions may indicate that the play was written with performance rather than playreading in mind. The contractions are less formal

<sup>43</sup> Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 81.

<sup>44</sup> Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 81. These passages are identical in the Beinecke manuscript, Osborn MS b.233, 74.

<sup>45</sup> Osborn MS b.233, 7.

and more closely mimic the natural patterns of speech. Interestingly, the dedication at the start of the Beinecke manuscript also uses some of the same contractions. It is written in prose and not verse, and thus may lend itself to this more informal mode of writing as well. The contractions could also be evidence of the scribe's evolving style, or they could be evidence that the hand that wrote the source material the scribe used for *The concealed Fansyes* used more contractions than the hand of the source material for the volume's other works.<sup>46</sup> But the relative informality of *The concealed Fansyes* and its success as a performance text is reinforced by the more casual language used within it, so perhaps this subtle yet very real difference between the two texts speaks to the sisters' design of their work for performance. Taken together, all of these contrasts between *A Pastorall* and *The concealed Fansyes* show some important differences between how the two works envision their audiences' experience of them. The circumstances that led to these differences—the passage of time, the growing skill of Cavendish and Brackley as writers, or the particular factors that made *The concealed Fansyes* more likely to be performed than *A Pastorall*—are unknown, but the textual details that emerge from a comparison of the two manuscripts help make even clearer the importance of performance to the design of *The concealed Fansyes*.

My aim in pulling together these readings of the Bodleian and Beinecke manuscripts is to draw out and preserve the complexities found within Cavendish and Brackley's two manuscript collections, particularly in terms of what the manuscripts reveal about authorship and performance. In doing so, this discussion of elements of the two manuscripts sheds light on some of the key areas of discussion and debate in current scholarship of Cavendish and Brackley's works and helps to ground these conversations in the texts themselves. It also, through describing the sometimes startling inconsistencies between the two volumes, helps recover the complicated contexts in which these manuscripts were produced. Embracing an understanding of these manuscripts that recognizes that they reveal themselves at once to be the product of a single mind *and* an equal collaboration between two sisters serves as a reminder that these are works that evolved over time and that had the potential to be shaped not just by their author/authors but by their scribe, compiler, and audiences. Moreover, discussing the ways in which the two manuscripts' dramatic works at once foreground playreading *and* envision household performance opens up new possibilities for understanding Cavendish and Brackley's evolution as dramatists and suggests that, whatever their circumstances may have been when they wrote *The concealed Fansyes*, perhaps it was possible to for them to envision a reality where performance of their play was possible. Or perhaps they just wished to write as if a performance was possible, an understandable desire for anyone living in such difficult circumstances. Whatever the explanation for the inconsistencies between the two manuscripts, by focusing on them, I hope to have shown that we can open up new ways of understanding these works. In doing so, we both attend to the realities of the production of the manuscripts themselves and also preserve the remarkable achievement that both manuscripts represent.

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46 Hulse, "The King's Entertainment," 361–64 describes Rolleston's evolving style in detail.

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## THE CAVENDISHES AND THEIR POETRY

Hero Chalmers

**THE RICH SEAM** of Cavendish family poetry exists in the form of manuscript writings by William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Newcastle, and his daughters Jane and Elizabeth, as well as in printed volumes by his second wife, Margaret (Jane and Elizabeth's step-mother). Jane and Elizabeth's verse originally appears in what Alexandra Bennett refers to as "two handsomely bound, presentation-style manuscript volumes" in the hand of their father's secretary, John Rolleston. Internal references suggest that the contents of both were mostly composed in the mid-1640s.<sup>1</sup> The earlier of the two manuscripts, held in the Beinecke Library, presents the poems along with *A Pastorall*; the later one, held in the Bodleian Library, adds eight more poems and a further drama, *The concealed Fansyes*.<sup>2</sup> British Library, MS Additional 32497 consists chiefly of poems written by William to Margaret during their courtship (which began after they met in April 1645) and shortly after their marriage some time before December 20, 1645.<sup>3</sup> The courtship poems—mostly transcribed by a secretary but with evidence of William's intervention—are printed by Douglas Grant in his edited collection, *The Phanseys of William Cavendish* (1956).<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, several manuscripts in the Portland Collection at the University of Nottingham contain "scribal copies and authorial drafts" of verse by William ranging

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1 Jane Cavendish, *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, ed. Alexandra G. Bennett (London: Routledge, 2018), 14. See also Jill Seal Millman and Gillian Wright, ed., *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 87. Whereas Bennett and others argue for Jane's sole authorship of the poems in these manuscripts, the present chapter is guided by Sara Mueller's full and persuasive case against restricting attribution to Jane alone; see [Chapter 12](#) of this book. While Mueller's careful analysis and comparison of the manuscripts leads her to conclude that no decisive judgment can be made as to whether both Jane and Elizabeth wrote the poems, I have chosen to refer to them as being by both poets in order to reflect what Mueller calls "the manuscripts' heterogeneous presentation of authorship."

2 *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 15. The two manuscripts are Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Osborn Collection MS b.233 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS Poet. 16 respectively.

3 Douglas Grant, ed. *The Phanseys of William Cavendish Marquis of Newcastle Addressed to Margaret Lucas and Her Letters in Reply* (London: Nonesuch, 1956), xxx; Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Royalist, Writer and Romantic* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003), 64, 75, 376n31. Grant considers that the latest poem in this manuscript probably dates from 1647; see Grant, *The Phanseys of William Cavendish*, xxxi.

4 For the handwriting in this manuscript, see Grant, *The Phanseys of William Cavendish*, xxx.

from the Caroline period to shortly before his death in 1676.<sup>5</sup> Lynn Hulse prints various of these poems with a connection to William's dramatic writing.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Margaret's verse appears chiefly in her first printed work, *Poems, and Fancies* (1653), although *Philosophical Fancies* (1653), which she had intended to publish as a companion volume, contains a few poems.<sup>7</sup> Liza Blake's digital critical edition of *Poems, and Fancies* offers a full collation across the 1653 edition and the two subsequent editions of 1664 and 1668 with full textual notes.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Brandie Siegfried's modern-spelling, scholarly edition of *Poems, and Fancies* takes as its copy-text Cavendish's revised edition of 1668.<sup>9</sup>

Precise evidence of Cavendish family members having read each other's verse is sometimes elusive. Sarah Ross shows how certain aspects of Jane and Elizabeth's manuscripts—for example, their poems to members of the royal family or their devotional verse—closely track motifs in their father's writing.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, Kate Chedgzoy speculates that "literary influence within the Cavendish family's culture of textual production could flow in multiple directions," citing in particular the apparent impact of Jane and Elizabeth's *Pastorall* on their father's writings.<sup>11</sup> Margaret certainly received William's courtship poems and acknowledged them in her letters, and Marion Wynne-Davies traces the evolving sexual dynamics of their familial discourse.<sup>12</sup> Katie Whitaker considers that Jane is likely to have met Margaret when the latter returned to London

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**5** Lynn Hulse, ed. *Dramatic Works by William Cavendish* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), xviii. See University of Nottingham, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Portland MSS Pw V 24, 25, 26. For the dating of poems in each of these manuscripts, see Hulse, *Dramatic Works by William Cavendish*, xviii, xix.

**6** See Hulse, *Dramatic Works by William Cavendish*, nos. 1–5, 6, 7–8, 9–11.

**7** For her intention to print the two works together, see Margaret Cavendish, *Philosophical Fancies* (London, 1653), 10. Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry and Culture 1640–1680* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 56–57, discusses some of the poems from *Philosophical Fancies* in her analysis of Margaret's poetic fusions of blazons and recipes. (For a further consideration of the use of blazons in *Poems, and Fancies*, see Jennifer Low, "Surface and Interiority: Self-Creation in Margaret Cavendish's 'The Claspe,'" *Philological Quarterly* 77 (1998): 149–69.) For a detailed analysis of the stylistic changes made by Margaret in the second edition of *Poems, and Fancies* (London, 1664), see Scott-Baumann, 62–66.

**8** Liza Blake, ed., *Margaret Cavendish's Poems and Fancies: A Digital Critical Edition*, <http://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/poemsandfancies>.

**9** Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies with The Animal Parliament*, ed. Brandie R. Siegfried (Toronto: Iter, 2018), 51. For a discussion of Cavendish's revisions in the second and third editions (1664, 1668), see 15–17.

**10** Sarah Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 100–34.

**11** Kate Chedgzoy, "Cavalier and She-Majesty: The Cultural Politics of Gender in Jane Cavendish's Poetry," *The Seventeenth Century* 32 (2017): 393–412 at 404.

**12** Grant prints Margaret's letters replying to William's poems in *The Phanseys of William Cavendish*, 97–119. Marion Wynne-Davies, *Women Writers and Familial Discourse in the English Renaissance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), chap. 7. See also James Fitzmaurice, "The Intellectual and

from Antwerp during the period 1651–1653, but we have no conclusive evidence that Jane and Elizabeth's poems and plays were read by their father and stepmother.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, in reading verses by Jane, Elizabeth, William, and Margaret alongside each other, this chapter traces fresh resemblances that argue for a shared web of influences, including the possibility that Margaret was responding directly to Jane and Elizabeth's manuscript verse and certainly reading her husband's poems in ways which have hitherto gone unnoticed.

As Ross has persuasively shown, the politics of Cavendish family manuscript poetry is bound up with "a culture of elite *poetic* sociality ... It manifestly *does coterie work* ... Writing to and through her father, [Jane] ... adopts and adapts the apparently modest genres of occasional and coterie poetic culture, and the sociality integral to those lyric modes, in order to articulate her allegiance to the royalist cause."<sup>14</sup> Like Burke and Coolahan, Ross regards Margaret's participation in the "print professionalization of the writer" as utterly distinct from the conventions of manuscript poetry adopted by Jane, Elizabeth, and William.<sup>15</sup> There are certainly a number of features peculiar to Margaret's printed verse which have merited critical attention in their own right: Margaret's striking self-presentation as a debut author in *Poems, and Fancies*, her network of literary influences, the volume's adumbration of her theories of natural philosophy, and its experimentation with oppositional politics.<sup>16</sup> Yet for all the features which set *Poems, and Fancies* apart from the manuscript verse of Jane, Elizabeth, and William which precedes

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Literary Courtship of Margaret Cavendish," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 14 (2004): 7.1–16, <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/si-14/fitzinte.html>; Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 78–79.

**13** Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 139. Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics*, 132, states that "it is not known whether ... [Jane's] poems reached her father in exile" but explores traces of their possible wider circulation, 134.

**14** Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics*, 102–4. See also Ross, "Coterie, Circles, Networks: The Cavendish Circle and Civil War Women's Writing," in *A History of Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Patricia Phillippy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 332–47.

**15** Victoria E. Burke and Marie-Louise Coolahan, "The Literary Contexts of William Cavendish," in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Nottinghamshire*, ed. Martyn Bennett (Lewiston: Mellen, 2005), 115–41, 130; Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics*, 106.

**16** For Margaret's self-presentation as author, see Hero Chalmers, *Royalist Women Writers, 1650–1689* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), chap. 1; Randall Ingram, "Margaret Cavendish, Humphrey Moseley, and 'the Book,'" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30 (2000): 101–24; Tina Skouen, "Margaret Cavendish and the Stigma of Haste," *Studies in Philology* 111 (2014): 547–70; Elaine Walker, "Longing for Ambrosia: Margaret Cavendish and the Torment of a Restless Mind in 'Poems, and Fancies' (1653)," *Women's Writing* 4 (1997): 341–51; Susan Wiseman, "Women's Poetry," in *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 127–47, 131. For literary influences, see Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies with The Animal Parliament*, 17–22; Hero Chalmers, "'Flattering Division': Margaret Cavendish's Poetics of Variety," in *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writings of Margaret Cavendish*, ed. Line Cottegnies and Nancy Weitz (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 123–44, 133–34, 137–38; Lara Dodds, *The Literary Invention of Margaret*

it, this chapter contends that Margaret's poems, like theirs, contribute to the task of textually reconstituting Royalist networks disbanded by the Civil War and Interregnum. Beyond this, I argue that her volume shares with Jane, Elizabeth, and William's verse a deliberate presentation of the tension between efforts to maintain a sense of a cohesive Royalist community or culture and the inevitable consciousness of its disintegration. In focusing on the manner in which all three poets embed notions of rupture and trauma associated with Royalist experience during the 1640s and 1650s, I build on recent critical attention paid to the ways in which Jane, Elizabeth, and William's poems all constitute affective responses to their historical moment.<sup>17</sup> By reading Margaret's poems alongside those of Jane, Elizabeth, and William, I discern a common poetics of loss articulated through tropes which recur across both their manuscript and printed verse.

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*Cavendish* (Pittsburgh: Dusquesne University Press, 2013), chaps. 2 and 3; Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement*, 53–57; Tanya Caroline Wood, "Borrowing Ralegh's Mantle," *Notes and Queries* 47 (2000): 183–85. For *Poems, and Fancies* as a work of natural philosophy, see Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998), chap. 3; Roberto Bertuol, "The Square Circle of Margaret Cavendish: The Seventeenth-Century Conceptualization of Mind by Means of Mathematics," *Language and Literature* 10 (2001): 21–39; Deborah Boyle, *The Well-Ordered Universe: The Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), chap. 2; Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies with The Animal Parliament*, 22–45; Stephen Clucas, "The Atomism of the Cavendish Circle: A Reappraisal," *The Seventeenth Century* 9 (1994): 247–73; Stephen Hequembourg, "The Poetics of Materialism in Cavendish and Milton," *Studies in English Literature* 54 (2014): 173–92 at 175–76; Bronwen Price, "Feminine Modes of Knowing and Scientific Enquiry," in *Women and Literature in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 117–39; Emma Rees, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre and Exile* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), chap. 2; Lisa T. Sarasohn, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish: Reason and Fancy during the Scientific Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), chap. 2; Lisa T. Sarasohn, "A Science Turned Upside Down: Feminism and the Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 47 (1984): 289–307 at 290–1, 296–97; Jay Stevenson, "The Mechanist-Vitalist Soul of Margaret Cavendish," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 36 (1996): 527–43 at 530–35; Lisa Walters, "'Not Subject to Our Sense': Margaret Cavendish's Fusion of Renaissance Science, Magic and Fairy Lore," *Women's Writing* 17 (2010): 413–31 at 419–26. For ways in which her poems diverge from a straightforwardly Royalist politics, see Sarasohn, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish*, 107; Mihoko Suzuki, "Animals and the Political in Lucy Hutchinson and Margaret Cavendish," *The Seventeenth Century* 30 (2015): 229–47 at 229–32; Lisa Walters, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 26–31.

<sup>17</sup> See Kate Chedgoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 135–40, and "Cavalier and She-Majesty"; *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 26–28; Elspeth Graham, "'An After-Game of Reputation': Systems of Representation, William Cavendish and the Battle of Marston Moor," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity in Seventeenth-Century England: William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Newcastle and His Political, Social and Cultural Connections*, ed. Peter Edwards and Elspeth Graham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 83–110, 97–98.

Following on from Margaret Ezell's seminal recognition of Jane and Elizabeth's verse as coterie writing that reaffirms bonds between Royalists, much important work has been done to uncover its rootedness in what Betty Travitsky calls a "Cavendish family dynamics."<sup>18</sup> Yet, while the majority of critics have emphasized the daughters' relationship with their father, Margaret's *Poems, and Fancies* also symbolically gathers together sundered members of the Cavendish family and household in an echo of Jane, Elizabeth, and William's manuscripts.<sup>19</sup> Beginning, in a number of copies, with William's commendatory verses, "To the Lady Newcastle, On Her Booke of Poems," the opening paratexts then juxtapose her husband (resident in Antwerp at the time) with his brother, who is with Margaret in London.<sup>20</sup> Her comparison of Sir Charles Cavendish's "kindnesse" with the "Affection" shown by "S<sup>t</sup> Paul" to "his Brethren in Christ" recalls the opening line of Jane and Elizabeth's poem "On my Noble Uncle S<sup>r</sup> Charles Cavendysh Knight": "Uncle Your life's the true Example of a Saint."<sup>21</sup> "The Epistle Dedicatory: To Sir Charles Cavendish, My Noble Brother-in-law" is followed by an "An Epistle to Mistris Toppe," Margaret's maid, in which she justifies herself to her "*Freinds*," thus gesturing towards the wider Cavendish household and circle of acquaintance.<sup>22</sup> The epistolary and conversational modes associated by Larson with Jane, Elizabeth, and William's coterie manuscripts are evoked not only by virtue of the fact that the volume is bookended by poems from and to William but by the fact that Elizabeth Toppe is given space to reply to Margaret's "epistle" with

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**18** Margaret M. J. Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter in Your Pen': The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 51 (1988): 281–96; Betty S. Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship: The Case of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and Her "Loose Papers"* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), 74. See also Elizabeth Clarke, "The Garrisoned Muse: Women's Use of the Religious Lyric in the Civil War Period," in *The English Civil Wars in the Literary Imagination*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 130–43, 134–37; *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 15–19; Katherine Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), chap. 5; Patricia Phillippy, "'Monumental Circles' and Material Culture in Early Modern England," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4 (2009): 139–47 at 143; Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics*, 112–13.

**19** For a similar strategy in Margaret's *Natures Pictures* (London, 1656), see Ann Hughes and Julie Sanders, "Disruptions and Evocations of Family amongst Royalist Exiles," in *Literatures of Exile in the English Revolution and Its Aftermath, 1640–1690*, ed. Philip Major (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 45–63, 50, 52.

**20** Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies* (London, 1653), facsimile reprint (Menston: Scholar, 1972), sigs. A1r, A2r; Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 136, 137. For details of textual variants, see Liza Blake's "Textual and Editorial Introduction" to her digital critical edition of *Poems and Fancies*.

**21** Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, sig. A2v; *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 53.

**22** Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, sigs. A2r, A4r, A4v. Catharine Gray, *Women Writers and Public Debate in Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 26, reads these elements of Margaret's prefatory material as mitigating the "scandalous self-display" of printed publication by situating it "within the class and gender hierarchies of the aristocratic household."

her own reply, signed “Your Honours most humble and obedient Servant, *E. Toppe*.”<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, *Poems, and Fancies*—which also includes “An *Elegy* on my *Brother*, kill’d in these unhappy Warres”—concludes with stanzas which once again invoke the influence of her brother-in-law and husband. Here she describes “Sir *Charles* into my chamber coming in” to engage in a literal conversation about her fairy poems, and she acknowledges the formative influence of the “*witty Poet*” to whom she is “married.”<sup>24</sup>

Yet if Margaret’s poems, like Jane, Elizabeth, and William’s, bring the Royalist family together, the writings of all three are equally predicated on the absence of key family members. Chedgzoy draws attention to the way in which Jane and Elizabeth’s manuscript poems and plays foreground “male absence consequent on political exile,” opening with six poems which “memorialize absent father, brothers and uncle.”<sup>25</sup> Similarly, William’s manuscript, entitled “Phanseys ... Sett by him in verse at Paris,” depicts Margaret’s “absence” as the catalyst for the “sadder thoughts” which nourish his poems.<sup>26</sup> Margaret’s prefatory epistle “To the Reader” situates her poems, like Jane and Elizabeth’s, as the product of her separation from William: “For my Rest being broke with discontented Thoughts, because I was from my Lord, and Husband, knowing him to be in great Wants, and my selfe in the same Condition; to divert them ... I have sat, and wrote this Worke.”<sup>27</sup>

Alienation, then, as much as cohesion, animates these collections of verse, all of which openly explore the necessity to find a space for “sadder thoughts.” Jane and Elizabeth’s outwardly focused poems (for example, their panegyrics to family members, friends, and the royal family, or their celebration of their father’s victory against the Parliamentary forces at Adwalton Moor) are interspersed from the outset with verse which dwells on the personal “Hell” of “greife” which they experience owing to their father’s absence.<sup>28</sup> Bennett reads Jane’s poems as offering evidence that she was a sufferer from the “bouts of melancholia” for which William and Margaret both sought medical advice.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the recurrence of the term “fancies” in the writings of Jane, Elizabeth, William, and Margaret may be seen to foreground not merely the poetic creativity which flows from

<sup>23</sup> Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation*, 116; Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, sig. A5v.

<sup>24</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 196, 213, 214. This reference to Sir Charles does not appear in subsequent editions.

<sup>25</sup> Chedgzoy, *Women’s Writing in the British Atlantic World*, 137. See also *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 16; Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics*, 102.

<sup>26</sup> MS Additional 32497, fols. 2r, 78r. See also fols. 75r, 77v, 79r, 80v, 87r–v. When William composed the poems in Paris, Margaret was currently with the queen in Saint-Germain-en-Laye; see Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 74–75.

<sup>27</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, sigs. A7r–v.

<sup>28</sup> Jane Cavendish, “Passions L<sup>r</sup>e to my Lord my Father,” in *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 52.

<sup>29</sup> *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 26–27.

imagination but a shared propensity to fall prey to the darker thoughts which attend on a heightened imaginative capacity during a period of historical conflict.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, however suggestive the thread of a (partly genetic) tendency to melancholia running through Cavendish family verse, it remains important to understand the latter's representations of psychological disturbance as consciously managed poetic constructs rather than purely spontaneous effusions. Chedgzoy notes the "performance of misery" in Jane's depiction of herself donning "Hermetts weeds" in "On a false reporte of yo<sup>r</sup> Lo:<sup>ps</sup> landinge," and she identifies other recurrent tropes through which the poet consciously stages her politically charged sorrow at being separated from her father.<sup>31</sup> These include "metaphors of live burial" and projections of herself as a ghostly apparition or as her own alter ego in a looking glass.<sup>32</sup> Yet Chedgzoy concludes that, for Jane Cavendish, as for fellow Royalist Lady Hester Pulter, "the consolatory uses of memory in the context of the psychic distress consequent upon war are vital."<sup>33</sup>

I wish to suggest that Jane and Elizabeth's poems also deliberately dramatize the mental effort involved in attempting to present a composed demeanour to the world when contending with inner emotional turmoil. In addition to relieving their own feelings, such a gesture offers their intended Royalist coterie readership a potentially consoling or affirming expression of their own dilemmas and implicitly celebrates collective Royalist stoicism. It is "Passions Contemplation [1]" which most vividly evokes the strain of having to restrict the expression of strong feelings:

Ther's nothinge more afflicts my greiued soule  
But that I cannot griue without controlle  
And <sup>soe</sup> least others should interppret more  
Thoughts Centries keepes out teares in each Eyes doore  
Ø I; how sorrow swells mee when it must <sup>not</sup> raue  
To washe it selfe with teares, then begg a graue  
Soe in contemplate thoughts I wishe to bee  
Teares Statue for sadder soules to drop to mee  
I am indeede a congeild peece of greife  
And without sight of you have noe releife.<sup>34</sup>

It appears that Jane and Elizabeth's poem may have caught the imagination of Margaret, who seems to echo its use of Niobe-like imagery to depict the impact of

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**30** Burke and Coolahan, "The Literary Contexts of William Cavendish," 130, notes "the repeated use of the word 'fancies'" by all three poets. For examples of their use of the term, see Jane's dedicatory poem to her father from the Beinecke manuscript in *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 51, and the play-title, *The concealed Fansyes*; William Cavendish, "Loves Phansy," in MS Additional 32497, fol. 76r. Later on in this poem, the term is used to denote the darker side of the imaginative capacity, "Those sadder thoughts & Phansys fill my Brayne", fol. 77v. See also William's "The Battle," fol. 80r, and Margaret Cavendish, "An Epistle to a Troubled Fancy," in *Philosophical Fancies*, 5.

**31** Chedgzoy, "Cavalier and She-Majesty," 407; *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 57.

**32** Chedgzoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World*, 137–38.

**33** Chedgzoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World*, 166.

**34** *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 53.

suppressed grief. In “*On a Melting Beauty*,” Margaret’s speaker imagines going into a church to find “a *mourning Beauty*” kneeling by a “*Tombe*.” The woman is “fix’d” in an attitude of grief, although racked with sorrow: “Her *Breast* did pant, as if *Life* meant / To seek her *Heart*, which way it went ... / *Teares* pull her *eye-lids* down, as they gush’d out.”<sup>35</sup> Like the speaker of Jane and Elizabeth’s next poem in the manuscript, Margaret’s “*Beauty*” bemoans her “*torments*” and finally begs, “strike me dead by this deare *Monument*,” only for the speaker to discover that the mourning woman has been turned to ice in an echo of Jane and Elizabeth’s “*Teares Statue* ... / ... a congeild peece of greife.”<sup>36</sup> Margaret’s speaker relates how:

Hearing *her* mourne, I went to give *reliefe*;  
But, Oh alas, her *eares* were stopt with *griefe*.  
When I came neere, her *bloud* congeal’d to *Ice*,  
And all her *Body* changed in a trice;  
That *Ice* strait melted into *tears*, down run  
Through *porous earth*: so got into that *urne*.<sup>37</sup>

Margaret here revisits the imagery deployed by earlier Cavendish family verse and takes its metaphors to a new level of poetic conceitedness, as if literalizing Phillippy’s conception of Jane and Elizabeth’s verse as providing an equivalent to familial funerary monuments.<sup>38</sup>

In order to understand the specific ways in which *Poems, and Fancies* similarly develops the seemingly rawer emotions of William’s “Phansyes” manuscript, it is necessary first to appreciate the ways in which the traumatic experiences of the Civil War period impact his verse as they do Jane and Elizabeth’s. A pivotal poem in this discussion is William’s “The Battle,” which he couches as a nightmare vision catalyzed by the melancholia indicative of the darker side of Cavendishian fancy:

When parted, Eare since, my sad hard did ake  
Such Melancholly dreames, and so a wake  
My perturbd Phansyd sleepe, whose motion thought  
Of bloody battles ~~how~~<sup>more</sup> bloodily wee fought  
In seurall Posturs, one an other Graspinge  
Minglinge defeates, most now for life are gasping.<sup>39</sup>

While Graham reads this poem as an interruption of William’s use of “love conventions” in the “Phanseys” manuscript to effect a “self re-creation” and rebuild his damaged reputation after Marston Moor, other poems in this collection (and dating from the same

<sup>35</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 193.

<sup>36</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 193; Jane Cavendish, “Passions Contemplation [2],” in *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 54.

<sup>37</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 194.

<sup>38</sup> Phillippy, “‘Monumental Circles,’” 143.

<sup>39</sup> MS Additional 32497, fols. 80r–v.

period) also reveal disruptions of the veneer of courtly confidence.<sup>40</sup> Most strikingly commensurate with the grim tone of "The Battle" are the two poems which precede it. In the first, "Loves Phansy," the speaker relates how "My Phansey sett mee on a high topt hill / The Eyre Cereane, and Cleere the winde was still." In the midst of an idyllic pastoral vision of "fertill meddows," "bleating sheepe," and "shepherdesses lovers," he sees "a youth, so sweet, and fayre / His rich apparel shewd a Princes Heaire." Yet the beautiful, regal youth is soon killed by a bear, and the mourning which follows evokes the sorrow of those for whom the Civil War has challenged the sovereignty of Charles as monarch, drawing perhaps on the affective resonances associated with the untimely death of William's youthful companion, Prince Henry, and the national mourning which followed it:

So burid Father, Mother, Sonne, ith wombe  
Of sadder Earth, and built a statly tombe  
But all in wayne their teares themselves did dround  
That kingdome too, none since saw any Ground  
...  
And so in wofull blacks, that place doth morne  
No hopes of day, because heele neer returne.<sup>41</sup>

While the next poem, "The Deflowred Virgin," is less directly legible as political allegory, it follows suit in disrupting harmonious pastoralism with lurid violence in a manner which hints, by association, at the rupturing of a pre-Civil War Stuart hegemony often associated with pastoral as a literary and dramatic mode.<sup>42</sup> Here, "a tender Virgin ... / Like to a gentle, modest sheppardesse" is raped and mutilated by "a harsh and Cruell man" who then throws her body off a precipice: "Splitt all in peeces when shee came to ground / And in the bottoms River, there shee dround."<sup>43</sup>

The broken pastorals of "The Deflowred Virgin" and "Loves Phansy" have antecedents in Jane and Elizabeth's *Pastorall*. While Wynne-Davies and Chedgzoy trace mutual channels of pastoral influence running between the work of the Cavendish sisters and their father, the antimasque of witches in Cavendish and Brackley's *Pastorall* offers

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**40** Graham, "'An After-Game of Reputation,'" 90, 96, 97. Graham's argument, 92–93, draws on Timothy Raylor's reading of William's poem, "Love's Muster," as related to the decoration of Bolsover Castle, see Raylor, "'Pleasure Reconcil'd to Virtue': William Cavendish, Ben Jonson, and the Decorative Scheme of Bolsover Castle," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999): 402–39 at 432–34. Graham, 93, acknowledges that "several of Cavendish's courtship poems explicitly draw attention to his 'Misfortunes,'" citing "A Songe," 93n33. Others include "Loves love not mee," "Loves partinge," and "The spotlesse Love," in MS Additional 32497, fols. 69v–70r, 73r–v, 75r.

**41** MS Additional 32497, fols. 76r, 77r–v. For William's association with Prince Henry, see Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 65, and the chapters in this volume by Lisa Hopkins and Elaine Walker.

**42** See, for example, Leah Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 19, 70; Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England 1640–1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 250–51, 320.

**43** MS Additional 32497, fols. 78r–v.

a precedent for William's use of anti-pastoral as a means of accentuating historically plangent scenes of grief and violent disruption.<sup>44</sup> "Hath not our mischeife made warr, and that a miserable one, to make Brother hate brother," asks one of the hags before proceeding to join in planning a burnt "sacrafice" of "Childrens heads ... Mens leggs ... Weomens Armes ... And little Barnes."<sup>45</sup> This is the vision of strife and dislocation which frames the advent of the main pastoral and alerts us to the wider political significance of its more mournful notes, as when one of the "three sad Sheppardesses," played by the three Cavendish sisters, sings of her father, "His absence makes a Chaos sure of mee."<sup>46</sup> The anti-pastoral strain shared by Jane, Elizabeth, and William's writing resurfaces in Margaret's "*A Description of Shepherds, and Shepherdesses*," described by Scott-Baumann as presenting "a dystopian vision of pastoral."<sup>47</sup> The poem's sceptical sense that "rustick Clownes" do not "spend their times ... / ... as *Poets faine*" is reinforced in the next poem, "*A Shepherds imployment is too mean an Allegory for Noble Ladies*."<sup>48</sup>

"The rhetoric of dismemberment" which characterizes Jane and Elizabeth's anti-pastoral "Antemasque" is, Chedgzoy argues, "a potent stand-by of wartime propaganda," but it also specifically anticipates the nightmarish images of William's "The Battle," which are taken up, in turn, by Margaret in "*A Description of the Battle in Fight*." This is the poem of all those in *Poems, and Fancies* which most directly draws on William's "Phanseys" manuscript.<sup>49</sup> She borrows her husband's often anaphoric and asyndetic techniques of relentlessly listing what she (directly echoing him) also calls the "severall postures" of dead men after battle, the human turmoil and physical damage left behind in the wake of military engagement:

Some with sharp Swords, to tell, O most accurst,  
Were above halfe into the bodies thrust:  
From whence fresh streams of *bloud* run all along  
Unto the *Hilts*, and there lay clodded on.  
Some, their *Leggs* hang dangling by the *Nervouse* strings,  
And *shoulders* cut, hung loose, like flying wings.  
...  
Their *knees* pull'd up, to keep their *bowels* in;  
But all too little through their *blood* did swim.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Chedgzoy, "Cavalier and She-Majesty", 404; Marion Wynne-Davies, "'How Great Is Thy Change': Familial Discourse in the Cavendish Family," in *A Princely Brave Woman: Essays on Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle*, ed. Stephen Clucas (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), 40–50, 43–44.

<sup>45</sup> Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley, *A Pastorall*, in *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 79, 80.

<sup>46</sup> Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley, *A Pastorall*, in *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 89.

<sup>47</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 142; Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 143.

<sup>49</sup> *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 79; Chedgzoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World*, 141; Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 173.

<sup>50</sup> MS Additional 32497, fols. 80r–v. Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 176, 173, 174. For William's use of the phrase "severall posturs", see MS Additional 32497, fol. 80r.

If we compare the above extracts from Margaret's poem with lines from William's equivalent piece, it is possible to detect not only rhetorical and broadly conceptual analogies but detailed points of comparison including images of rivers of blood, severed legs, and disembowelment. William writes:

One wants a legge, an other wants an Arme  
 One Cries retreat, another Cries Alarme  
 A Gored body heere lies could and dead  
 Ones bowels out, another wants his head  
 ...  
 None knowing what for to call bad, or good  
 Rivers, for water, now all running blood  
 His doubtfull victory neyther to yield  
 Neyther durst say, yett Eyther won the field.<sup>51</sup>

However, Margaret takes William's brief and more rawly immediate poem and extends it into a much longer piece which seems, at times, to distance or sublimate post-traumatic emotions through the use of the fancifully conceited tropes which are such a familiar feature of *Poems, and Fancies*:

Some softly murmuring like a bubling stream  
 Yet sweetly smile in *death*, as in a *dream*.  
 Whose *soules* with soft-breath'd sighs to heaven flye,  
 To live with gods above the starry skie.  
 ...  
 With heaps of bodies, *hills* up high are growne,  
 Where *haire* as *grasse*, and *teeth*, as *seed* are sown.<sup>52</sup>

The sense that Margaret is further processing the psychological damage sustained by herself and (most directly) William as a result of military conflict also emerges in the way a number of her poems attempt to reassert his lost military authority by demonstrating practical strategic expertise.<sup>53</sup> Wynne-Davies notes "Margaret's knowledge of the necessary fortifications to withstand a siege" in her allegorical poem, "The Fort or Castle of Hope."<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the poem's technical description of how to repel enemy ordnance by building a defensive wall "from whence the Cannons play" curiously echoes the language of the anonymous commendatory verses found in the Beinecke copy of the Cavendish sisters' manuscript, which praises the authors because "in garrison your

51 The phrase "*Rivers of bloud*" recurs in Margaret's "A Battle between King Oberon, and the Pygmees," in her *Poems, and Fancies*, 184, in which she also imagines "*severall noyses* that rebounded far," recalling William's "Noyse, drowndinge noyse," fol. 80v.

52 Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 176. Price, "Feminine Modes of Knowing and Scientific Enquiry", 130, reads Margaret's poem (which she does not link to William's "The Battle") as "an analysis of the masculine."

53 William's investment in stressing his expertise in military strategy while in exile is evident in the existence of his unpublished treatise on swordsmanship; see Philip Major, "A Previously Unknown Poem by William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle," *Notes and Queries* 54 (2007): 409–11 at 410.

54 Wynne-Davies, *Women Writers and Familial Discourse*, 168.

muse durst stay / When that shee heard the drumms and cannon play.”<sup>55</sup> Although Margaret’s “Epistle to Souldiers” protests that she has “*no knowledge*” in “the *valiant Art, and Discipline of Warre*,” the poems on military themes which follow this epistle repeatedly attest to her specific practical acumen.<sup>56</sup> “*Doubts Assault, and Hopes Defence*” contains another detailed description of the minutiae of siege warfare, a topic of immediate, personal concern for Margaret owing to William’s involvement in the defence of the besieged city of York in 1644 as well as her own links to the Parliamentary siege of her home town, Colchester, in 1648 and the resulting death of her brother.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, “*A Battle between Courage, and Prudence*” dwells on the correct way to clothe, arm, and pay both infantrymen and cavalry.<sup>58</sup> The group of military poems also manifests a persistent interest in the value of well-trained horses in battle, reflecting William’s most cherished personal commitment to promote the equestrian arts, including their military utility.<sup>59</sup> In “*A Battle between King Oberon, and the Pygmies*,” in particular, Margaret’s account of the miniature grasshopper steeds (“*Horses for War*”) leads her to offer a sustained defence—complete with technical terminology—of the strategic advantages to be gained from deploying “*Horses of manage*” in battle.<sup>60</sup> It is striking to find what appears to be the earliest extant written record of some of William’s central ideas concerning the art of *manège* in the form of his wife’s printed poems.<sup>61</sup>

Margaret’s engagement with what Graham (borrowing Clarendon’s phrase) calls the “after-game” of William’s reputation manifests itself not only in her preoccupation with his military and equestrian concerns but in the way that *Poems, and Fancies* follows Jane, Elizabeth, and William’s verse by attaching itself to the Cavendish family estates, their

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**55** Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 169; “Upon the right honourable the Lady Jane Cavendish her booke of uerses,” in *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 29.

**56** Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 167. Vimala Pasupathi, “Old Playwrights, Old Soldiers, New Martial Subjects: The Cavendishes and the Drama of Soldierly,” in *Cavendish and Shakespeare, Interconnections*, ed. Katherine Romack and James Fitzmaurice (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006), 121–24, 133–34 takes Margaret’s declaration of a lack of military expertise here more at face value.

**57** Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 170–71; Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince, William Cavendishe* (London, 1667), 44–47; Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 107–8.

**58** Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 171.

**59** See William Cavendish, *La méthode et invention nouvelle de dresser les chevaux* (Antwerp: 1658), sig. e1r; William Cavendish, *A New Method, and Extraordinary Invention, To Dress Horses, and Work Them According to Nature* (London: Milbourn, 1667), 6, 77.

**60** Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 180, 182–83. See also 172, 177. For a further discussion of the debt owed by *Poems, and Fancies* to William Cavendish’s equestrian manuals, see Elaine Walker’s chapter in this volume.

**61** William’s printed equestrian treatises, *La méthode* and *A New Method* (see note 59 to this chapter) appeared in 1658 and 1667 respectively. The earliest surviving manuscript pertaining to these works postdates the publication of *La méthode* five years after *Poems, and Fancies*; see University of Nottingham, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Portland MS Pw V 21, fol. 157v.

Civil War jeopardy, and their subsequent reclamation.<sup>62</sup> Studies of the Cavendish sisters' manuscript have recognized the way its poems and plays stress the garrisoned status of its site of composition at Welbeck Abbey, where they found themselves "under virtual house arrest" by Parliamentary soldiers.<sup>63</sup> The loss of his estates impinges keenly on William's own verse written in exile after 1645:

Why shouldst thou love me alas I am old  
Ruind of all and now am bought and solde  
...  
Thus am a Just delinquent and so stande  
My greatest fault was having too much Land.<sup>64</sup>

His nostalgia, in exile, for the imagined stability of pre-war country house life is hinted at by the way in which he embeds a direct echo of Jonson's "To Penshurst" in a pastoral he wrote to be performed while in Antwerp. Its prologue acknowledges that the lavish hospitality figured by Jonson as the preserve of his earlier aristocratic patron's table cannot now be matched by William: "Since on uss, are the times, most fatall Curses / Nott feaste your taste, Itt is beyond our Purses."<sup>65</sup> However, in a subsequent pastoral dialogue, Flora promises Coridon a feast of natural abundance which contains a near-verbatim allusion to Jonson's poem. "The Blushinge Aprecott, & walleye Peache, / In a freshe maunder, Ile offer to thy Reache," announces Flora, recalling Jonson's "The blushing apricot and woolly peach / Hang on thy walls, that every child may reach."<sup>66</sup> (The first line of this couplet was evidently one which William favoured, since it reappears in his poem "On Mr Evling his Marriage.")<sup>67</sup> If Jane, Elizabeth, and William's poems register threats to, and the loss of, Cavendish houses and estates, Margaret's *Poems, and Fancies* arises directly out of the attempt to reclaim Cavendish property, since she wrote the volume while in England to assist her brother-in-law, Sir Charles Cavendish, in petitioning Parliament to rescind sequestration. In the event, Charles finally managed to recover a portion of the Cavendish estates, including Welbeck Abbey and Bolsover Castle, in the summer of 1652.<sup>68</sup> Margaret's "A Dialogue *between a Bountifull Knight, and a Castle ruin'd in War*"

<sup>62</sup> Graham, "An After-Game of Reputation," 83.

<sup>63</sup> *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 8. See also Chedgzoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World*, 138; Clarke, "The Garrisoned Muse," 133–34; Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics*, 109; Marion Wynne-Davies, "'My Fine Delitive Tomb': Liberating Sisterly Voices During the Civil War," in *Female Communities 1600–1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities*, ed. Rebecca d'Monté and Nicole Pohl (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 111–28, 112.

<sup>64</sup> MS Additional 32497, fol. 69v.

<sup>65</sup> Pw V 24, fol. 15v; Jonson, "To Penshurst," lines 59–70, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5:213.

<sup>66</sup> Pw V 24, fol. 16r; Jonson, "To Penshurst," lines 43–44, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, 5:212.

<sup>67</sup> MS Additional 32497, fol. 145v.

<sup>68</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 137–38, 143, 151–52.

has been widely recognized as directly referencing Charles's efforts to save and restore Bolsover.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Margaret's epistle "To the Reader" represents the writing of her book as a substitute for the household duties she would normally be carrying out were it not for the Cavendish's dispossession from their estates:

*And my Lords Estate being taken away, [I] had nothing for Huswifery, or thrifty Industry to imploy my selfe in ... For Housewifery is a discreet Management, and ordering all in Private, and Household Affaires, seeing nothing spoil'd, or Profusely spent, that every thing has its proper Place, and every Servant his proper Work, and every Work to be done in its proper Time; to be Neat, and Cleanly, to have their House quiet from all disturbing Noise ... But I have nothing to ... order, so as I become Idle; I cannot say, in mine owne House, because I have none, but what my Mind is lodg'd in.*<sup>70</sup>

A sense of Cavendish family poetry as registering—but providing a site of resistance to—the disruption of their relationship with property, households, and pre-war lifestyles is apparent in shared references to inventories and food. Inventories of possessions naturally took on greater significance for families whose property was threatened during the Civil War period, but Jane's consciousness of the importance of making inventories in order to keep track of family property is apparent in her account-book from an early age.<sup>71</sup> The Portland papers also contain an "Inventory of Lord Newcastle's plate hidden beneath the brewhouse at Welbeck," with a statement from Royalist soldiers to guarantee that it had been "removed from it hiding place" and would be returned to William's daughters when it was "safe to do so."<sup>72</sup> Margaret would later show an acute consciousness of the cost to her husband of losses sustained to his property during the war, presenting them in the form of accounts or inventories in her *Life of William Cavendish* (1667).<sup>73</sup>

The preoccupation with inventories inflects poems by Jane, Elizabeth, and Margaret. In "Thankes L<sup>tr</sup>re," one of the sisters expresses her gratitude to William for a list of presents he has sent her: "The curious Fan ... / Thy fyner Combes ... / Thy neater Brasletts ... / Thy Maskes & Chinclothes."<sup>74</sup> Reading as if they are an inventory of prestigious personal

<sup>69</sup> See Dodds, *The Literary Invention of Margaret Cavendish*, 115–16; Pamela Hammons, "The Gendered Imagination of Property in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century English Women's Verse," *CLIO: A Journal of Literature, History, and The Philosophy of History* 34 (2005): 395–418; Wynne-Davies, "'How Great Is Thy Change,'" 42–47; Wynne-Davies, "'My Fine Delitive Tomb,'" 116–18; and Wynne-Davies, *Women Writers and Familial Discourse*, 162, 167–68.

<sup>70</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, sig. A7r. Megan Fung, "Art, Authority and Domesticity in Margaret Cavendish's 'Poems, and Fancies,'" *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10 (2015): 27–47 at 28, argues that "markers of domesticity" in this passage, as elsewhere in the volume, "constitute a critical metaphor for Cavendish's poetic process."

<sup>71</sup> *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 165–66. See also 173; Wynne-Davies, "'How Great Is Thy Change,'" 41–42.

<sup>72</sup> University of Nottingham, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Portland MS, Pw 1.367.

<sup>73</sup> Cavendish, *The Life of ... William Cavendish*, 96–107.

<sup>74</sup> *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 61.

possessions, these items assert Newcastle's "power and status, despite his exile" and offer his "material encouragement" to his daughters to "maintain socially acceptable standards of self-presentation."<sup>75</sup> They also allow the sisters to assert ownership at a point in time when Cavendish family control over the larger properties represented by their houses and landed estates was becoming increasingly tenuous. Similarly, a number of Margaret's poems personifying a feminine Nature evoke inventories of clothing and jewellery, as in "Natures Cabinet":

In *Natures Cabinet*, the *Braine*, you'l find  
 Many a fine *Knack*, which doth delight the *Mind*.  
 Severall *Colour'd Ribbons* of *Fancies* new,  
 To tye in *Hats*, or *Haire* of *Lovers* true.  
 ...  
*Fans* of *Opinion*, which wave with the *Wind*,  
 ...  
*Gloves* of *Remembrance*, which draw off, and on,  
 ...  
*Pendants* of *Understanding* heavie were,  
 But *Nature* hangs them not in every *Eare*.<sup>76</sup>

Yet Margaret's heavily allegorical poems, unlike Jane and Elizabeth's verse epistle to their father, read almost as phantom inventories, dislocated from a tangible connection to Cavendish family control over property.

The sense that Margaret, Jane, and Elizabeth's poetry responds to the historical threats posed to the Cavendish estates in the way it figures more transient elements of the material life of the aristocratic household is also apparent in the way that they, like William, repeatedly return to the imagery of food. Jane and Elizabeth's poems register distortions of the expected role of food in facilitating Royalist sociability. Chedgzoy argues that Jane and Elizabeth's manuscripts give their "distress" at their father's continued absence "material form as food and drink which is neither nutritious or palatable" by proclaiming, "My meate I'll tell you if you would it heare / 'Tis severall Hashes made upp in a feare / Instead of Beare, now tell you what I drinke / Sighes still'd till mallencholly make mee winke."<sup>77</sup> In another poem, Jane and Elizabeth's speaker vows to protest against William's absence by becoming a "Puritane": "And I will fast untill I bee not able / To call for Pigg or Turkey to my Table."<sup>78</sup> Where William's prologue to a pastoral at Antwerp had lamented the failure to offer guests the kind of feast they might have expected from him before his exile, another of his poems in the Portland manuscripts veers between fantasizing culinary abundance and offering a darkly comic

<sup>75</sup> Pamela Hammons, *Gender, Sexuality and Material Objects in English Renaissance Verse*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) 74; Chedgzoy, "Cavalier and She-Majesty," 395.

<sup>76</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 126. See also "Natures Dresse," 127; "Natures Wardrobe," 134–35.

<sup>77</sup> Chedgzoy, "Cavalier and She-Majesty," 406; Jane Cavendish, "On a false reporte of yo<sup>r</sup> Lo:<sup>ps</sup> landinge," in *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 57.

<sup>78</sup> Jane Cavendish, "Hopes Still," in *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 78.

sense that the violent military conflicts of the Civil War have infected even the hospitality of his table.<sup>79</sup> Imagining a generous meal of “Boylde Beefe,” “Chyne,” and “Venison Pastye ... Piping Hott,” accompanied by perfectly chilled “Wine,” the poem continues:

The soldiers do note  
 The pigg In's Buff Cote  
 How Valeantly hee bears upp his snoute  
 With Curants Hayle Shott  
 Sutch wounds hee hath Gott  
 That did dashe all his Brayns quite oute.  
 The fortetide pie  
 With out works did Lie  
 Off Custards there was sutch a peale  
 The [...] bones Hott  
 Did plye them with Shott  
 Prince off orange Gaynst sweet bread of veale.<sup>81</sup>

Where William's poem represents food through military metaphors, Margaret's “*Description of a Battle in Fight*” grotesquely figures the physical consequences of military combat in culinary metaphors:

Here heads are cleft in two parts, *braines* lye masht,  
 And all their *faces* into slices hasht.  
 ...  
 And *Guts* like *Sausages* their bodies twine,  
 Or like the *spreading plant*, or *wreathing vine*.<sup>82</sup>

The grotesque imaging of human bodies as food continues in “*Natures Cook*,” which offers a gruesome twist on Jane and Elizabeth's poems about household servants by figuring “*Death*” as the eponymous chef.<sup>83</sup> Where Jane and Elizabeth's speaker facetiously imagines herself to have become “a compound Christmas dish,” claiming “hope doth gellye me,” Margaret's figure of Death works on human “*Meates ... / Some for Gelly consuming by degrees*.”<sup>84</sup>

Margaret, Jane, Elizabeth, and William's rhetorics of food, like the other aspects of their verse which this chapter has examined, show evidence of common ground extending beyond the shared territory of coterie manuscript poetry which has rightly been seen to link father and daughters. Margaret's printed volume builds more on its

<sup>79</sup> Pw V 24, fol. 15v.

<sup>80</sup> The manuscript is illegible at this point.

<sup>81</sup> Pw V 25, fols. 68r, 68v.

<sup>82</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 173–74.

<sup>83</sup> For Jane and Elizabeth's poems on servants, see “The Carecter” and “On a Chambermayde,” in *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 66, 69.

<sup>84</sup> “The discoursie Ghost”, in *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, 68; Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 127. For a further discussion of the culinary imagery in “The discoursie Ghost,” see Chedgzoy, “Cavalier and She-Majesty,” 397.

familial antecedents than we might at first recognize, responding to their poetics of loss by developing shared tropes and, in some cases, reworking direct allusions. By way of a coda, however, it is instructive to return to the dominant strand in *Poems, and Fancies* that sets it apart from Jane, Elizabeth, and William's verse: namely, its preoccupation with atomistic natural philosophy. For by means of this philosophy of matter, Margaret's poetry offers a sense that underlying the death, dismemberment, and dilapidation of Royalist estates brought about by the Civil War is a world of intelligent, self-moving atoms eternally offering the possibility of reconstruction and renewal:

Small *Atomes* of themselves a *World* may make,  
 As being subtle, and of every shape:  
 And as they dance about, fit places finde,  
 Such *Formes* as best agree, make every kinde.  
 For when we build a house of Bricke, and Stone,  
 We lay them even, every one by one:  
 And when we finde a gap that's big, or small,  
 We seeke out Stones, to fit that place withall.  
 For when not fit, too big, or little be,  
 They fall away, and cannot stay we see.  
 So *Atomes*, as they dance, finde places fit,  
 They there remaine, lye close, and fast will sticke.  
 Those that unfit, the rest that rove about,  
 Do never leave, untill they thrust them out.  
 Thus by their severall *Motions*, and their *Formes*,  
 As severall work-men serve each others turnes.  
 And thus, by chance, may a *New World* create:  
 Or else predestinated to worke my *Fate*.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "A World made by *Atomes*," in *Poems, and Fancies*, 5–6.

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## Chapter 14

# THE CLOSET AS FORM AND THEME IN CAVENDISH AND BRACKLEY'S *THE CONCEALED FANCIES*

Daniel Cadman

DRAMATIC WRITING WAS a common mode of literary expression for a variety of members of the Cavendish family and literary coterie. Prior to the closure of the commercial theatres in 1642, William Cavendish, Marquess of Newcastle had exerted considerable influence on the London theatrical scene. In addition to acting as patron to a range of influential authors, including Ben Jonson, James Shirley, and William Davenant, Newcastle also contributed to *The Varietie* and *The Country Captaine*, two comedies produced by the King's Men. Newcastle also commissioned two of Ben Jonson's masques, *Love's Welcome at Bolsover* and *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck*, for performance at his two estates. However, the Cavendish family's innovations in dramatic writing extended beyond the commercial theatres and Newcastle's patronage network. Among the prolific outputs of Newcastle's second wife, Margaret Cavendish, is a group of dramas in a range of genres written during the Civil War and Interregnum periods. Newcastle's eldest daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, also participated in dramatic writing by including a pastoral masque and a courtship comedy among a collection of writings and occasional poems that are collected together in manuscript. Written following the closure of the commercial theatres in 1642, as well as representing relatively rare examples of women's intervention in a male-dominated literary milieu, the dramatic works of the women in the Cavendish family serve to complicate the picture of the development of drama in the early modern period. Because of their distance from popular theatrical culture, the dramatic outputs of the women of the Cavendish family can be identified as closet dramas. In scholarship on early modern literature, the term "closet drama" has come to denote a type of play intended not for the commercial theatres but rather for private performance or recitations from members of elite coteries, as well as for print.<sup>1</sup>

Using the Cavendish sisters' play *The Concealed Fancies* as my case study, I want to highlight some of the specific strategies employed by the authors in the development of their closet drama. Margaret J. M. Ezell highlights the importance of the two dramas preserved in the manuscript as part of "a case study of the literary activities of two educated seventeenth-century Englishwomen, a case study whose findings do not agree with

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<sup>1</sup> For comment on the development of closet drama during the early modern period, see Karen Raber, *Dramatic Difference: Gender, Class, and Genre in the Early Modern Closet Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001) and Marta Straznicky, "'Profane Stocial Paradoxes': 'The Tragedie of Mariam' and Sidneian Closet Drama," *English Literary Renaissance* 24 (1994): 104–34.

the popular image of the intimidated female author fearing to violate 'feminine modesty' and producing 'closet' literature."<sup>2</sup> In my analysis of *The Concealed Fancies*, I aim to extend Ezell's conclusions about the dramas produced by Jane and Elizabeth. However, rather than suggesting a distance from the closet, as Ezell implies, I argue instead that the sisters mobilize the ideas related to the closet, particularly its ambiguous associations with privacy, intimacy, and devotion, as means of interrogating notions of feminine behaviour, courtship, and women's engagement with cultures of performance. Such mobilizations further complicate the impression of the Cavendish sisters' productions as "private" or "marginal" literature and can instead highlight their subversive engagement with those cultural discourses.

As well as representing a dynamic engagement with the theatrical culture in which the authors' father was a participant, *The Concealed Fancies* exhibits, simultaneously, a distinctive self-consciousness about the domestic spaces in which it was written and in which it was most probably intended for performance.<sup>3</sup> The associations between the play and the domestic space are also reflective of the intellectual culture nurtured in the Cavendish household and stimulated by Newcastle himself. Ezell observes that "Newcastle provided an environment where literary achievement was encouraged equally for his sons and daughters" and adds that he does not seem to have regarded "certain subjects to be improper for women or the public display of their talents to be immodest."<sup>4</sup> Alison Findlay also adds that each of the family estates was intended by Newcastle to represent "a privileged haven for uncensored self-expression."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in his own occasional writings to the family, Newcastle praises Jane's skills as a "rare Inditer" who had "the Pen off a moste redye writer," and he encourages Elizabeth to exercise a considerable degree of liberty and to assert control over her creative self-expression by writing "but whatt you think. / Now your'e a girl, disemble when you

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2 Margaret J. M. Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter in Your Pen': The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish," in *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History and Performance, 1594–1998*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 1998), 246–58, 246.

3 The significance of these domestic spaces is considered in a variety of readings by Alison Findlay, which include: "'She Gave You the Civility of the House': Household Performance in 'The Concealed Fancies,'" in *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama*, ed. Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, 259–71; "'Upon the World's Stage': The Civil War and Interregnum" in Alison Findlay, Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, and Gweno Williams, *Women and Dramatic Production 1550–1700* (Essex: Pearson, 2000), 68–80; and *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 45–53. The significance of these domestic spaces is also considered in Lisa Hopkins, *The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), 186–93; and Lisa Hopkins and Barbara MacMahon, "'Come, What, a Siege?': Metarepresentation in Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley's 'The Concealed Fancies,'" *Early Modern Literary Studies* 16 (2013): 1–20, <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/journal/index.php/emls/article/view/83/82>.

4 Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter," 256.

5 Findlay, "She Gave You the Civility of the House," 259.

Linke.”<sup>6</sup> It is notable not only that Newcastle aims to delineate the family household as a creative space in which the sisters should have the ability to express themselves freely but also that they should take advantage of the liminal stage between adolescence and adulthood as a point at which they can write “but whatt you think” before they enter into marriages and practise the “dissembling” which it apparently requires. As well as encouraging intellectual development and creative self-expression, Newcastle’s advice to Elizabeth also implies the performative nature of courtship, marriage, and other forms of sociability; this is a premise that is consistently registered in one of the sisters’ collaborative works, *The Concealed Fancies*.

*The Concealed Fancies* is one of two dramatic works preserved in manuscript form alongside a variety of poems by Jane and Elizabeth. The play was probably written at some point between the latter half of 1644 and late 1645 at the height of the English Civil War.<sup>7</sup> The play appears at a moment of acute national and personal crisis for the Cavendish family. Following the defeat of the Royalist forces at Marston Moor in July 1644, Newcastle fled England and went into exile in continental Europe, eventually joining Henrietta Maria’s exiled court in mid-1645. During Newcastle’s absence, the Cavendish family’s two estates of Bolsover Castle and Welbeck Abbey were occupied by Parliamentary forces. At this time, Jane and Elizabeth were staying at the besieged Welbeck Abbey, where *The Concealed Fancies* was probably written. The writing of the play has frequently been likened to the various instances in which the female characters in *The Concealed Fancies* take advantage of the opportunities provided by the absence of the household patriarch, resulting from the Civil War, in order to explore various potential means of self-expression that are relatively untrammelled by patriarchal influence. As Alison Findlay argues, the play sees the sisters capitalizing upon an opportunity to “replay conservative royalist traditions and simultaneously to embrace the new possibilities for female autonomy offered by the Civil War context.”<sup>8</sup>

As well as reflecting the situations of the two sisters, the play also responds to the domestic environment from which it emerged and where it was probably intended to be performed. In the midst of the two plots, the play also contains a number of interludes involving exchanges between various servants, maids, kitchen staff, and members of the forces defending the estates, all of whom perform a function similar to a chorus by punctuating and commenting upon the developments in the principal plots. It has been suggested that these characters may well have been modelled upon real members of the serving staff in the Cavendish household, with the possibility that the depictions of these characters would be rich with in-jokes reflecting some of the idiosyncrasies of their real-life counterparts. The play may also have been written with the spaces of the households

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6 Quoted in Betty Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship in Early Modern England: The Case of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and Her “Loose Papers”* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), 27.

7 Comment on the dating of the play is offered in Findlay, “She Gave You the Civility of the House,” 262–63.

8 Findlay, “Upon the World’s Stage,” 80.

themselves in mind. Alison Findlay has highlighted the ways in which the sisters harness the opportunities provided by the family estates of Welbeck Abbey and, in particular, Bolsover Castle as potential performance spaces. Lisa Hopkins and Barbara MacMahon have also suggested that the sisters may have envisaged a “promenade style” of performance taking in much of the estates.<sup>9</sup>

The analysis that follows focuses on *The Concealed Fancies*, as it represents a fitting case study for closet drama, not only because it registers the ambiguities in the distinction between stage and “closet” drama but also because it harnesses the thematic properties contained in attempts to conflate the closet with the private sphere, with particular bearings upon attitudes towards courtship and sexuality. I argue that such ambiguities in this conflation are signalled by the sisters’ adoption of the literary discourse of the Cavendish family, particularly as it is applied by, and to, their father, William Cavendish, Marquess of Newcastle, to address certain aspects of his public persona (specifically the tensions between his martial identity and his reputation as a philanderer). Most suggestively, the play contains a number of scenes set inside the closet of the household patriarch, Monsieur Calsindow (commonly regarded as an analogue for Newcastle); rather than being a space of absolute and impenetrable privacy, the closet emerges as a decidedly permeable space which struggles to contain various open secrets about the master of the house.

In his book *Close Readers: Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England*, Alan Stewart begins a chapter on the closet by citing a distinction made by Bishop Joseph Hall between “stage-sins” and “closet-sins.”<sup>10</sup> Hall qualifies this distinction by cautioning that it is “a dangerous vanity to look outward at other mens sins with scorn, when we have more need to cast our eyes inward to see our own humiliation.”<sup>11</sup> Here, then, “stage-sins” are those committed in full view, whereas “closet-sins” are subtle or private transgressions. Within this formulation, the “stage” comes to represent the space in which things are made fully apparent to a penetrating public gaze, whereas the closet is a space of concealment; in Hall’s use of the metaphor it is particularly notable that “closet-sins” can represent those vices which are not immediately apparent even to the transgressor, thanks to their own self-deception. The closet here is a private, internalized, and intensely personal space in which we must “cast our eyes inward” in order to observe. Hall, then, sees the closet as a space of absolute privacy and concealment in contrast to the conspicuous openness of the stage, with the binarism between stage and closet equating to that between the public and the private sphere. It is very much in this spirit that the term has come to be applied so prominently in the generic classification of early modern drama. Such a distinction between closet and stage drama has a particularly significant bearing upon the labelling of women’s dramatic writing prior to the Restoration. As Marta Straznický notes, women’s dramatic writing has been “variously

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<sup>9</sup> Hopkins and MacMahon, “Come, What, a Siege?,” 1.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Stewart, *Close Readers: Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 161–87.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Hall, *The Contemplations upon the History of the New Testament* (London, 1661), 89.

identified as domestic, household or closet drama, all three terms signalling a perceived distinction between plays written for a paying, public spectatorship and plays written for a private audience of family and friends."<sup>12</sup> However, such labelling in commentary on early modern drama and the assumptions that underpin it have been highlighted as problematic in a number of ways.

What could be identified as the "first wave" of early modern closet drama is the group of neo-classical tragedies written during the 1590s and early 1600s, with practitioners including Mary Sidney, Samuel Daniel, Samuel Brandon, Fulke Greville, Sir William Alexander, and Elizabeth Cary. Stemming largely from aristocratic coteries and the related patronage networks, this group of plays share a number of common aesthetic features, including long rhetorical speeches, a lack of direct action, sententious commentary, and the inclusion of choruses, along with a range of stylistic features including apostrophe and stichomythia. Because of their privileging of rhetoric over action and sententiae over spectacle, these plays have often been characterized by their apparent hostility towards the public stage, a view promulgated particularly by T. S. Eliot. Eliot sees the emergence of this mode of dramatic writing as the product of an endeavour "to make head against the popular melodrama of the time" by promoting the tenets of neo-classical decorum which apparently were being debased on the popular stage; such ambitions, he concludes, "were bound to fail."<sup>13</sup> In outlining his view, Eliot somewhat problematically conflates the non-theatrical nature of these works with an *anti*-theatrical agenda. For these reasons, the term "closet drama" had come to denote dramas that were actively hostile towards, rather than simply bypassing, the commercial theatres.

Such a view has faced a robust challenge in commentary over the last few decades, along with a dismantling of the assumptions driving the kind of commentary promulgated most notably by Eliot.<sup>14</sup> Lukas Erne, for example, dismisses the perception of hostility between "closet" and theatrical dramatists, highlighting instead that the two currents of dramatic writing should be considered "complementary rather than antagonistic in the influence they exerted."<sup>15</sup> It is for similar reasons that Coburn Freer has objected to the term "closet drama" on the grounds that it gives a false impression of "willful obscurity and terminal stuffiness."<sup>16</sup> The equation between the public/private

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<sup>12</sup> Marta Straznicky, "Private Drama," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 247–59, 247.

<sup>13</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Elizabethan Dramatists* (London: Faber, 1963), 43.

<sup>14</sup> One of the earliest interventions in this area comes from Mary Ellen Lamb, who rejects Eliot's claims about both the anti-theatrical agenda behind these works and also the notion that they were the products of a coherent and mobilized group. See "The Myth of the Countess of Pembroke: The Dramatic Circle," *Yearbook of English Studies* 11 (1981): 194–202.

<sup>15</sup> Lukas Erne, *Beyond "The Spanish Tragedy": A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 212.

<sup>16</sup> Coburn Freer, "Mary Sidney: Countess of Pembroke," in *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 481–521, 484.

and stage/closet binarisms has also proved problematic in a way that has a specific bearing upon the dramas of the sisters, Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley. Although they were probably intended for domestic performance, it is not strictly accurate to regard these plays as “private” affairs. Straznicky challenges these kinds of public/private distinctions by highlighting that “these plays could and did engage important political debates” and “were released to the public in print or circulated beyond the author’s family in manuscript and in many instances were written for performance.”<sup>17</sup> While the “closet” dramas of the women writers in the Cavendish family differ considerably from these neo-classical tragedies, they are still often classed nominally as closet dramas because of their non-theatrical status. However, Ezell argues that *The Concealed Fancies* represents an important case study for avoiding the conflation of “public” with “publication”; she also argues that the contents of the manuscript volume in which this play appears “confirm in tone and subject that it was envisioned as having a public or social dimension” and goes on to point out that the admittedly “self-limiting readership” of this play “in no way indicates that this readership was uncritical or unsophisticated or that the authors lacked a ‘public’ voice and subject matter.”<sup>18</sup> Emily Smith has also presented evidence that the play was familiar to a relatively broad readership and that it enjoyed a considerable degree of local popularity.<sup>19</sup> The Cavendish sisters’ plays therefore represent another case in which the equation of closet drama with privacy is similarly problematic and for which the term needs qualification.

*The Concealed Fancies* can also figure significantly in these debates because it contains a number of pivotal scenes taking place within a closet, a feature of the aristocratic household that occupied a similarly ambiguous status between the public and the private. It was also a feature of which Bolsover Castle, in particular, contained numerous notable examples. As a space in aristocratic estates, the closet has often been seen as a symbol of privacy and withdrawal. Mark Girouard, for example, points out that in these houses, the closet “was essentially a private room; since servants were likely to be in constant attendance even in a chamber, it was perhaps the only room in which its occupant could be entirely on his own” with its principal functions being as “a room for private devotions, and a room for private study and business.”<sup>20</sup> However, more recent scholars, including Patricia Fumerton and Alan Stewart, have challenged the association of the closet with the absolute privacy suggested by Girouard and in Hall’s distinction between “stage-sins” and “closet-sins.” Fumerton, in particular, has argued that absolute privacy was ultimately unattainable in the early modern household, as visitors and servants had regular access to nominally private spaces, leading to an “overall sense ... of privacy exhibited in public, as if one were visiting a museum of the history of private

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<sup>17</sup> Straznicky, “Private Drama,” 247.

<sup>18</sup> Ezell, “To Be Your Daughter,” 257.

<sup>19</sup> Emily Smith, “The Local Popularity of ‘The Concealed Fancies,’” *Notes and Queries* 53 (2006): 189–93.

<sup>20</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 56.

life.”<sup>21</sup> Mary Thomas Crane, meanwhile, has similarly labelled the closet as a paradoxical space of “public privacy” and the site of “activities such as prayer, reading, self-examination, and account-keeping that practitioners wished others to know about, even while carrying them out in ostentatious privacy.”<sup>22</sup> The closet therefore represents a liminal space, associated nominally with retreat and withdrawal while at the same time representing a site of practices associated with domestic husbandry, religious devotion, and intellectual engagement that served specific ideological ends.

The development of the plot of *The Concealed Fancies* reflects the personal and the domestic situations of its authors. The main part of the play focuses on two sisters, Luceny and Tattiney, who, like the authors, are forced to adapt to life at the family estate while the family patriarch, Monsieur Calsindow, is absent due to the onset of the war. During this time, the sisters are being courted by their respective suitors, Courtley and Presumption, whose various suits and professions of love are mercilessly, though calculatedly, rejected or lampooned. As the war reaches their estate, the two sisters abandon it and take refuge as nuns before finally relenting to the suits proposed by Courtley and Presumption following an elaborate theatrical spectacle of divine favour. Luceny and Tattiney outline their motives in frustrating the efforts of Courtley and Presumption in a discussion following an encounter with their suitors. Although they intend to accept Courtley and Presumption’s suits and eventually marry them, the marriages will not be defined by their submission to their new husbands but will instead be unions that preserve the power relations of courtship. Luceny outlines her nightmare scenario as one in which she will be “condemned to look upon my nose whenever I was; and when I sit at meat, confined by his grave wink, to look upon the salt” (2.3.47–51);<sup>23</sup> in other words, to keep her eyes permanently downcast in recognition of her husband’s superiority. On the other hand, her “happiness, when I am in the condition of his wife, is to imagine him Courtley and I Mistress Luceny” (2.3.55–57), thus preserving the dynamic offered during courtship and avoiding having to relinquish her agency in the relationship. On similar grounds, Tattiney asks rhetorically if the “words saying in the church” (or utterance of the marriage vows) “shall make me mind him more than I do now” (2.3.110–12). Their elaborate courtship games are therefore predicated upon their ambitions to retain a degree of self-possession within their marriage without having to submit to a new patriarchal authority figure. This scene is reflective of that which Alison Findlay has highlighted as the “wider project” of the authors to rewrite “the household according to their ‘fancies’” and “to forge independent personalities for themselves in

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21 Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 72.

22 Mary Thomas Crane, “Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9 (2009): 4–22 at 5.

23 All quotations from *The Concealed Fancies* are taken from the edition that appears in *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 1996).

their writing and in their marriages, whilst remaining daughters of the house.”<sup>24</sup> This scene represents the conflation of two definitions of the word “fancy,” one of which relates to sexual preference while the other refers to performance and the exercising of creative or imaginative faculties. It is notable that these exchanges of confidences between the two sisters are brought to an abrupt end when Luceny voices her concerns about the potential eavesdropping of their suitors: “Come, let us go, for I do fear / If at the door they may us hear” (2.3.150–51). Such fancies, in both senses, must remain concealed from Courtley and Presumption, and Luceny’s fears about their plans being overheard highlight the untenable nature of domestic privacy, a premise that is emblemized most readily by the space of the closet.

This permeability and penetrability of apparently private domestic spaces is signalled in an episode from the play’s subplot, which involves three sisters, one of whom is named Cicilley while the other two are identified in the manuscript only by the speech prefixes Sh and Is, who are under virtual house arrest within Monsieur Calsindow’s besieged estate, Ballamo Castle. This situation, along with that of the main plot, is eventually resolved when the siege of Ballamo is finally broken by the forces led by Colonel Free, allowing Calsindow to return and authorize the various proposed nuptial unions.

The paradoxical nature of the closet as a space of “public privacy” is a premise that is interrogated in *The Concealed Fancies*. This is most notable in a scene from the third act that takes place at Ballamo Castle, one of the two estates in the play belonging to the absent patriarch, Monsieur Calsindow. At this point, the estate has been captured by Parliamentary troops, leaving the three cousins under virtual house arrest in the besieged estate. Bored and in search of some recreational distraction from their lessons, the cousins turn their attentions to Calsindow’s closet and rummage through a cabinet containing various cordials belonging to their host, which, they speculate, are “for restoration of health and making one young” (3.4.34–35). Dorothy Stephens notes that this plundering of the cordial box in Calsindow’s chamber represents a means of “compensating for the frustrating passivity of a siege that puts them at the mercy of the soldiers by in turn putting their absent host at their mercy in a relatively benign skirmish between the sexes.”<sup>25</sup> Among the cordials and treats they find in the box are “quintessence of mint,” “magisterium of pearl,” “accodeshdry,” fruits, cakes, “curious balsams,” and “all manner of spirits” (3.4.37–63). One of the most striking elements of this scene is Sh’s utterance, “I wish he [Calsindow] saw us in a prospective,” or telescope (3.4.46). According to Alison Findlay, the cousins’ plundering of foods “recalls Eve’s consumption of the fruit of knowledge which transforms her from an obedient daughter into an active consuming subject,” and Sh’s desire to be seen in a prospective by Calsindow “grants him a God-like viewpoint, overseeing their transgressions” but at the same time “registers a need for masters of the house to accommodate women’s desires and pleasures.”<sup>26</sup> The

<sup>24</sup> Findlay, “She Gave You the Civility of the House,” 270.

<sup>25</sup> Dorothy Stephens, *The Limits of Eroticism in Post-Petrarchan Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 146.

<sup>26</sup> Findlay, *Playing Spaces*, 48.

desire to be seen “in a prospective” lends a voyeuristic framework to the scene, in which the audience or readership are themselves implicated, which further underlines, in turn, the permeability of the closet.

Stephens also expresses frustration about what she regards as the scene’s extraneous listing of these commodities and to the abundance of “irritating little disagreements over who should have a whole pot of medicinally sweet plums.”<sup>27</sup> She goes on to speculate that such perceived shortcomings and signs of “authorial inexperience” may indicate that the scene was possibly written by the younger sister, Frances, mainly on the basis that “One could easily imagine a teenager sick of war rations might be unwilling to condense her daydream of marvelous food.”<sup>28</sup> However, the scene should be considered as consistent with the play’s persistent rhetoric of itemization. Such rhetoric is consistent with the prominence of inventories in other productions in the Cavendish family canon, as Hero Chalmers notes in her contribution to this collection. Chalmers highlights that inventories acted as important assertions of ownership arising from the threat to property during the Civil War, with Jane in particular exhibiting an awareness that “Cavendish family control over the larger properties represented by their houses and landed estates was becoming increasingly tenuous.”<sup>29</sup> In the second scene of *The Concealed Fancies*, the audience is treated to lengthy discussions of the dressing routines undertaken by the character of Lady Tranquillity, requiring “Five hours without interruption!” (1.2.39). This drawn-out process requires the mobilization of such elements as a quiff, a pinner, and a smock-band, along with such cosmetic cordials as pomatum, scarlet, and Mr. Trantam’s distilled water, which apparently contains “rarer cordials” to “plump up the face” (1.2.43–44). According to Findlay, the scenes featuring Lady Tranquillity represent “an excess of leisured self-indulgence, the nightmare of an invading housewife-to-be whose appetites threaten to consume all.” This is in contrast to the principal female characters, through whom the authors reflect their abilities to “rewrite themselves as leisured wits rather than domestic managers.”<sup>30</sup> The trope of itemization is also apparent in Act 4, scene 4, which opens with a song performed by Courtley, one of the principal male characters, who here characterizes his unrequited love by imagining himself as a shopkeeper, literally trading on his own grief. Among the items he imaginatively presents for sale to his reproachful mistress are such symbols as “Melancholy hoods,” “pendant tears of pearl,” and “fine sweetwater sighs, for to perfume / Your closet chamber, or so any room” (4.4.2–6). Here Courtley’s public commodification of his frustrated courtship of Luceny depends upon a shared assumption about what takes place in her apparently private “closet chamber.” In this case, the closet, rather than being a site of absolute privacy, becomes a contested space—rights of access may be limited, but the actual privacy of the space becomes compromised as assumptions about the contents and associations of

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27 Stephens, *Limits of Eroticism*, 146.

28 Stephens, *Limits of Eroticism*, 146.

29 Chalmers, XXX–XX.

30 Findlay, *Playing Spaces*, 49.

the closet are made public. Rather than a haven of privacy secluded from the rest of the aristocratic household, the closet is here marked once again by its permeability.

In each of these cases, the closet becomes not so much a private retreat but a conduit between the household and the public sphere. The tropes of itemization and commodification also highlight it, somewhat paradoxically, as a site of conspicuous consumption. The interplay between the public and the private is further underlined by the specific identification of a number of the items uncovered by the cousins. Among the items they plunder is a "box of my Lady Kent's cordials" (3.4.56–57), a reference to Elizabeth Grey, Countess of Kent, a relative of the Cavendishes whose *Choice Manual of Rare and Select Secrets in Physick and Chyrurgery* was published in 1653 (see the introduction to this volume). Such references to medicines also serve to highlight the closet as a mediated public space and point to a tradition in which such family remedies are mobilized in a voyeuristic framework that allows a degree of public access to apparently intimate domestic details. This tradition is promulgated by the recurring image of the open closet in the titles of household manuals, of which some notable examples include *The treasure of commodius conceits and hidden secrets, and may be called, the huswives closet, of heathfull provision* (1573), *Queen Elizabeth's closet of physical secrets* (1652), and *The Queen's Closet opened* (1655). Stephens points out that these manuals "often claim authority by making the public privy to the medicinal secrets of a great lady."<sup>31</sup> The scene in *The Concealed Fancies* employs a similar voyeuristic framework that allows mediated public access to nominally private family details.

Such medicinal vocabulary also figures prominently in the wider literary discourse of the Cavendish family and clearly has a set of resonances and associations within that specific discourse. This is highlighted by the fact that the scene also contains a reference to a cordial known as "Gilbert's water," which Lisa Hopkins and Barbara MacMahon associate with Gilbert Talbot, clearly marking it as a product of the Cavendish coterie.<sup>32</sup> In an occasional poem addressed to her sister, entitled "The Quinticens of Cordiall," Jane also likens her sister's positive influence upon her to "Balsum to my braine, / And Gilberts water,"<sup>33</sup> suggesting that it would clearly have been a remedy familiar to the family, as well as highlighting its broader and more figurative resonances within the Cavendish family discourse. By including this abundance of references to cordials and medicinal goods, Brackley and Cavendish are therefore drawing upon a clearly established frame of reference from the family's writing. This is also suggested by a collection of poems written by Newcastle during his exile, collected under the title *Phanseys* and most probably addressed to his fiancée-to-be, Margaret Lucas. I propose that *Phanseys* is one of the play's most notable intertexts because, in addition to the similarities in titles, the two texts also exhibit a range of common metaphors, allusions, and associations, one

<sup>31</sup> Stephens, *Limits of Eroticism*, 150–51.

<sup>32</sup> Hopkins and MacMahon, "Come, What, a Siege?" 6–7.

<sup>33</sup> Quotations are taken from "Presentation Volume of Jane Cavendish's Poetry: Yale University, Beinecke Library Osborn MS b. 233," in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Poetry*, ed. Jill Seal Millman and Gillian Wright (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 87–96.

of which is evidenced by the abundance of references to medicines and cordials in the *Phanseys*. In one poem, Newcastle describes his addressee as “love’s quintessence” and likens their love to a “balsum of Perue” before asserting that their “Love hath no Venum, Poyson, in’t att all, / But is all sweetnes and Balsamicall” (31.16–18).<sup>34</sup> The *Phanseys* also has Newcastle describing the effects of “a balsum kisse,” which he instructs to “Dropp, Dropp that sweeter shower, love’s softer rayne, / Into my Lips, ’twill cuer my wounded brayne.” He also imagines Margaret’s being possessed of all conceivable beautiful virtues “crusht into one forme,” thus likening it to the production of the kinds of home remedies contained in household manuals. In this sense, Cavendish’s references to cordials and medicines are eroticized; no more so than when he imagines “Our Norrishment turn’d to the quintessence / Of what makes man, and is his first Essence.” In the *Phanseys*, then, cordials become directly associated with erotic indulgence.

In his readings of the “epistemologies of the early modern closet,” Alan Stewart traces the development of a *topos* originating in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* that underlines domestic order predicated upon the restriction of women’s knowledge by the household patriarch, a *topos* promulgated in “a series of local twists to the notion of the closet.”<sup>35</sup> One of the principal variations of this *topos* considered in this reading is the dialogue *Della famiglia*, by Leon Battista Alberti, which contains a section in which, according to Stewart,

Alberti marks off a set of materials (his writings and papers), a set of relationships (with other men), and a room within his house (his study) as beyond the household, not falling within the possible conversation of man and wife. Any curiosity on the part of the wife about those particular materials, relationships, or that room will give rise to doubts about her chastity: a wife asking about transactions with men must be interested in men.<sup>36</sup>

Stewart also argues that this tradition of excluding women from the business of the closet delineated it not “as a place of individual withdrawal, but as a secret nonpublic transactive space between two men behind a locked door.”<sup>37</sup> *The Concealed Fancies*, however, contains a distinctive twist upon this *topos* of forbidden knowledge. After having perused the contents of their host’s box of cordials, the cousins turn their attention to a locked cabinet. Speculating upon the contents, Sh anticipates opening the cabinet to find their host’s “magazine of love. I dare swear you shall see locks of all manner of coloured hairs, and favouring ribbons, in as many colours as the rainbow” (3.4.73–76). The cousins make two attempts to access the cabinet; in their initial raid on the closet, they find that the cabinet is locked, and their second attempt, for which

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<sup>34</sup> William Cavendish, Marquess of Newcastle, *The Phanseys of William Cavendish, Marquis of Newcastle, addressed to Margaret Lucas and her Letters in Reply*, ed. Douglas Grant (London: Nonesuch, 1956). All quotations from the *Phanseys* are taken from this edition and line numbers will be cited parenthetically.

<sup>35</sup> Stewart, *Close Readers*, 163.

<sup>36</sup> Stewart, *Close Readers*, 163–64.

<sup>37</sup> Stewart, *Close Readers*, 171.

they call on the help of a locksmith, is interrupted by a visit from Lady Tranquillity. When Is asks what makes Sh think that these will be the contents of the cabinet, she replies, "'Tis my strong imagination, and if this fancy of mine should prove true, we shall have rarer recreation to look on them" (3.4.78–80). The actual contents of the cabinet are therefore never revealed, and the access granted to the audience is the "fancy" articulated by Sh. However, the speculations about the contents are consistent with the impressions of the authors' father, William Cavendish, in the occasional poems that accompany *The Concealed Fancies* in the manuscript volume. Ezell observes that in these poems, written primarily by Jane, Cavendish's status as a soldier, as well as his "prowess as a ladies' man," is underlined.<sup>38</sup> The cabinet's contents, at least as Sh fancies them, are particularly striking and have considerable bearing upon the construction of Monsieur Calsindow, particularly as an avatar for Cavendish himself. These two facets are yoked by Cavendish himself in the *Phanseys*, particularly in one poem where he portrays himself

Like an old Soldier in Queene Venus' warres,  
My wounds of love turn'd all to mangl'd Scarrs,  
Love's broaken speere and bowed sworde doe meet  
As offerings att your Sacred Alter's feete.

(7.1–4)

In the same poem, he goes on to declare that his impending marriage is prompting him to abandon his earlier philandering:

And all Love's Magazine, that's thought divine,  
I Sacrifice here att love's flaminge Shrine:  
As all sweet powders, Essence, sweet balls, Oyles,  
Rich Cloaths, Fethers, Ribbans, and all Love's Spoyles  
I here give Up; all Poetry renounce,  
Gainst phansi'd Ryme or Verse I here pronounce.

(7.7–12)

Cavendish here lists various elements associated with his previous romantic pursuits that are strikingly similar to what Sh imagines will be the contents of the cabinet, particularly the ribbons, which serve as material suggestions of his former dalliances in the same way as the locks of hair. The "magazine of love," or "Love's Magazine," plays on the associations with Cavendish as both lover and soldier and suggests, in Sh's mind, the potentially explosive contents of the cabinet. Rather than a site of homosocial relations, the closet here is imagined as the locus for the apparently prolific sexual conquests of the absent Monsieur Calsindow. In this sense, the scene further reveals the closet's liminal position in the relationship between the household and the private life of the host. Just as the household manuals purport to give a voyeuristic insight into the workings of an aristocratic household, so the closet is here imagined as a site that can offer confirmation of the impressions of Calsindow.

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<sup>38</sup> Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter," 255.

While in these scenes the closet is viewed as a repository of illicit private details and open secrets about the head of the household, the resonances of the closet become more ambiguous through the appropriation of images associated with the closets at Bolsover. This is particularly the case with the so-called Heaven and Elysium closets that lead off from the main bedchamber on the second floor of the Little Castle. As Lucy Worsley points out, both closets are “richly decorated” and “have ceilings and friezes painted with a riotous profusion of classical and Christian figures, and elaborate marble corner fireplaces.”<sup>39</sup> Lisa Hopkins has argued that this division of these closets represents a choice between “the fleshly delights of the pagan Elysium” and “the spiritual blessings of the Christian Heaven.”<sup>40</sup> Figures reminiscent of the décor of these closets are mobilized at pivotal moments in the play. At one point during the play’s main plot, the sisters Luceny and Tattiney respond in despair to the capture of their household by enemy troops. So intense is this despair that Luceny even contemplates suicide when she considers a course of action that would “shortly put unquiet life quite out” (3.2.8). Immediately after the sisters have delivered their expressions of grief, an angel appears encouraging them to remain steadfast in the face of their calamities:

Stay, be not angry, suffer with your friends,  
In like fortune yourself to them lend,  
For I do hope the happy gain will be,  
And that ere long you joyfully shall see.  
So I’m assured you shall not make these ends  
For happy shall you be in your blessed friends.  
(3.2.15–20)

Alison Findlay characterizes the intervention of the angel as “a prelude to the equally miraculous reappearance of Lord Calsindow at the end of the play.”<sup>41</sup> The appearance of the angel also gestures towards the decor of the Heaven closet, thereby harnessing the imagery of the closet as part of a providential scheme that advances towards the play’s comedic conclusion.

A similar harnessing of the resonances of the Bolsover closets occurs towards the conclusion of the play’s main courtship plot. Following the loss of their home, the two sisters turn instead to devotional practices as nuns. The situation is resolved only when their suitors disguise themselves as pagan gods, thereby appropriating the imagery associated with the Elysium closet. Alison Findlay reads this development as a self-consciously artificial one, suggesting that an “overambitious attempt to stage a divine spectacle within the household is perhaps just what Jane and Elizabeth were dramatising: parodically destabilising patriarchal authority whilst seeming to celebrate it.”<sup>42</sup> Rather than a successful reappropriation

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<sup>39</sup> Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a Seventeenth-Century Playboy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 114.

<sup>40</sup> Hopkins, *Female Hero*, 186.

<sup>41</sup> Alison Findlay, “She Gave You the Civility of the House,” 262.

<sup>42</sup> Alison Findlay, “She Gave You the Civility of the House,” 265.

of the imagery of the closet by the suitors in order to serve the maintenance of patriarchal order; the associations of the closet are once again reconfigured as a means of undermining the apparent reinstatement of patriarchal values at the end of the play.

The play's conclusion is predicated upon the return of Monsieur Calsindow in order to authorize the prospective marriages that will provide comedic closure. However, it is at this point in the play that Calsindow's sexual exploits are brought unequivocally to light. In spite of Lady Tranquillity's apparent status as a caricatured version of Margaret Lucas, she fails in her attempts to court Calsindow, who, it is gradually revealed, has in fact been dallying with her chambermaid, the aptly named Toy. This characterization is in line with a number of hints contained within Cavendish's *Phansyes*; at one point, for example, the speaker condemns "wild Phansy" for provoking young lovers to lay their "great fury with a Kitchinge wenshe" (36.16). Upon hearing that Lady Tranquillity has married the Falstaffian soldier Corpolant, Calsindow declares to her that "I will take / Your woman for my Mistress mate" (5.6.53–54). Before he can act on these words, however, the angel that had earlier dissuaded Luceny from contemplating suicide reappears to caution Calsindow that he should "take a wife / That's truly virtuous and fair, / Handsome and innocent as the chaste air" (5.6.56–58). This leads Calsindow, prompted by the angel's words, to send Toy away while insisting that "My conscience bids me not to look of you" (5.4.66). In a play in which the prospective brides are engaging various strategies to correct the lapses and presumptions of their male suitors, it is significant that the aristocratic patriarch, usually the agent of comedic closure, is himself in need of similar guidance and correction. In this way, the play adds a clear element of ambiguity to the integrity of the patriarchal authority figure. The fact that such guidance is provided by the same angel that cautioned Luceny and Tattiney against excessive despair shows how the idea of the closet has been reconfigured in the service of the play's progress towards heteronormative stability.

The closet is much more prominent as a thematic than a generic device in *The Concealed Fancies*. While the conclusion seems to require the abandonment of practices associated with the closet—whether they are the sexual exploits of Monsieur Calsindow or the devotional withdrawal of Luceny and Tattiney—the play also engages in a subversive reconfiguration of the resonances of the closet. By emphasizing such points, I underline the problematic nature of the closet as a frame for formal and generic categorization. In *The Concealed Fancies*, the associations of the closet, both broadly and locally, are reappropriated by the Cavendish sisters and redeployed as a means of undermining the patriarchal authority that appears to have been reinstated. The means by which these female dramatists appear to pay lip service to conventional and accepted modes of feminine self-expression can therefore be redeployed as vehicles for critical and even parodic comment on such conventions. Such a conclusion highlights the clear scope to extend such analyses beyond this play and to further consider the idea of "closetedness," with its apparently self-conscious modesty and marginality, as belying its more provocative properties.

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## Chapter 15

# MARGARET CAVENDISH AND WAR

Catie Gill

**FOCUSING ON MARGARET** Cavendish's *Natures Pictures* (1656), this chapter explores how that work serves as a reminder of warfare by acting, as Marina Leslie has noted, as "an emblem of disordered times."<sup>1</sup> The "emblem" of war most recognized in Cavendish's body of work is the heroic fighter; in particular, the soldier, being a character that crosses generic boundaries, has been the subject of detailed critical assessment. Because some of the most impressive protagonists in the field are female characters who take inspiration from the most positive images that literature and society could offer, Cavendish is believed to celebrate the female warrior. Such an explanation of the way that battlefield ethics operate has never wholly coincided with the critical response to the text that I will be examining, which is also the story from *Natures Pictures* that Leslie identifies as emblemizing disorder: "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," despite its superficial resemblance to the *femme forte* tradition, has always prompted more dystopian, Hobbesian focus on the brutality of war and reflections on the abuse of women. The real-life historical circumstances that war inflicted, as I will show, left Cavendish probing the negative impact of war and the unrest of the times.

Military history, at least that which was too overtly fascinated with the tactics of battle, did not interest Cavendish, but she was greatly concerned with the ethics of war and also its effects. While "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity" cannot be said to fully establish the heroism of war, her biography, *The Life of the Thrice Noble ... William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle* (1667), comes much closer to identifying the best in human nature as represented by the figure of the loyal soldier fighting for a noble cause. However, as Deborah Boyle has noted in her analysis of seventeenth-century ethics and politics, "humans vary widely in their natural moral qualities" and "Cavendish evidently does not think that the naturally good and the naturally bad are evenly distributed; the naturally good are in the minority."<sup>2</sup> Looking at the representation of the field of battle, in the light of Boyle's arguments, Cavendish's attitudes to war will emerge within the constructs of the honour code, from within both a story and a biography.

The *Life* is to be examined alongside *Natures Pictures* for the reason that it establishes the principles that Newcastle considers worth fighting for, and so provides an insight

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<sup>1</sup> Marina Leslie, "Evading Rape and Embracing Empire in Margaret Cavendish's 'Assaulted and Pursued Chastity,'" in *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Kelly-Coyne and Marina Leslie (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 179–97, 179.

<sup>2</sup> Deborah Boyle, "Fame, Virtue, and Government: Margaret Cavendish on Ethics and Politics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67 (April 2006): 251–89 at 260.

into what motivates the man of honour. Contrasting the literary with the non-literary, as critics interested in the depictions of battlefield scenarios in drama have already done, means exposing the permeability of boundaries. Both Vimala C. Pasupathi and Alexandra Bennett, for example, observe areas of overlap between Cavendish's drama and the *Life*. If, as Pasupathi and Bennett suggest, Cavendish seeks to deploy literary motifs effectively in her biography, what does this say about attempts to influence the reader's perceptions of Newcastle's role in war?<sup>3</sup> Most blatantly, for example, Cavendish avers "in all actions and undertakings where my Lord was in person himself, he was always victorious."<sup>4</sup> We might apply the insights already mapped in relation to drama to "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity."

Cavendish's reputation as an author is, in part, built on her establishment of herself as a war writer who could comment perceptively on contemporary experiences as well as on the ideas that shaped history. It is part of her value as a writer that when reflecting on a topic she both self-consciously assesses the limits of genre and qualifies the effects that language or "sense-impressions" have on the imagination.<sup>5</sup> It will thus serve the analysis of this chapter to turn, in the final section, to a discussion of Cavendish's reflections on aesthetics and to the gendering of war. As a result of these intersecting features of Cavendish's work, her place as a war writer can be established in relation to output produced about or in direct response to conflict.

### "The Sweetness of Peace ... the Misery of War"<sup>6</sup>

Cavendish wrote *Natures Pictures* before she turned to composing the *Life* of Newcastle, and by this point in the Cavendishes' history, all of the experiences that were significant to the Marquess's military reputation already lay behind him. But it is useful to begin with some impressions of war from the *Life*, rather than the chronologically earlier book, for the details it relates about Newcastle's war record. The portrait in Book

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3 Vimala C. Pasupathi, "Old Playwrights, Old Soldiers, New Martial Subjects: The Cavendishes and the Drama of Soldierly," in *Cavendish and Shakespeare, Interconnections*, ed. Katherine Romack and James Fitzmaurice (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 121–46; Alexandra G. Bennett, "Fantastic Realism: Margaret Cavendish and the Possibilities of Drama," in *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writings of Margaret Cavendish*, ed. Line Cottegnies and Nancy Weitz (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 179–93 (esp. 183–84). I follow Pasupathi's method of reading literary against non-literary text, but my findings do not corroborate her argument that, in Cavendish's literature, Newcastle represents incompetence in war.

4 Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of William Cavendish*, ed. C. H. Firth (London, 1886; reprint, Kessinger, n.d.), 79.

5 "Sense impressions" is Sarasohn's term. Lisa Sarasohn, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 39.

6 Margaret Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, ed. James Fitzmaurice (Plymouth: Broadview, 2004), Letter 185, 251. "Those that never had the Sweetness of Peace, or have not known the Misery of War, cannot be truly and rightly Sensible of either." This statement was made in response to the riot in Antwerp.

1 of the biography deals in depth with the Marquess's experiences during the first two years of civil war (1642–1644), when he was Commander of the Northern Armies and ultimately answerable to King Charles I. The significance of the *Life* is that it offers retrospective, and ameliorative, discussion of Newcastle's career. As a character study, it has its origins in the great lives by Plutarch and the tragedies of Shakespeare, which adds a profound dimension to this account of the loyal soldier fighting gloriously for the cause.<sup>7</sup>

Cavendish attributes a statement to Newcastle on the dawn of battle that seems to be representative of how he explained his war-time allegiances: “[he thinks] it his duty rather to hazard all, than to neglect the commands of his Sovereign.”<sup>8</sup> Book 1's depiction of battle, indeed, reveals how Cavendish reacts to the outcomes of war as it affected her husband: Newcastle did “hazard all” but lost. She is constrained in her history by her husband's command to avoid writing “to the prejudice or disgrace” of others, which means there is little detail on Newcastle's Royalist allies, and by her self-prescribed role: “neither doth it belong to me now to write ... anything else but what concerns the history of my noble Lord.”<sup>9</sup> These parameters establish the purpose of the biography, which is to stand in solidarity with the marquess (now duke).

The *Life* has the advantage of being able to view events in perspective, and by Cavendish's own confession it was written from the relative ease of “a retired country life.”<sup>10</sup> *Natures Pictures*, meanwhile, engages with the post-Civil War society described in one of the stories in the volume as providing “no Joy, nor Comfort,” which is to say, it was composed just after the Civil War, when England was a commonwealth.<sup>11</sup> In response, Cavendish comments with the urgency of a writer expressing her commitment to the continuing cause of monarchy. The events of this part of Cavendish's life are well known, yet they provide significant insights into the circumstances that she found herself in when writing *Natures Pictures*, and they provide crucial context for identifying her imperatives.

*Natures Pictures* was produced after years of exile, first in France (1644–1647), then in Antwerp, by 1648, via Rotterdam. Cavendish was not wholly cut off from her native home, as she returned in 1651, spending one and a half years mostly in London, and she was accompanied by her brother-in-law Charles Cavendish in order that both of them might petition for their land rights.<sup>12</sup> In her autobiography, Cavendish recalls that Newcastle was labelled the “greatest traitor to the State” at that time, showing how heavily suspicion could fall on Royalists, particularly if they had been prominent

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<sup>7</sup> See Pasupathi, “Old Playwrights.”

<sup>8</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 19.

<sup>9</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 106.

<sup>10</sup> Cavendish, “To His Grace, The Duke of Newcastle,” in *Life*, xlix.

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Cavendish, “A Description of Civil Wars,” in *Natures Pictures* (London, 1656), 88.

<sup>12</sup> Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1998), 22, 48; Emma L. E. Rees, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 35, 36; Cavendish, *Life*, 97, 107.

supporters of the king during the war and probably remained so.<sup>13</sup> While Cavendish's base when she was writing *Natures Pictures* was Antwerp, allusions in the text suggest that her thoughts might have been on England. She wrote explicitly in one story about her own experiences before the Whitehall committees, and in another story she characterized the Parliamentarians' exercise of power as "tyranny."<sup>14</sup> Hence what she witnessed in the twin locations of England and Antwerp is key to unlocking the ways in which *Natures Pictures* seeks to infuse the stories and poems with contemporary details. Cavendish was instinctively political in the way she approached war, for reasons that can be traced directly to her circumstances.

Being in England in the early 1650s during the newly established republic would have revealed to her that the Royalist cause had not been extinguished. The early 1650s saw the efforts, ultimately thwarted, of Prince Charles to reclaim the throne in his father's name in the battles of Dunbar and Worcester, the failure putting an end to civil war until the unrest at the end of the decade and, subsequently, the Restoration. Royalist writing of the Commonwealth period, whether from England or (as is true of many of Cavendish's texts) composed in exile, was extremely likely to have a political dimension as a result of how dramatically the country was changing.<sup>15</sup> Cavendish would have been aware of these events even without the perspective gained from being in England, as Newcastle both offered himself in the service of the prince in the event of a military rebellion and (when refused) was in correspondence with key Royalist figures with oversight of the plot.<sup>16</sup>

As well as the influence of the sojourn in England, Cavendish must have been affected by experiences in Europe. Though her time abroad was not without its compensations, life in exile was not wholly peaceful. As David Norbrook has observed, during the 1640s in France, where Cavendish was first exiled, "the leaders of the Fronde were ready to make common cause with civic leaders against absolutism, and in taking refuge in Antwerp from the disorders that were besetting Paris, the Cavendishes were reenacting the exile from a turbulent public sphere that had already taken them from England."<sup>17</sup> That Cavendish found Antwerp relatively comfortable is evident from her correspondence, published as *Sociable Letters* (1664) and written during her residence. This city's

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<sup>13</sup> Cavendish, "A True Relation of my Birth," in *Life*, 275–318, 298.

<sup>14</sup> *Natures Pictures* directly links back to Cavendish's time in England in a story about "Happ'land" that discusses her appearance before the sequestration committee (93). The autobiographical significance is highlighted by Rees, *Margaret Cavendish*, 77. For the account of Parliamentary "tyranny," see "A Description of the Civil Wars," *Natures Pictures*, 88.

<sup>15</sup> Jerome De Groot, *Royalist Identities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004); Robert Wilcher, *The Writing of Royalism, 1628–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Royalist, Writer, and Romantic* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2002), 129–34; Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, Letter 33, 83–84; Letter 50, 100; Letter 196, 263. Cavendish, *Life*, 115, 121, 123.

<sup>17</sup> David Norbrook, "Women, the Republic of Letters, and the Public Sphere in the Mid-Seventeenth Century," *Criticism* 46 (Spring 2004): 223–20 at 231.

literary and intellectual circles, its art and architecture, may have given her much comfort.<sup>18</sup> However, the *Sociable Letters* also respond to localized conflict in terms of its unsettling effect on the émigrés, Margaret especially, and show that the city was not entirely peaceful. In letters 172 and 185, in particular, the focus on “Mutiny” and the “Diverse, and Different Reports, some that the Army is coming to Destroy the City, and others, that the Souldiers have liberty to Abuse all Women, others, that all the City shall be put to the sword” results in Cavendish acknowledging “Fear is an Absolute Conqueror.”<sup>19</sup> It is not thought that the events were any more than a localized riot, but Cavendish’s account suggests that painful memories of conflict made the situation seem worse than in truth it was. The epigraph to this section, “the sweetness of peace ... the misery of war,” indeed is taken from a letter reflecting on the riot.

War, its memory, and its ongoing effects therefore exerted a measurable influence on Cavendish during the period directly before she began to write *Natures Pictures*. The fractious context she found herself in, particularly in France but also occasionally in Antwerp, would have reminded her of unrest in her native England. Politically, since she did not accept the authority of the Commonwealth and as her strongest alliances were with the group of Royalists who believed in the reinstatement of the monarchy, she would have experienced the ebbs and flows of contemporary factionalism. Furthermore, it seems that emotionally the memories of civil war probably troubled her. Her writing from the years directly preceding the publication of *Natures Pictures* gives further indication that the war and its effects exert a hold over her imagination. *Poems, and Fancies* (1653) features verse about a “ruined” country that has been devastated by war and, additionally, figures the horror of regicide using the standard poetic figure for kingship—the hunted stag—hence showing her desire to engage with the recent past.<sup>20</sup> *The Worlds Olio* (1655) devotes significant space to assessing political matters, especially competing models of government, and the counterpoint, rebellion and war: poor leadership and popular unrest’s negative effect is assessed.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, sections of *Natures Pictures* “The She Anchoret” would ruminate on constitutional questions not dissimilarly.<sup>22</sup>

Some years before Cavendish writes “Assaulted and Pursued Chastity,” therefore, war has become a common, almost perennial, theme, and as a writer she seemingly tasks herself with excavating both the personal and the political changes it brings about. Hero Chalmers points out that Cavendish’s *Natures Pictures* (1656) addresses “scattered Royalist communities,” which suggests that one aim of Cavendish in exile was to forge

**18** See James Fitzmaurice’s essay in this volume; Ann Hughes and Julie Sanders, “Gender, Geography and Exile: Royalists and the Low Countries in the 1650s,” in *Royalists and Royalism During the English Civil Wars*, ed. Jason McElligott and David L. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 128–48.

**19** Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, Letter 172, 237; Letter 185, 251.

**20** Margaret Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies* (London, 1653), “The Ruine of the Island” and “The Hunting of the Stag,” 118–20, 113–16.

**21** Margaret Cavendish, *The Worlds Olio* (London, 1655). See in particular the third book.

**22** Cavendish, “The She Anchoret,” *Natures Pictures*, 287–357 (esp. 326–30).

connections with political allies, some of whom would be in England and some on the continent, like her.<sup>23</sup> How *Natures Pictures* produces a sense of an ongoing dialogue with her readership around the war and its effects becomes clear through "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity." Her writing deploys some of the same methods that can be found in *Poems, and Fancies* and *The Worlds Olio*, such as indirect or allusive political comment, as in royalist tropes that relate to the regicide but which are extraneous to this chapter's analysis of the text's military themes. Moreover, there are occasions when the characters sit in council to debate issues and strategies that echo the discussions of state matters in her previous texts.<sup>24</sup> "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity" goes further than the previous war writing because it is the first extended prose narrative written by Cavendish that follows a soldier.

In the story, the chief protagonist, Travellia, who is cross-dressed and therefore consistently taken for a man, forges an alliance with the Queen of Amity, whom she champions after learning of the threat that her country faces from the king of neighbouring Amour.<sup>25</sup> Driven by a desire to marry the queen that is so strong he presses for advantage even after she has refused his suit, the king behaves like the ubiquitous villain from romance. Inspired by Travellia, the queen leads the attack, because her lieutenant knows that with the sovereign on the field, the soldiers will fight valiantly: "in each heart such loyal love may grow ... honour [will] close your days."<sup>26</sup> Travellia is an especially good rhetorician, and her speeches tend to be effective in achieving the desired result. The presence of royal characters in this story speaks to the evocation of real-world themes, such as the idea that Royalists fight more bravely when their monarch is willing to take to the field with them.

The lessons of the war do not stop there, however, as Cavendish also wants to depict the sovereign-favourite relationship in ways that chime with other concerns, not least, how to gain the support of the rank and file. Certainly, as Lois Potter accurately observes, the depiction of power in Cavendish shows a clearer insight than her contemporaries' into the relationship between heroism and fantasy.<sup>27</sup> The next phase of Amity's military strategy demonstrates Potter's point because, as the battle progresses, more and more idealized versions of sovereignty are articulated. This occurs as the soldiers "with one voice ... make vows that they would never forsake their Queen," after a rousing speech

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**23** Hero Chalmers, *Royalist Women Writers 1650–1689* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 130. See also Chalmers' essay in this volume and her discussion of the *femme forte* tradition in *Royalist Women*.

**24** Margaret Cavendish, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," in *The Blazing World and Other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilley (London: Penguin, 1992), 45–118, 71, 91. Travellia escapes execution. Last-minute reprieve from a death sentence inverts King Charles I's experience and functions as a royalist trope.

**25** The heroine is referred to using three names: Miseria, Affectionata, and Travellia. I use the name most frequently applied.

**26** Cavendish, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," 92.

**27** Lois Potter, "The Plays and Playwrights: 1642–60," in *The Revels History of Drama in English*, ed. Phillip Edwards, Gerald Eades Bentley, Kathleen MacLuskie, and Lois Potter (London: Methuen, 1981), 4:261–77, 279.

that inspires them to take back their captured sovereign. Travellia expresses their choice: "[either] redeem your country's loss, or sacrifice your lives in services thereunto," and they rise to the challenge.<sup>28</sup> The way Travellia provokes the soldiers' loyalty validates royalism through expressing antipathy towards the capturing of a monarch, here fictional but evocatively potent within the historical frame.

While this discourse of mutuality between sovereign and subject, army leader and troops, agrees with the romance's tone and purpose, it to a degree also chimes with real-world events. Cavendish's *Life* depicts the same basic set of relations that the political theorist Thomas Hobbes was defining in the period—after all, though "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity" is generically a romance, it is also an allegory of contemporary relations. The story seems to conceive of a social contract that secures the obedience of the subject to the sovereign through recognition of the benefits that they are believed to gain from the arrangement, or "contract."<sup>29</sup> This language of affective relations has already been identified in "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," which conceives of the love between sovereign and subject as mutually beneficial and which assumes that it is in the interest of the subject to give up their life for the queen.

A very similar tone is struck in the *Life*. Newcastle commits himself to the command of the king on the eve of the battle of Marston Moor with this vow: "he was ready and willing, for his part, to obey his Highness in all things." Despite the order to engage the enemy having been delivered by Charles I's second in command, Prince Rupert, Newcastle says that the letter with the king's instruction should be obeyed "[as] if his Majesty was there in person."<sup>30</sup> Newcastle, in other words, acknowledges his subordination to the king but conceives of the feelings he bears to him as love—for his person and his office. This is the origin of the social contract according to Hobbes. Meanwhile, after a speech from Newcastle on the battlefield, his troops, the White Coats, offered obedience to his command, "being as glad of my Lord's proffer, as my Lord was of their readiness, [and] went on with the greatest courage."<sup>31</sup> This, too, expresses the soldiers' understanding of their place in the social hierarchy and their contract with the monarch, via his ensign, the marquess. It is also clear from the echoes between "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity" and this battle-section of the *Life* that Cavendish was thinking about Hobbesian obligation across a number of texts.

The eventual success of Travellia's army by the end of "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity" reinforces the affective relations that have been so important to the story. Not only is the queen saved but Travellia (no longer cross-dressed) receives her troops' approval: "Heaven bless you, of whatever sex soever you be."<sup>32</sup> "Assaulted and Pursued

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<sup>28</sup> Cavendish, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," 95.

<sup>29</sup> Victoria Kahn, "'The Duty to Love': Passion and Obligation in Early Modern Political Theory," *Representations* 68 (Autumn 1999): 84–107; Victoria Kahn, "Margaret Cavendish and the Romance of Contract," *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (Summer 1997): 526–66.

<sup>30</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 76.

<sup>31</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 78.

<sup>32</sup> Cavendish, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," 114.

Chastity" shows, through the exceptional leadership of the *femme forte*, Travellia, and the exemplary relationship between sovereign and subject, the fabulous victory that can be accomplished when the conditions are right. By contrast, as is well known, Newcastle's day on the field ended disastrously because the men in Prince Rupert's army were routed, and Newcastle's own troops "were killed in rank and file."<sup>33</sup> Historians account Marston Moor one of the most significant Royalist losses in the whole course of the war, and the death of Newcastle's White Coats was, as Cavendish said, akin to annihilation.<sup>34</sup> By way of a side note, the only troops that made any headway against the Parliamentarians that day were those under the command of Cavendish's brother, Charles Lucas (and his co-commander, Lord Goring).

Seen not in terms of the success or failure of military conduct but as a measure of the soldiers' and leader's worth, some additional conclusions can be drawn from Cavendish's depiction of battle. Both "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity" and the *Life* depict Cavendish's engagement with the values that a soldier upholds on the battlefield. The protagonists' actions during battle, the reasons why they fight, and the way that they interact with other soldiers are significant markers of their worth. External factors (such as the justness of the cause to which the individual commits themselves, or even their success) may be less valid as a way of assessing a person's honour than other more oblique markers. As Deborah Boyle has observed, internal factors, such as motivation, may be the period's most reliable guide as to individual merit within the honour code. An "almost Kantian" paradox pertains, because the individual who strives to embody the qualities associated with honour has missed the point; honour comes from nature and cannot be counterfeited.<sup>35</sup> Seeking reward, or consciously behaving in ways to attract plaudits, compromises the individual's worth within the honour code, while acting whether or not it brings any benefit to yourself may be the definition of true heroism.

Even Cavendish's Travellia is of questionable merit, judged through this lens: she motivates her troops by declaring, "Noble friends, brave soldiers ... we fight for fame."<sup>36</sup> Alternatively, when Cavendish in her autobiography comments on how her father, Thomas Lucas, "did not esteem titles, unless they were gained by heroic actions," she is gesturing towards the same sort of definition of true honour that Boyle has delineated as an ideal but essentially impracticable standard of merit.<sup>37</sup> It is, therefore, apparent that underpinning Cavendish's construction of events at Marston Moor is an idealized version of honour, one that finds value in the apparently selfless sacrifice exhibited

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<sup>33</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 79.

<sup>34</sup> Malcolm Wanklyn, *Decisive Battles of the English Civil Wars: Myth and Reality* (Barnsley: Penn & Sword, 2006), 107–34, 134.

<sup>35</sup> Boyle, "Fame, Virtue, and Government," 268. Boyle indicates that Cavendish revises concepts of honour to include rather than exclude people who actively seek to be remembered, turning fame into a correlative of virtue.

<sup>36</sup> Cavendish, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," 97.

<sup>37</sup> Cavendish, "A True Relation," in *Life*, 275.

that day in July 1644. She is bound by standards of veracity in the construction of the account.<sup>38</sup> And yet she clearly exercises narrative power in terms of the text's sensibilities and tone.

Considerable overlaps between *Natures Pictures'* literary engagement with war and the biography exist. However, the position of the *Life* in relation to its subject matter is particularly interesting, as the duke's war record and reputation are at stake. As Cavendish remarks in her discussion of the genre of biography, the text is not the full account of events. She has already, in the preface, foregrounded the instruction to omit from the discussion material to the "prejudice or disgrace" of others.<sup>39</sup> She elaborates, beginning by showing her contentment at working within these parameters, yet ending in a completely different spirit: "I will neither endeavour to make show of eloquence, making speeches that were never spoken ... much less will I write to amuse my readers, in a mystical or allegorical style." Then, at the heart of the matter as she sees it, occurs a piece of doublespeak. She concedes that she will not write of the "disloyal actions" of the "treacherous cowardice, envy and malice of some persons" because she has sworn not to.<sup>40</sup> In effect, she cannot help but let the reader know that she would say more, if only she could.

Exposing the degree to which Cavendish breaks her promise would be possible through an excavation of inferences in the *Life*, but it is not the work of this chapter.<sup>41</sup> Instead, if we accept that the frustration Cavendish expresses in relation to biography is to a degree genuine, then analysis must centre on her more favoured mode—romance. Cavendish does not just depict the charismatic *femme forte* figure defending the innocent sovereign of Amity; she, as Nancy Weitz has noted, constructs an "ideological rift ... slipping ambiguously in and out of moral categories."<sup>42</sup> Cavendish's romance hence interrogates the other sovereign–subject relations in order to reveal, far more negatively, the exploitative bond between the king and his soldier, and the indolence of rulers. In masculinity's excess, moreover, possessiveness and sexual violence are the order of the day. In other words, Cavendish is able to explore "envy and malice" more fully in romance than in biography.

Readers who enjoy romance narratives are mocked in the *Sociable Letters* for the high regard in which they hold "feign'd Heroes," and Cavendish further criticizes

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**38** See the statement from Newcastle's secretary, John Rolleston, who advised Cavendish. Cavendish, *Life*, lxx–lxxviii.

**39** Cavendish, "The Preface," in *Life*, lvii.

**40** Cavendish, "The Preface," in *Life*, lvii.

**41** This would expose how Cavendish allows errors to be attributed to Rupert, Charles I, or the Royalists. For how Newcastle repairs his affairs, see Elspeth Graham, "'An After-Game of Reputation': Systems of Representation, William Cavendish and the Battle of Marston Moor," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Peter Edwards and Elspeth Graham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 83–110.

**42** Nancy Weitz, "Romantic Fiction, Moral Anxiety and Social Contract in Cavendish's 'Assaulted and Pursued Chastity,'" in *Authorial Conquests*, ed. Cottagnies and Weitz, 145–60, 150.

romance in *Natures Pictures* for being over-blown, “ridiculous to reason.”<sup>43</sup> Romance’s frivolous plotlines make it easy to overlook the sophistication that some writers bring to the genre.<sup>44</sup> Romance in fact offers a powerful corrective to human failing through the analysis of vice, as Paul Salzman has considered, by demonstrating how it deploys a polemical mode that both works within moral parameters and complicates them.<sup>45</sup> *Natures Pictures*, therefore, utilizes the more complex framework that Salzman has identified by bringing rival armies into conflict, which allows for discussion of the contrasting ideals they stand for. Cavendish’s *Life* seemed aggrieved at the instruction that it should point no blame at the real-life enemies of Newcastle. Her romance, however, has greater success in exposing corruption and human frailty. I will have further cause to link the *Life* to *Natures Pictures*, having first analyzed romance’s polemicism.

### “Dividing of the Spoils”<sup>46</sup>

In “Assaulted and Pursued Chastity,” war is generated by passion; in particular, it arises from the King of Amour’s desire for the Queen of Amity. In a different context within *Natures Pictures*, Cavendish conveys fighting chivalrously as “a game of Honour.”<sup>47</sup> This essentially medieval framework, courtly love, is not invalidated in Cavendish’s work, but it is certainly reprised, such as through the queering that results from having a woman (cross-dressed) defending the queen when she has been taken as the prize of battle.<sup>48</sup> Still further complexity is added through *Natures Pictures*’ rape plot. In a sick society in which fear replaces love, sex and coercion are intimately interlinked. As Amelia Zurcher explains, readers are expected to respond to this genre’s ethical conundrums with “the complexity and rigour not consistent with romance’s reputation as a wishful or escapist genre.”<sup>49</sup> Cavendish goes some way towards confirming this expectation of the form’s sophistication, as in the preface to *Natures Pictures* she explains its purpose: “[to] admonish ... to direct ... to the best of mankind.”<sup>50</sup> While

<sup>43</sup> Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, Letter 21, 68; Cavendish, “Assaulted and Pursued Chastity,” 54.

<sup>44</sup> Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the Early Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>45</sup> Paul Salzman, *English Prose Fiction 1558–1700: A Critical History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

<sup>46</sup> Cavendish, “Assaulted and Pursued Chastity,” 90.

<sup>47</sup> Cavendish, “A Description of Natural Affection,” in *Natures Pictures*, 60–63, 62.

<sup>48</sup> In “A Description of Natural Affection,” the chivalric code is more subtly contradicted. The prince wins the woman, but her marriage is mainly pragmatic.

<sup>49</sup> Amelia Zurcher, “The Political Ideologies of Revolutionary Prose Romance,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 551–66.

<sup>50</sup> Cavendish, “Preface,” *Natures Picture* (London, 1671), sig. B3r. In addition to the comments on romance discussed here, see also Margaret Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*, ed. Anne Shaver (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 265; Cavendish, “The Three Wooers,” in *Natures Pictures* (1656), 117–20, 118.

Cavendish does write a number of simple and morally rather traditional stories, her aim is typically higher, such as "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity"'s charting of a complex link between masculinity and excess.

In *The Blazing World* (1666), a character whose military victory looks like the "day of judgement" shows war as the ultimate coercion through the annihilation of enemies.<sup>51</sup> The *Blazing World* scenario confirms that Cavendish's imperative is to look at war's cost, but the brief focus on one decision made by the leader, the Empress, shows how morally compromised leadership becomes during conflict. Cavendish's Empress acts to suppress a rebellion, to "reduce by force" the insurgents, which she does at considerable cost through use of superior weaponry, a "flaming fire" targeting their homes.<sup>52</sup> As Oddvar Holmesland summarizes, the Empress's problems with rebellion "[comment] on the intolerable situation in England ... after the civil war" and, hence, dramatize whether authoritarian solutions are ever valid.<sup>53</sup> The event is likely to divide opinion, which is precisely the aim of this text.

The differences and similarities between Cavendish's Empress and the King of Amour are immediately evident when returning to explore the romance, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity." This text examines arbitrary government through charting the impact on the state of a ruler who shirks his responsibilities. The King of Amour is uninterested in state affairs to a degree the Empress would not condone, and he is so love-sick that he neglects all other duties. It is probable that Cavendish was alert to romance's anti-monarchical potential, leading her to exercise a degree of caution when discussing royalty, such as her balancing out the picture to include the idealized queen alongside this degenerate king.<sup>54</sup> However, she is prepared to utilize the romance fascination with taking the indolent ruler to task through anti-court motifs.<sup>55</sup> She identifies the King of Amour's weakness as more than his lack of duty and sensual excess, therefore, by turning the focus to his taste in favourites. She, for instance, notes that the prince "insinuated" himself into the king's favour, and "[having] got such affections in his court living ... he became very powerful," which is a statement implying that the monarch's judgement is faulty, and which establishes very clearly an anti-court satirical vein to this section of the text.<sup>56</sup>

The king is not only represented as whimsical when in love and uninterested in the realities of government: he is also incapable of inspiring the heroism or devotion which

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51 Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, in *Political Writings*, ed. Susan James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–109, 94.

52 Cavendish, *Blazing World*, in *Political Writings*, 99.

53 Oddvar Holmesland, "Margaret Cavendish's 'The Blazing World': Natural Art and the Body Politic," *Studies in Philology* 96 (Autumn 1999): 457–79 at 473.

54 Rees points out that a writer deploying anti-court satire might want to disassociate herself from the romance genre to deflect attention from content that might cause offence to royalty. See Rees, *Margaret Cavendish*, 112.

55 See, for example, Basilius in Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (London: Penguin, 1977).

56 Cavendish, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," 89.

is crucial in war. As a figure designed to represent the indolent ruler character-type, the King of Amour seems to wield arbitrary power. The authority he commands exceeds his inherent qualities as a ruler; he is obeyed because of his position, not his judgement. An example of how he treats his subjects badly is the contract that the prince is asked to make once he is a soldier for Amour. The king explains: "Your Faith I'll trust and Courages will try / Then let us see how bravely you dare die."<sup>57</sup> The king's "try ... how ... you ... die" is surely intended to provoke an uneasy reaction; this is not a leader in whom the subject can place their trust. The social contract is usually built at least on the pretence that there is love between the subject and their monarch, but here the king rules by fear, which is a symptom of arbitrary government's political arrangements.<sup>58</sup>

The Empress of the Blazing World and the King of Amour are depicted through their actions, their words, but also evidently through the perspective the narrators offer. It is possible for readers to see that the leaders of Amour and the Blazing World are flawed individuals who abuse their power, because the narrator's judgements seep into the text.<sup>59</sup> Another feature of the narrative sophistication is the near resemblance of some of the characters to well-known people. "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity" might be paralleling the following: Travellia, the *femme forte*, parallels Queen Henrietta Maria; the King of Amour, an indolent ruler, has some qualities of the young Prince Charles; the rapacious prince equates to the ruthless and daring Prince Rupert. There is an element of risk to this allusive technique that Annabel Patterson identifies in *Censorship and Interpretation*. Patterson traces why some writers do not, or cannot, push their critique of the powerful home to censorship, and she explains that writers using the allegorical technique may be "unheard or misrepresented."<sup>60</sup> Cavendish seems to have the confidence to walk the fine line of allegorical romance, which shows how politicized the genre was in her hands.

The story's turning from critiquing leaders to admonishing followers, in this case the armies of Amour, gives further evidence of Cavendish exposing wartime's corruption of values. She also begins to reveal a theme: that "women and children suffer the most when the battles are over."<sup>61</sup> The soldiers of Amour have internalized their leaders' ruthlessness such that the chivalric code is almost absent from Amour's ranks, as they give themselves over to unrestrained behaviour and indulge their desire to exert power over the vanquished. In the course of battle between Amity and Amour, the prince, who is in command, is aggrieved that the soldiers fall to "dividing of the spoils" when they should still be fighting.<sup>62</sup> Readers of Cavendish's text would know how widely practised looting

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<sup>57</sup> Cavendish, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," 88.

<sup>58</sup> See Rachel Willie's essay on Machiavellianism in this volume.

<sup>59</sup> For the narrative sophistication of Cavendish, see Brandie R. Siegfried in this volume.

<sup>60</sup> Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 48.

<sup>61</sup> Fitzmaurice, "Introduction," in *Sociable Letters*, 17.

<sup>62</sup> Cavendish, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," 90.

was during the Civil War, so this detail is a pertinent critique.<sup>63</sup> This focus on plunder is not the only sort of problem Cavendish describes. The prince sees the opportunity to press his advantage when the Queen of Amity is defenceless. Seizing the queen, whom he sees immediately as “a gift” for the king, the prince takes special care with his prize: “had the spoils been less, he had sent them with some messengers; but being so rich, he durst trust none to guard it but himself.”<sup>64</sup>

With intricate precision, Cavendish has deployed the word “spoils” twice of the same battle. She would know “spoils” to be a correlative for abuse; by linking the larceny of the soldiers to the capture of the queen, she is troubling the idea that woman is a possession by using her culture’s association of rape with theft.<sup>65</sup> Cavendish is asking for attention to be paid to war when the conquest is not of territory but of a woman. Such attitudes are therefore corrosive to the aspects of honour that Cavendish’s text most endorses, though Travellia, and therefore “Assaulted and Pursued Chastity,” insists on linking rape to war.

Indeed, it is not just “Assaulted and Pursued Chastity” that exposes war’s damaging effect on women, their vulnerability to abuse and their treatment as objects to be exchanged. The disintegration of knightly values is neither the first nor the only consequence of war, but it is paramount to Cavendish’s concerns as a writer who cannot endure to see women’s value reckoned in terms of their sexual availability. Lady Orphant, in the play *Loves Adventures*, has an idealistic view of soldiers, and when she follows her beau to the wars, she believes he will treat her well: “he will neither use me uncivilly, nor cruelly.” Lady Orphant is proved right and her chastity is threatened neither by the soldiers nor by her beloved, but her foster father’s warning that women are likely to be used “too civilly” speaks of some dangerous consequences during wartime.<sup>66</sup> More explicitly, in Cavendish’s play *Bell in Campo*, the men want to send the women far away from battle, knowing the enemy will take them as “slaves, using or abusing them” if they are defeated.<sup>67</sup> The sexual abuse of women is one of the markers of wartime barbarity that forms a basis of male protectionism and shame. Women’s vulnerability in war results both from the assumption that they are property and from the power that soldiers hold in determining their fate.

The captured woman is not restricted to Cavendish’s literary writing, however. The *Life of Newcastle* also narrates a war-time story of a woman in peril and subject to the will of soldiers once taken in battle. In 1643, Royalist troops captured Lady Anne Fairfax,

<sup>63</sup> Cavendish’s family home was twice looted and bodies in the family tomb disinterred. Cavendish, *True Relation*, in *Life*, 290–92.

<sup>64</sup> Cavendish, “Assaulted and Pursued Chastity,” 93.

<sup>65</sup> OED “rape,” n., 3.1. Amy Greenstadt, *Rape and the Rise of the Author: Gendering Invention in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009). At the end of the story, moreover, Cavendish destabilizes the harmony of the ending by referring to soldiers returning to the marriage ceremony with “all the spoils they got in war” (117).

<sup>66</sup> Cavendish, *Loves Adventures*, 4.18, in *The Convent of Pleasure*, 51.

<sup>67</sup> Cavendish, *Bell in Campo*, 2.7, in *The Convent of Pleasure*, 117.

wife to the Parliamentary commander Thomas Fairfax. Of the encounter, Cavendish observes:

The enemy that were in the town, it seems, were so discomfited ... they escaped ... some of my Lord's soldiers ... brought [Lady Anne] to his quarters, where she was treated and attended with all civility and respect, and within a few days sent to York in my Lord's own coach.<sup>68</sup>

Cavendish therefore places the emphasis on how Lady Fairfax was treated well, indeed chivalrously, by the marquess.

However, more might be at stake in this encounter than first appears. Cavendish invokes rape as a persistent threat to women in her literary work, and, having established women's vulnerability in war early in her writing career, she makes it, indeed, a repeated concern.<sup>69</sup> The cavalier stereotype (or "rake"), rather than the rapist, is probably what is in Cavendish's mind as she strives to protect her image of Newcastle as an idealized soldier who embodies the best of the chivalric honour code. Cavendish therefore writes as though to head off any insinuations, fully alert to the implication that might be drawn from the detail that the enemy's wife was delivered to Newcastle's "quarters," so she ensures the reader knows that the prisoner was treated with "civility and respect."

The records go further, as can be traced in Parliamentary documents dealing with the seizure of Lady Fairfax.<sup>70</sup> It would seem implicit that the frequency with which Cavendish depicts soldiers abusing women taken in war in her literary corpus explains Cavendish's sensitivity to the Fairfax incident when writing the *Life*, but this case occurred when she was still in England, so there may be other possibilities. Fairfax's return, in fact, occurred after Parliament issued the extraordinary resolution that "order shall be taken for seizing and making Prisoners of all the Ladies, Wives, any Lords, or others that are in actual War against the Parliament" if Lady Fairfax was not promptly returned. Indeed, Parliament went so far as to say that it had compiled a list of women who would be taken in revenge.<sup>71</sup> Cavendish may or may not have known of these events: Newcastle was not in her orbit in 1643, so would she remember this detail in the late 1660s when writing the *Life*? Surely, the incident is memorable enough, but we cannot be sure as to whether the historical record filters into the text. What is clear is the anxiety that presents itself

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<sup>68</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 49.

<sup>69</sup> "Margaret Cavendish must be recognised as the first woman dramatist to represent—and condemn—sexual violence against women." Marion Wynne-Davies, "'Fornication in my Owne Defence': Rape, Theft and Assault Discourses in Margaret Cavendish's 'The Sociable Companions,'" in *Expanding the Canon of Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Paul Salzman (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 34–48, 46.

<sup>70</sup> Andrew Hopper, *"Black Tom": Sir Thomas Fairfax and the English Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 192–93.

<sup>71</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, July 27, 1643, 3:183. "The Committee for Examinations do take a care to present a List of all the Ladies whose Husbands have been, or are, in actual War against the Parliament." Cited in part in Hopper, *"Black Tom"*, 193.

in the scene describing Lady Fairfax's visit to the marquess's "quarters." Since Cavendish is prone to believing that the worst soldiers' behaviour culminates in sexual abuse of women, it seems very likely that she knows the subtext of which she writes.

Cavendish's two major works, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity" and the *Life* of Newcastle, provide insight into why war writing is so prevalent in her corpus. In the *Life*'s explanation of the writer's purpose, Cavendish signals her intention to tell what she knows: "most of the persons that held any considerable place in the armies, was well known to me," and thus it "[is not] inconsistent with my being a woman, to write of wars."<sup>72</sup> To this evidence of her perception of the importance of personal insight in shaping the *Life* some additional reasons can be inferred. Since romance is associatively gendered (though admittedly more often written for women than by them), she would not find the writing of romance "inconsistent" as a mode through which to express her concern about war, any more than biography. Indeed, romance conceivably has the greatest potential for considering the coexistence of great heroism and great violence; certainly, she takes the exploration of the latter further in her romance than in the *Life*. Today, we would call the account in "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity" an exposé of toxic masculinity and sexual abuse, and we would see that not as "inconsistent" but as all too commonly a feature of women's writing about war. "In the Ruines of War we suffer Equally with Men," she asserts in the *Sociable Letters*.<sup>73</sup>

Cavendish conceives of the complexity of the times in which she lives; when writing *Natures Pictures*, she is instinctively political in the way she interprets the romance tropes, and this has a bearing on how she produces a conclusion. This is evident through Travellia at the end of "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," because she is still ready for the call to war, even after peace has been declared: "I have laid aside my masculine spirit [i.e., her soldier's role] ... but I shall take it up again, if it be to serve the Queen."<sup>74</sup> Travellia therefore continues to be royalism's political mascot, as she embodies Queen Henrietta Maria's *femme forte* spirit; if she were to return to the field, it would be for the glory of her country. Travellia is not just a resonant political symbol, however. Cavendish also needs her to be ready to defend herself should that need arise in marriage, hence the importance of her remaining a soldier even at the conclusion. Travellia has always been the most perceptive character in "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," and if her instinct suggests the probability of war again breaking out, it is human nature—witness her husband's conflation of love with war—that makes it so. The images in allegorical romance, as ever, have both a political and a personal corollary, exposing human failings and flawed political systems simultaneously.

The impact of war on Cavendish seems less simple to define. Confiding how she "never saw an Army together, nor any Incounters," Cavendish explains how, despite this seeming lack of exposure to battle, she sees in her mind's eye "Armies ... rais'd in my braine, fought in my fancy, and registerd in my closet." For Cavendish, as has been seen

<sup>72</sup> Cavendish, "The Preface," in *Life*, lvi.

<sup>73</sup> Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, Letter 88, 140.

<sup>74</sup> Cavendish, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," 115.

when she reacts fearfully to disturbances in Antwerp, such a memory triggers alarming “sense impressions”: “I am as fearefull as a Hare: for I shall start at the noyse of a Potgun, and shut my eyes at the sight of a bloody Sword.”<sup>75</sup> Given how evocatively and emotively conflict is represented in her work, it is highly appropriate that she confesses how many emotions are condensed into the imaginative work of writing war.

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<sup>75</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, 167; *The Natural Philosophy*, 39.

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**MATERIAL AND POLITICAL NATURE IN MARGARET  
CAVENDISH'S *THE UNNATURAL TRAGEDY*  
AND *THE BLAZING WORLD***

Andrew Duxfield

ASIDE FROM THE unprecedented nature of her achievements as a female writer, the most striking characteristic of the work of Margaret Cavendish is its diversity. It is difficult to think of another writer in English—of any period, male or female—whose work matches her range, which encompasses philosophy, science, political commentary, biography, poetry, drama, and utopian fiction. The extraordinary extent and variety of Cavendish's work in itself makes the task of encapsulating the nature of her writing and thought a significant challenge, but this challenge is further exacerbated by both the extensive revision to which she subjected her ideas and her notable capacity for self-contradiction. These factors, combined with the fact that serious study of her work has only developed momentum over the last two decades, mean that while fascinating and revealing work has been done in the various strands of Cavendish study—on her life; on her scientific writing; on her philosophy; on her literary output—there is much work yet to be done on establishing the ways in which these strands inform one another.

With a view to both addressing and illustrating this problem, this chapter will take as its focus the treatment of a single concept—that of nature—as it manifests itself in different areas of Cavendish's work. Recent critical attention, most notably in Brandie R. Siegfried and Lisa T. Sarasohn's essay collection *God and Nature in the Thought of Margaret Cavendish*, has been paid to Cavendish's treatment of the subject of nature, but this has focused predominantly upon her philosophical and scientific writings.<sup>1</sup> Building on my recent work carried out in the editing of Cavendish's play *The Unnatural Tragedy*, I aim in particular to consider the ways in which Cavendish's philosophical and scientific notions of nature both find expression and undergo interrogation in her literary work, with a specific focus here on *The Unnatural Tragedy* and the utopian proto-novel *The Blazing World*. I do not pretend to be able to offer a full account of Cavendish's understanding of nature in this chapter; rather my hope is that the discussion will provide

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<sup>1</sup> Brandie R. Siegfried and Lisa T. Sarasohn, ed., *God and Nature in the Thought of Margaret Cavendish* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). See Anna Battigelli's *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998) for an example of scholarship that has considered the relationship between the various forms of Cavendish's writing. Other recent works that have considered Cavendish's philosophy and natural philosophy are Lisa T. Sarasohn, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) and David Cunning, *Cavendish* (London: Routledge, 2016).

some sense of the complexity of her deployment of this idea and of the extent of the cross-pollination that took place between her literary and non-literary work, insofar as such an easy distinction can be made.

## Cavendish and Nature

For all of the formal variety of Cavendish's work, nature is a concern that repeatedly surfaces within it, regardless of the form in which she is writing. Despite its consistent presence across her oeuvre, however, it is nonetheless itself a profoundly multifaceted concept in her work. Without suggesting that they offer an exhaustive sense of Cavendish's thinking on nature, I will consider in this essay two senses in which the term is deployed in her work. The first of these is of nature as the quasi-divine force that, in Cavendish's materialist brand of natural philosophy, orders and dictates the structure and the events of the world. While Nature is created by God, she (as nature is typically personified) appears to occupy in Cavendish's worldview much of the cosmic and spiritual space usually taken up by God in the natural philosophical systems of the period. The second idea on which the essay will focus is the notion of the natural condition of mankind, as notoriously delineated by one of the more illustrious acquaintances of the Cavendish family, Thomas Hobbes. The natural condition, for Hobbes, is that state in which humanity would exist in the absence of absolutist state power; it is a state characterized by self-interest, conflict, and unrestrained violence. As we will see, both *The Unnatural Tragedy* and *The Blazing World* explore in fascinating ways the political and philosophical implications of this idea.

## Material Nature

Katie Whitaker notes in her biography of Cavendish that "her philosophical poems provided perhaps the first atomic theory of nature to be published in England, and reeked of the atheism for which the ancient Greek atomists, Democritus and Epicurus, were notorious."<sup>2</sup> Cavendish was not an atheist, but it is easy to imagine how her natural-philosophical model may have given rise to such a suspicion. In that model, God and Nature are distinct from one another, as Cavendish makes clear in a discussion of Epicurus's ideas in *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*:

As for God, he being immovable, and beyond all natural motion, cannot actually move Matter; neither is it Religious, to say, God is the soul of Nature; for God is no part of Nature, as the soul is of the body; And immaterial spirits, being supernatural, cannot have natural attributes or actions, such as is corporeal, natural motion.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge: The Life of Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003), 160.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "Observations Upon the Opinions of Some Ancient Philosophers," in *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (London, 1666), Wing / N857, sig. li1v.

As, for Cavendish, God's immateriality renders him incapable of acting directly upon matter, direct responsibility for instigating and controlling terrestrial phenomena and events is delegated to Nature, which, by virtue of its materiality, is able to carry out these responsibilities:

Neither is God naturally moving, for he has no local or natural motion, nor doth he trouble himself with making any thing, but by his All-powerfull Decree and Command he produces all things; and Nature, which is his Eternal servant, obeys his Command.<sup>4</sup>

Crucially, though, this decree and command only seem to apply on the most macro of levels; Nature is commanded to order the universe but is not told *how* to do it, "for her actions are free and easy, and not forced or constrained."<sup>5</sup> As David Cunning puts it, "we would be wisest to say that God transcends the world of natural bodies but that He provided these with the resources to attend to their own affairs."<sup>6</sup>

While Cavendish's system does not deny the existence of God, then, its division of cosmic labour nonetheless makes possible—or even necessary—the description of all phenomena without recourse to divine intervention (although I will say more about the necessity of God for Cavendish's model shortly); in her discussions of the material world (and, as we will see, Cavendish classes as material many things that we might instinctively not) it is nature that takes on responsibilities usually reserved for the divine. An example of this can be seen in Cavendish's first published work, *Poems, and Fancies*, which begins with a poetic account of the creation of the universe being administered by a council called and chaired by Nature:

When Nature first this World she did create,  
She cal'd a Counsell how the same might make;  
Motion was first, who had a subtle wit,  
And then came Life, and Forme, and Matter fit.<sup>7</sup>

A few lines later, Nature makes clear to her councillors the hierarchical arrangement: "it is my nature things to make, / To give out worke, and you directions take."<sup>8</sup>

This personification of nature is of course a poetic device, and it may well be that when Cavendish refers to Nature in this way she is referring to the collective matter that makes up the universe rather than indicating a belief in a pseudo-divine figure dictating the order of things. But personification is quite a conceptually apt device, since Cavendish certainly does attribute to nature something akin to human consciousness and intelligence. In *Ground of Natural Philosophy*, Cavendish argues that

If Nature were not Self-knowing, Self-living, and also Perceptive, she would run into Confusion: for, there could be neither Order, nor Method, in Ignorant motion; neither

<sup>4</sup> Cavendish, "Observations," sig. li v.

<sup>5</sup> Cavendish, "Observations," sig. li v.

<sup>6</sup> Cuning, *Cavendish*, 96.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies* (London, 1653), Wing / N869, sig. B1r.

<sup>8</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, sig. Br.

would there be distinct kinds or sorts of Creatures, nor such exact and methodical Varieties as there are: for, it is impossible to make orderly and methodical Distinctions, or distinct Orders, by Chances: Wherefore, Nature being so exact (as she is) must needs be Self-knowing and Perceptive.<sup>9</sup>

Since the apparent order of the world can only be explained by the existence of a governing intellect, and since the immaterial God cannot have a direct role in governing the motions of the material world, that governing intellect must belong to nature itself. And nature's jurisdiction over the material world entails a further reach than one might expect. Since Cavendish considers anything which has the capacity for motion to be material, materiality ends up being rather a capacious category in her thinking. As Lisa T. Sarasohn puts it:

Unlike other material philosophers who attempted to find the constituents of material being in order to explain or construct the world of objects they observed, Cavendish assumed that minute parts of matter constituted both the real and the imaginary, the seen and the unseen, and every kind of so-called spirit. Her vision of the material world was broader than that of her contemporaries. She saw and imagined matter in everything, and in her thought, even the imaginary became concrete.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the material is a category that, for Cavendish, can incorporate the mind, thoughts, ideas, and the soul.<sup>11</sup> Nature, then, is an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent force in Cavendish's thinking: it is granted by God authority over physical phenomena, over what we might call the spiritual, and over the imagination.

## Political Nature

That divinely granted authority is crucial in Cavendish's philosophy; it is what stops her universe from being what in many respects it seems to be: a world that can function perfectly well without God. For all of nature's self-aware governance of matter, Cavendish makes clear her feeling that a world governed only by nature and without the authority of God would be a world of anarchy:

[I]f Nature had no dependence on God, she would not be a servant, but God her self. Wherefore *Epicurus* his Atomes, having no dependence upon a divine power, must of

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<sup>9</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Ground of Natural Philosophy* (London, 1668), Wing / N851, sig. B4r. For examples of other similar statements by Cavendish, and a discussion of her concept of intelligent matter, see Cunning, *Cavendish*, 55–97.

<sup>10</sup> Sarasohn, *Natural Philosophy*, 55.

<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting here that Cavendish's philosophy allowed for immaterial and material versions of the soul, the relationship between which may be read as being analogous to that between God and Nature. Cunning notes: "We might have immaterial souls, Cavendish wants to allow, and orthodoxy dictates that we believe that we have immaterial souls, but these are not the entities that steer and direct our bodies or that form imagistic ideas of the entities that surround us. Those entities are material bodies." *Cavendish*, 65.

necessity be Gods; nay, every Atome must be a peculiar God, each being a single body, subsisting by itself; but they being senseless and irrational, would prove but weak Gods: Besides his Chance is but an uncertain God, and his *Vacuum* an empty God; and if all natural effects were grounded upon such principles, Nature would rather be a confused Chaos, then an orderly and harmonical Universe.<sup>12</sup>

An interesting point to note here is that Cavendish's argument for the necessity of God works more effectively for Epicurus's universe, in which the atoms of which the world is comprised are "senseless and irrational," than it does for her own, in which, as we have seen, the matter that makes up the material world is "Self-knowing, Self-living, and also Perceptive."<sup>13</sup> But clearly Cavendish seems to believe that there is a degree of harmony and order in the universe that cannot be explained by the workings of nature alone and that can only have been brought about by the absolute rule of a divine godhead. Without that rule, the world would be a chaos of competing claims to authority.

This argument bears more than a passing resemblance to one applied to more terrestrial questions of hierarchy by an acquaintance of the Cavendish family, Thomas Hobbes. In his most famous work, *Leviathan*, Hobbes makes the argument that in order for a society to function with any degree of order, its members must engage in a kind of social contract, collectively consenting to absolute rule by a single figure. Without this contract, humanity is driven by what Hobbes describes as its "natural condition" to a state of interminable and socially debilitating conflict. The problem arises, for Hobbes, from nature's having created men as broadly equal: "from this equality of ability," he suggests, "ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our Ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which neverthesse they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies."<sup>14</sup> The absence of clear hierarchy inevitably leads to conflict: "during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man."<sup>15</sup> The result is a world in which there is insufficient security for resources to be spent on ennobling practices and in which life is culturally and intellectually impoverished and, in those famous words, "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short."<sup>16</sup> The solution to this natural condition of war is for every individual to surrender his natural right to protect and pursue his own interests in whatever way he wishes, and instead to consent to a transference of rights to a single monarch, who must be trusted to act in the collective interest. In this way, the chaos of competing individual interests is resolved, as "a multitude of men, are made *One Person*, when

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<sup>12</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "Observations Upon the Opinions of Some Ancient Philosophers," in *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, sig. li2r.

<sup>13</sup> Cavendish, *Ground of Natural Philosophy*, sig. B4r.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. P. MacPherson (London: Penguin, 1968; reprinted 1985), 184.

<sup>15</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 185.

<sup>16</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 186.

they are by one man, or one Person, Represented.”<sup>17</sup> The result of this compact is the Commonwealth, which Hobbes defines as

One Person, of whose Acts a great Multitude, by mutuall Covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the Author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their Peace and Common Defence.<sup>18</sup>

Like Cavendish’s nature, which is too multifarious to attain a state of order without divine instruction, Hobbes’s humanity is doomed to incessant conflict without the investment of absolute power in a single figure.

Cavendish often downplayed the extent of her learning, and in her *Physical and Philosophical Opinions* she stated of Hobbes’s work that she “had never read more then a little book called *De Cive*.”<sup>19</sup> Recent work by Sarasohn and Liam Semler has demonstrated, however, that Cavendish was more familiar with Hobbes’s work at this stage than she suggests.<sup>20</sup> In any case, had she read only *De Cive*, she would have encountered the argument outlined above, since Hobbes included a version of it in that text. While Cavendish clearly believes that there are limits to nature’s capacity to order itself without some divine instruction, Sarasohn suggests that Cavendish’s understanding of the natural condition of mankind is more optimistic than Hobbes’s. For Hobbes,

order in the state could occur only when colliding individuals gave their collective power to an absolute ruler. Cavendish argued instead that just as every part of material nature—rational, sensitive, and inanimate—cohered together and functioned as a whole, so every member of a well-ordered polity naturally unified to create a strong state, with each constituent functioning to perform its own duties. Hobbes emphasized the artificial beginnings of the state; Cavendish argued that humans, since they were composed of rational and sensitive matter, always lived in a political state.<sup>21</sup>

Questions about the philosophical justification, or even necessity, of monarchical rule, of course had a particular urgency in the 1650s, and no doubt will have carried a great

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<sup>17</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 220.

<sup>18</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 228.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (London, 1655), Wing / N863, B3v.

<sup>20</sup> See Lisa T. Sarasohn, “Leviathan and the Lady: Cavendish’s Critique of Hobbes in ‘The Philosophical Letters,’” in *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writings of Margaret Cavendish*, ed. Line Cottegnies and Nancy Weitz (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 40–58, and L. E. Semler, “Margaret Cavendish’s Early Engagement with Descartes and Hobbes: Philosophical Revisitation and Poetic Selection,” *Intellectual History Review* 22 (September 2012): 327–53. Cavendish had certainly read at least some of *Leviathan* by 1664, when she included a discussion of some of its natural philosophical ideas in her *Philosophical Letters*, although here she states of its political arguments: “I did not read that part of your Author” (sig. N2r). *Philosophical Letters* (London, 1664), Wing / N866, sig. Fv–N2v. For further discussion of Hobbes and Cavendish, see the chapters by Lisa Walters and Lisa Sarasohn in this volume.

<sup>21</sup> Sarasohn, *Natural Philosophy*, 102–3.

deal of personal significance for Cavendish, whose families by both birth and marriage experienced extreme turmoil during the English Civil War and who remained loyal to the Royalist cause throughout the conflict and the Interregnum. As we will see, whatever Cavendish's personal feelings on the politics of nature, she voices and explores the Hobbesian position in fascinating ways in her literary writing.

### Nature in *The Unnatural Tragedy* and *The Blazing World*

*The Unnatural Tragedy*, published in the 1662 collection *Playes* but probably written while Cavendish was still living in Antwerp in the late 1650s, is a play which, not least through its title, encourages the consideration of what it might mean to be "natural" or "unnatural."<sup>22</sup> The word "natural," and cognates of it, appear sixty times in the play. In a most obvious sense, one might take the "unnatural tragedy" of the title to refer to the most prominent of the play's three plots. In this plot, which takes clear inspiration from John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633), a young libertine named Frere returns to France after having studied and travelled in Italy, and he develops an erotic fixation upon his sister, Soeur. Despite Frere's best efforts at convincing her of the moral rectitude of incestuous sex, Soeur persistently rejects his advances and remains faithful to her fiancé, Monsieur Mari. In this respect Soeur differs from her predecessor in Ford's play, Annabella, who initially returns her brother's affection and becomes pregnant by him, but the outcome nonetheless remains similarly apocalyptic to that of *'Tis Pity*: after numerous rejections, Frere rapes and murders Soeur before committing suicide, and Monsieur Pere drops dead instantaneously upon the discovery of the bodies of his two children.

It might seem very clear, on the basis of this account, where this play about incest, rape, and soricide gets its name. Yet despite preparing the ground for readers to spring to the obvious conclusion that Frere's behaviour is unnatural, the play sets about complicating our assumptions in interesting ways. First, despite the persistent references to nature, the natural, and the unnatural in the play, Frere is never at any point accused by any other character of behaving unnaturally. Instead, this is an accusation that he levels at his sister when she refuses his advances:

Sisters should not be so unnatural as to be weary of a brother's company or angry at their grief, but rather strive to ease the sorrow of their hearts than load on more with their unkindness.

(4.1.3–5)<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Alfred Harbage suggests the possible range of dates of composition as 1653–1662 but opts for 1658 as his proposed date. See his *Annals of English Drama, 975–1700: An Analytical Record of All Plays* (3rd ed.), revised by Simon Schoenbaum and Sylvia Stoler Wagonheim (London: Routledge, 1989), 154–56.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Unnatural Tragedy*, ed. Andrew Duxfield, *EMLS Hosted Resources* (2016). <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/iemls/renplays/The%20Unnatural%20Tragedy.pdf>, accessed June 3, 2018. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

A couple of scenes later, during a more frank advance upon his sister, he extends his argument further:

SOEUR How! Would you have me commit incest?

FRERE Sister, follow not those foolish binding laws which frozen men have made,  
but follow nature's laws, whose freedom gives a liberty to all.

SOEUR Heaven bless your soul, for sure you are possessed with some strange  
wicked spirit that uses not to wander amongst men.

FRERE Sister, be not deceived with empty words and vainer tales, made only at the  
first to keep the ignorant vulgar sort in awe, whose faith, like to their greedy  
appetites, take whatsoever is offered; be it ne'er so bad or ill to their stomachs  
they never consider, but think all good they can get down. So whatsoever they  
hear they think 'tis true, although they have no reason or possibility for it.

(4.3.12–22)

In his attempted persuasions of his sister, Frere employs a line of argument pursued by his antecedent, Giovanni, in Ford's *'Tis Pity*. In a discussion with his tutor and confessor, Friar Bonaventura, Giovanni asks the following rhetorical questions:

Shall a peevish sound,  
A customary form, from man to man,  
Of brother and of sister, be a bar  
'Twixt my perpetual happiness and me?  
Say that we had one father, say one womb  
(Curse to my joys!) gave both us life and birth;  
Are we not, therefore, each to other bound  
So much the more by nature?

(1.24–31)<sup>24</sup>

Giovanni and Frere each make essentially the same two points. First, they suggest that there is a natural bond between a brother and sister and that it is only natural that this bond should extend to sexual union. Second, they each stress that the laws which condemn acts of incest are not natural, but rather socially generated conventions. To observe edicts against incest is, for Giovanni, to adhere to a "customary form" passed down from "man to man." For Frere, it is to obey "foolish binding laws which frozen men have made." To behave naturally would be to disregard these artificial codes altogether, since "nature's law ... gives a liberty to all."

It would, of course, be foolish to assume that because Frere is allowed to say these things we are expected to take them at face value; Soeur's despairing response is a fair gauge of the outlandishness of her brother's argument. Nonetheless, by associating Frere's ideas with those of Hobbes, Cavendish lends them a veneer of philosophical seriousness. As discussed above, Hobbes argued that for a society to attain any degree of order, all individuals in that society must forfeit their personal liberty and submit to

<sup>24</sup> John Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, ed. Brian Morris (London: Black, 1990).

a single ruler, who represents and looks after the interests of the people collectively. Hobbes is clear that this is a sacrifice that a population is unlikely to be willing to make without some degree of coercion. In order for men to resist their natural urge to conflict, artificial restrictions must be put in place, but, crucially, these restrictions must not be seen to be artificial. Hobbes explains how this has historically been achieved:

And therefore the first Founders, and Legislators of Common-wealths amongst the Gentiles, whose ends were only to keep the people in obedience, and peace, have in all places taken care; First, to imprint in their minds a belief, that those precepts which they gave concerning Religion, might not be thought to proceed from their own device, but from the dictates of some God, or other Spirit; or else that they themselves were of a higher nature than mere mortals, that their Lawes might be the more easily received.<sup>25</sup>

However depraved Frere's intentions are and however cynical his argument in justifying them might be, his attempt to demystify the authority of the codes that outlaw his desire seems to derive directly from the point Hobbes makes here. Where Frere's position differs from Hobbes's is that where Hobbes sees this coercion as a necessary and fundamental aspect of the creation of an orderly and functioning society, Frere sees it as a means of asserting priggish control over people's natural sexual freedoms.

Frere is not the only character in the play to think in this way. In one of the play's other plots, a group of young women going by the collective name of "the sociable virgins" engage in intellectual and sometimes radical debate on topics ranging from classical literature to women's place in politics while under the supervision of conventionally minded matrons. In one of these debates, the First Virgin states the case that the principle of monogamy runs directly counter to the natural inclinations of women, and is thus a principle which she intends to ignore:

1 VIRGIN And the truth is that variety is the life and delight of Nature's works, and women—being the only daughters of Nature, and not the sons of Jove, as men are feigned to be—are more pleased with variety than men are.

1 MATRON Which is no honour to the effeminate sex. But I perceive, lady, you are a right begotten daughter of Nature, and will follow the steps of your mother.

1 VIRGIN Yes, or else I should be unnatural, which I will never be.

(1.7.43–50)

The sociable virgins also echo Frere in demonstrating a Hobbesian understanding of how authority is manufactured. In a conversation about statecraft, the First and Fourth Virgins lament a modern failure to deploy pageantry as a means of generating authority:

4 VIRGIN Indeed, princes are not so severe, nor do they carry that state and majesty as those in former times, for they neglect that ceremony nowadays, which ceremony creates majesty and gives them a divine splendour. For the truth is

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25 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 177.

ceremony makes them as gods, when the want thereof makes them appear as ordinary men.

VIRGIN 1 It must needs, for when princes throw off ceremony, they throw off royalty; for ceremony makes a king like a god.

(2.6.190–96)

As we have seen, Hobbes stresses the political expedience of rulers of making themselves appear “of a higher nature than mere mortals, that their Lawes might be the more easily received.”<sup>26</sup> Both Frere and the First Virgin, then, consider the artificial construction of social obedience a hindrance to their natural sexual desires, but they seem to differ over the necessity of this artifice; where Frere advocates the abandonment of the “laws of frozen men,” the sociable virgins follow Hobbes in seeing them as a necessary means of curbing humanity’s recalcitrant tendencies.

By focusing its central plot on an act that so directly provokes our most instinctive assumptions about what is and what is not natural, *The Unnatural Tragedy* encourages us to revisit and examine those assumptions. Engaging with Hobbesian notions of Commonwealth, it reminds us, in something like an *avant la lettre* deployment of the Marxist notion of cultural hegemony, that the values by which a society lives are not naturally occurring but socially constructed, and that these constructions serve to maintain state power. The play is equivocal over what we should make of this state of affairs, but it is forceful in bringing it to its reader’s attention.

Many of these ideas are returned to and developed in Cavendish’s utopian romance, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666). *The Blazing World* recounts the adventures of a young, beautiful woman who is kidnapped by merchants and taken away on a ship. After a disaster at sea kills off her captors and leads the ship to the north pole, she finds herself transported to a new world of perpetual daylight that is peopled by fantastical human-animal hybrids. When the Emperor of this world meets her, so taken is he that he instantly marries her and grants her absolute power over his empire. In this newfound position of prominence, the Empress sets about establishing learned societies, enquiring about the cultural norms of her new home, and engaging in philosophical debate with hybrid animal-men and immaterial spirits, before establishing a platonic romance with the soul of the Duchess of Newcastle, with which she instantaneously travels between the Blazing World and Earth (which, it only at this point becomes apparent, is not the place from which the Empress originally came). In the second part of the text, the Empress learns that her home country is under attack from its neighbours, and she employs the powers she has developed as a natural-philosophical head of state to liberate it from its enemies and establish its dominance over its international rivals.

If *The Unnatural Tragedy* approaches questions of statecraft in an oblique manner, *The Blazing World* tackles them directly and explicitly. As a person newly introduced to the wielding of executive power, the Empress reflects at various points upon how her

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<sup>26</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 177.

world should be ruled. Again, the ideas of Hobbes are pertinent here. Shortly after the Empress-to-be arrives there, the narrator comments upon the seamless governance of the Blazing World, where there was “no more but one Emperor, to whom they all submitted with the greatest duty and obedience, which made them live in a continued peace and happiness, not acquainted with other forreign wars, or home-bred insurrections.”<sup>27</sup> In her early discussions with the hybrid animal-men, she engages them directly on the topic of their system of governance:

Next, she asked, Why they preferred the Monarchical form of Government before any other? They answered, That as it was natural for one body to have but one head, so it was also natural for Politick body to have but one Governor; and that a Common-wealth, which had many Governors was like a Monster of many heads ... so we are resolved to have but one Emperor, to whom we all submit with one obedience.

(72)

The repeated emphasis on unity calls to mind Hobbes’s definition of the Commonwealth as “one person” and, of course, carries a considerable topical freight in a text published soon after the Restoration, which marked the end of England’s experiment with a republican system of government.

During her own reign the Empress becomes anxious that she has lost sight of this principle of unity. At the heart of this problem seems to be her formation of various specialist schools of natural philosophy, each associated with a particular species of animal-man hybrid. The specialist interests of these schools bear more than a passing resemblance to work pursued by Royal Society figureheads like Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke; Sara H. Mendelson suggests that the hybrid creatures that make up the philosophical schools of the Blazing World “offer the perfect vehicle for a satirical attack on ... the arrogant empiricists of the Royal Society,” and that they facilitate a critique of “new science” more broadly.<sup>28</sup> Cavendish criticizes the new empirically focused science in two ways: first, the text implies, their highly specialised focus on distinct, individual problems militates against the consideration of the bigger conceptual questions that need to be answered in order to arrive at the truth, and, second, the specialization of scientific enquiry itself necessarily ensures the fragmentation of knowledge and understanding, which in turn increases the likelihood of political disunity. These concerns are encapsulated in a passage in which, after the Empress has instructed them to destroy their telescopes, the Bear-men plead with her to allow them to continue in their discipline:

The Bear-men being exceedingly troubled at her Majesties displeasure concerning their Telescopes, kneel’d down, and in the humblest manner petitioned that they might not be broken; for, said they, we take more delight in Artificial delusions, then in natural truths. Besides, we shall want employment for our senses, and subjects for arguments; for were

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**27** Margaret Cavendish, *A Description of the Blazing World*, ed. Sara H. Mendelson (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview, 2016). All subsequent quotations from the text refer to this edition.

**28** Sara H. Mendelson, “Introduction,” in Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 37. See also Lara Dodds, *The Literary Invention of Margaret Cavendish* (Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 149–50, and Sarasohn, *Natural Philosophy*, 1–14.

there nothing but truth, and no falshood, there would be no occasion for to dispute, and by this means we should want the aim and pleasure of our endeavours in confuting and contradicting each other.

(79)

The political fallout of this pursuit of “artificial delusions” at the expense of “natural truth” is made clear later in the text, when the Empress confides in the Duchess of Newcastle on the matter of her rule of the Blazing World. Regretting changes she had made to the system of governance she had inherited from the Emperor, the Empress tells the Duchess that

there are such continual contentions and divisions between the *Worm- Bear- and Fly-men*, the *Ape-men*, the *Satyrs*, the *Spider-men*, and all others of such sorts, that I fear they'l break out into an open Rebellion, and cause a great disorder and ruine of the Government.

(139)

The Duchess's response is to advise the dissolution of the various learned societies, since “'tis better to be without their intelligences, then to have an unquiet and disorderly Government.”<sup>29</sup> The key to both the understanding and the governing of the world, it seems, is unity.

While the satirical exchange between the Empress and the Bear-men associates specialization and factionalism with “artificial delusion” and unity and monarchy with “natural truth,” this association is complicated by other aspects of the text. As well as staging discussions of political theory which extol the natural virtues of absolute rule, the text also shows us absolute rule in action, and in doing so it casts it in a light more reminiscent of the complaints of Frere than of the endorsements of monarchy that we hear from the Duchess and the Empress. The first instance of this comes when the Empress becomes concerned about the state of the religion in her new home. “Pondering with her self the inconstant nature of Mankind, and fearing that in time they would grow weary, and desert the divine Truth, following their own fancies, and living according to their own desires” (101), the Empress sets about establishing two chapels that take full advantage of the extraordinary natural resources available in the Blazing World. The first of these, which serves as a chapel in which to preach “sermons of terror to the wicked” (102), is built with fire stone, a mineral substance that emits flames when exposed to water. This construction facilitates an extraordinary performance of ceremonial legerdemain:

and when she would have that Chappel where the Fire-stone was, appear all in a flame, she had by the means of Artificial-pipes, water conveyed into it, which by turning the Cock, did, as out of a Fountain, spring over all the room, and as long as the fire-stone was wet, the Chappel seemed to be all in a flaming fire.

(101)

The second chapel, built with the light-emitting “star-stone,” serves instead for the “Sermons of comfort to those that repented of their sins” (102). Thus, through an entirely

<sup>29</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 140.

artificial piece of pageantry, the Empress is able to establish her form of religion in the Blazing World, “for she knew well, that belief was a thing not to be forced or pressed upon the people, but to be instilled into their minds by gentle persuasions” (102).

A similar example of performative statecraft is provided later in the text, when the Empress again makes artificial use of the natural resources at her disposal. In this instance the goal is to awe her sceptical former countrymen, whom she intends to help in their war against their invaders, into a state of submission. Again deploying the remarkable properties of Blazing World stone, and also the help of the Fish-men, the Empress reveals herself to her people in a display of Christ-like divinity, achieved entirely by optical illusion:

The appointed hour being come, the Emperess appear'd with Garments made of the Star-stone, and was born or supported above the Water, upon the Fish-mens heads and backs, so that she seems to walk upon the face of the Water, and the Bird- and Fish-men carried the Fire-stone, lighted both in the Air, and above the Waters.

(149)

The effectiveness of this performance, which makes her appear “like an Angel, or some Deity” is clear, as her countrymen “all kneeled down before her, and worshipped her with all submission and reverence” (149). The same effect is achieved among the leaders of her countrymen’s enemies shortly afterwards (154); we are again taken back to the Hobbesian establishment of power that is alluded to in *The Unnatural Tragedy*. While the theoretical discussions that take place in *The Blazing World* assert the truthfulness and naturalness of unity and monarchical power, then, the text also shows that, as Hobbes acknowledges, the practice of exercising this power requires the assistance of artificial, unnatural illusion.

Despite making clear its efficacy, the text shows some signs of ambivalence in its treatment of this kind of Realpolitik. Mendelson argues that if we base our reading purely on the Empress’s behaviour, then *The Blazing World* might be said to entirely endorse Hobbesian absolutism as a means to maintain control over a potentially unruly populace, but she also suggests that if we cast the net wider over Cavendish’s writings, we can end up with the impression that she “was unable to decide between the divergent political philosophies voiced by her avatars.”<sup>30</sup> However much the Empress appears to relish the pageantry of statecraft, at points in the text she shows the strain of sustaining her performance of power. When the Duchess congratulates the Empress on her governance of a “peaceable, quiet, and obedient world,” she replies that “although it is a peaceable and obedient world, yet the Government thereof is rather a trouble, then a pleasure; for order cannot be without industry, contrivance and direction” (129). In fact, the kind of dominion about which the text seems most enthusiastic is that over worlds created in the imagination. The Empress is persuaded by the spirits when they suggest to her that inventing a world might be the most productive political activity she could undertake, for anyone who does so “may create a

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**30** Mendelson, “Introduction,” 47.

World of what fashion and Government he will" (123). Cavendish also declares in her epilogue to the text that

my ambition is not onely to be Emperess, but Authoress of a whole World; and that the Worlds I have made ... are framed and composed of the most pure, that is the rational parts of Matter, which are the parts of my Mind.

(163)

Given that the creation of a world from nothing makes her own relationship to her created world analogous to that of nature with the material world, this might be the most natural kind of governance that there is.

In their own interesting ways, then, *The Unnatural Tragedy* and *The Blazing World* each reflect on the concept of nature and on its association with both power and creativity. *The Unnatural Tragedy* encourages an awareness of the constructedness of the codes that we take to be natural and by which we live. *The Blazing World* lays bare the process of these conventional codes being constructed. Neither text, though, seems to fully endorse or condemn this artifice; perhaps *The Blazing World's* advocacy of a retreat into the created worlds of the imagination is an acknowledgement that the governance of the "many-headed monster" of the real world is a problem to which there is no natural solution.

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## Chapter 17

# “I AM MY LORDS SCHOLAR”: MARGARET CAVENDISH AND PATRONAGE

Lisa T. Sarasohn

IN MARGARET CAVENDISH'S first serious philosophical work, the 1655 *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, which she often acknowledged as her favourite among her many writings, she states, “I am my Lords Scholar.”<sup>1</sup> This claim might seem like the loving proclamation of a grateful wife, but given the patronage dynamics of the mid-seventeenth century, it is actually much more. By citing the role her husband William Cavendish, the Marquess (later Duke) of Newcastle played in exposing her to the natural philosophy of the time, she is also indicating that he is the authority who by his support becomes the patron who validates the veracity of her ideas. In two other early works, *Philosophicall Fancies* and *Poems, and Fancies*, both published in 1653, Cavendish also recognizes the role her husband's brother, Sir Charles Cavendish, played in supporting her forays into scientific thinking: “I do here dedicate this my Work unto you,” she writes in *Poems, and Fancies*, “not that I think my Book is worthy such a Patron, but that such a Patron may gaine my Book a Respect, and Esteem in the World, by the Favour of your Protection.”<sup>2</sup> And, moreover, to neglect to acknowledge his patronage would be a grave error on her part, as she also emphasized in *Philosophicall Fancies*:

To forget to divulge your noble Favours to me, in any of my Works, were to murther GRATITUDE [her capitalization]; Which I will never be guilty of. And though I am your slave, being manac'd with Chaines of Obligation, yet my Chaines feelee softer than Silke, and my Bondage is pleasanter then Freedome, because I am bound to your selfe, who are a Person so full of Generosity, as you delight in Bounty, and take pleasure to relieve the necessitated Condition of your Friends; and what is freely given is comfortably reciev'd and a satisfaction to the minde.<sup>3</sup>

Cavendish's sincerity is obvious, although perhaps fulsome to modern ears, in her recognition of the roles her husband and brother-in-law played in exposing her to the ideas current in natural philosophy and encouraging her efforts in publishing her own interpretations of them. But her acknowledgment of their support also indicates the norms of patronage, the system of mutual obligation and honour which governed social relations in the seventeenth century. Throughout her works in the 1650s and 1660s, Cavendish used the protocols of patronage to secure her place

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1 Margaret Cavendish, *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (London, 1655), sig. B1v.

2 Margaret Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies* (London, 1653), sig. A2r.

3 “To Sir Charles Cavendish,” in *Philosophicall Fancies* (London, 1653), sig. B4r–B5v.

in the learned community. In this, she was not unusual. The thinkers of this period knew that they needed the support of those of higher rank to validate their work: eminent philosophers such as Francis Bacon and William Harvey dedicated their works to the king, and Thomas Hobbes dedicated *De Cive*, an early political treatise, to William Cavendish. The marquess also moderated a debate about the nature of free will between Hobbes and John Bramhall, the Bishop of Derry, during his exile in France in 1645, which was eventually published in 1656. Hobbes notes in his preface to this work, *The Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance*, that he only published because although “There were some reasons for which I thought it might be inconvenient to let my answer go abroad; yet the many obligations wherein I was obliged to him, prevailed with me to write this answer.”<sup>4</sup>

William Cavendish was also a patron to literary men, including Ben Jonson, two of whose Masques were performed at Cavendish’s estates Welbeck Abbey and Bolsover in the 1630s, and Thomas Shadwell, who dedicated *The Virtuoso* to him in 1676 and proclaimed in a statement redolent of patronage tropes: “So long as your Grace persists in obliging, I must go on in acknowledging; nor can I let any opportunity pass of telling the world how much I am favored by you; or any occasion slip of assuring your Grace that all the actions of my life shall be dedicated to your service, who, by your noble patronage, your generosity and kindness, and your continual bounty, have made me wholly your creature.”<sup>5</sup>

Thus Margaret Cavendish had every opportunity to learn how patronage worked. The institution of patronage dominated the political world of early modern England before the English Civil War. It was informal, but its norms were known to everyone who sought to find preferment, whether from a king, an aristocratic lord, or a local member of the gentry class. It connected people in networks of dependence and obligation—the patron was acknowledged by the client as the powerful dispenser of honour and protection, which the client was obligated to receive with gratitude and service. The patron exhibited the virtues of magnanimity, magnificence, and generosity, to which the client responded with humility and trust. The relationship between patron and client, according to Linda Levy Peck in her study of Stuart patronage, was “at once symbiotic and symbolic,” testifying to the power of the patron and gaining the client “access to tangible and intangible resources,” including “land, office, position, status, and economic opportunity.”<sup>6</sup> Richard McCabe has enumerated the several tropes that characterize the dedications to patrons in early modern England; they include courtesy,

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4 Thomas Hobbes, *The Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance. Clearly Stated and Debated between Dr. Bramhall Bishop of Derry, and Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury* (London: Cook, 1656), 2.

5 Thomas Shadwell, *The Virtuoso*, ed. Marjorie Hope Nicolson and David Stuart Rodas (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 3.

6 Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Modern England* (Boston, MA: Routledge, 1990), 3, 57.

gratitude, loyalty, and favour and were based on themes first discussed by Aristotle, Cicero, and Seneca in antiquity.<sup>7</sup>

Recent historiographical studies of these ties of interpersonal and power relationships have also emphasized the role of gifts, material and otherwise, in cementing bonds between people of different status and, we might add, people of different genders. This analysis is often based on the work of the French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu, who argues that the economics behind relationships of different status are often disguised in a kind of "game of honour" where "cultural or symbolic capital"—recognition, acknowledgment, and gratitude—are hidden behind professions of trust and ritual performance.<sup>8</sup> And, supposedly, the gifts which establish these ties in early modern Europe are freely given and received, not limiting the freedom of either party in the exchange.<sup>9</sup> The relationship between patron and client testifies to the nobility of the giver and the worth of the recipient and vice versa.

But long before any modern interpretation of cultural capital, William Cavendish's former client, Thomas Hobbes, had articulated a psychology of human behaviour in both the state of nature and the political state, which emphasized the power of honour and reputation. Examples of instrumental power, Hobbes writes in *Leviathan*, published in 1651 while Margaret Cavendish was in England, are "Riches, Reputation, Friends, and the secret working of God, which men call Good Luck." Such honour is often gained through "free gift," an essential element of relationships between the powerful and those who depend on them. Such analysis would make sense to Cavendish; it includes the right or hope to "gain thereby friendship or service from another, or from his friends; or in hope to gain the reputation of Charity, or Magnanimity." Such a gift, according to Hobbes, obligates the receiver to gratitude: "That a man which receiveth Benefit from another of meer Grace, Endeavour that he that giveth it, have no reasonable cause to repent him of his good will."<sup>10</sup> Thus the symbolic capital Cavendish would gain through either gifting her books to universities or making them available to readers through publication would reflect glory on her. Whether she was the patron or client, the giver or receiver, her eminence was proclaimed.

And so the gift Cavendish gives to her husband and Sir Charles is her work, which honours their generosity in supporting her and creates a kind of obligation without diminishing her own freedom, honour, or position. She does not mention that *Poems*,

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<sup>7</sup> Richard A. McCabe, *"Ungainful Arte": Poetry Patronage, and Print in the Early Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 79.

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 118–20.

<sup>9</sup> See especially Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Illana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 62, 105.

and *Fancies*, and indeed all of her works, depends on the largesse of her benefactors in allowing her to publish very expensive volumes.<sup>11</sup>

Cavendish does acknowledge, however, that she was “necessitated” to acknowledge her brother-in-law’s support, and not just because in 1651 she was relying on his financial aid as she sought to persuade a Parliamentary committee to release some of the funds her husband had forfeited because of his support of Charles I. In one remarkable way Margaret Cavendish differed from her philosophic fellows: she was a noblewoman, and noblewomen did not publish books. Aristocratic women were sometimes the patrons of scholars and intellectuals, but they were rarely writers and thinkers themselves. Some few were poets and novelists, like Mary Wroth, but those who wrote about philosophy, like Anne Conway, did not have their works printed, although their writings sometimes circulated in manuscript form. The majority of women whose books were published during the English Civil War were not members of the upper classes, and they overwhelmingly wrote devotional literature and were often proponents of heterodox religious ideas, a type of woman Cavendish despised.

So, as the first woman who wrote at length about scientific topics and published her works, Cavendish had to find a way to validate them. The obvious solution was to seek the protection of her husband and brother-in-law, who could testify to the worthiness of her work and the virtues of their author. The latter was particularly important because in putting herself on the public stage, Cavendish risked being classified as a woman of the streets. Immorality was the charge that accompanied those women who left the domesticated sphere of the home, as Cavendish well knew and addressed in many of her works. Indeed, Lady Mary Wroth, whose work Cavendish knew, had scandalized early Stuart society with both her 1621 romance, *Urania*, and the affair which the story depicted. A poem written shortly after Cavendish’s death indicates what was probably the most usual indictment of the writer:

Shame of her sex, Welbeck’s illustrious Whore ...  
The great atheistical philosophraster,  
That owns no God, no devil, lord nor master,  
Vice’s epitome and virtue’s foe,  
Here lies her body but her soul’s below.<sup>12</sup>

The danger of patronage for any woman was the degree of intimacy it could imply between a female client and her patron. According to the literary historian Dustin Griffin, a woman writer might be reluctant to “to enter into an arrangement whereby they implicitly engaged to exchange ‘benefits’ with a patron—especially a male patron—or to accept his ‘protection’ at a time when ‘protection’ was a euphemism for sexual keeping.”<sup>13</sup> By

<sup>11</sup> I wish to thank Liza Blake, Lora Gerecois and Sara Mendelson for letting me know about the presentation copies of Cavendish’s works.

<sup>12</sup> The poem is printed in Douglas Grant, *Margaret the First: A Biography of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, 1623–1673* (London: Hart-Davis), 199.

<sup>13</sup> Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 189.

placing her patronage relationship within the parameters of family, Cavendish avoided this supposition, but nevertheless, she continually defended her own virtue and modesty in printing her works.<sup>14</sup> Cavendish may have been particularly sensitive about the charge of immorality if, as Katie Whitaker has suggested, Newcastle suffered from syphilis and was unable to have sexual relations. In correspondence between Newcastle and the courtier and virtuoso Kenelm Digby, the latter wrote to him about a marvellous cure for impotence made from powder of viper that helps "men grown eunichs by age become Priapus again."<sup>15</sup> This could mean that Newcastle was her patron but not her lover.

Expanding beyond her own family members, Cavendish taps another source of support—her fellow virtuous women. Referring to Lord Denny's invective against Mary Wroth, Cavendish wrote in a dedication "To All Noble, and Worthy Ladies" at the beginning of *Poems, and Fancies*, "Work *Lady*, work, let writing *Books* alone, For surely *wiser Women* nere wrote one."<sup>16</sup> This reference to her scandalous predecessor is curious in a defence of her own virtue, but she quickly amends the reference to defend her right to write, contrasting her own "honest, Innocent, and harmless *Fancies*" with the immoral behaviour of women who appear in public. She pleads for the upright women to give her protection against her female foes:

Strengthen my Side, in defending my *Book*; for I know *Womens Tongues* 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* 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, M. N.<sup>17</sup>

Cavendish has expanded her patronage universe in this dedication where she tried to win the support of other noble and worthy ladies and thereby receive "Honour, and Reputation by your Favours." In her other works, Cavendish often disparaged most women for their wanton and frivolous behaviour, but here she recognizes the power and worth of a group of virtuous women who will protect her and her work. Even if they decline her service—that is, the gift of her book—she will become a martyr for the sake of their honour and presumably her own.

Cavendish, though she often cited her own bashfulness, was not shy in securing patrons for her books, whether they were unspecified worthy ladies or the many unnamed "readers" she writes to in the paratexts of the books she wrote in the 1650s

<sup>14</sup> On family and patronage, see Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving*, 17–44.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: The Extraordinary Life of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, the First Woman to Live by Her Pen* (New York: Basic, 2002), 101. Whitaker discusses the details of this cure and how Digby planned to procure it from "a rare apothecary."

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "To All Worthy, and Noble Ladies," *Poems, and Fancies*, sig. A4v. Compare "To Pamphilia from the father-in-law of Seralius": "Work o th' Workes leave idle bookes alone / For wise and worthier women have writte none," *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, ed. Josephine A. Roberts (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 33.

<sup>17</sup> Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, sig. A4v.

and 1660s.<sup>18</sup> There is almost a frenzied voice in these addresses where she explains and defends her motives and work. Clearly, not everyone was thrilled by Cavendish's poetic and philosophic works. Some unidentified scholars even accused her of not writing her own books. William Cavendish rose to her defence at the beginning of the 1655 *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, putting his own honour on the line as he protected his wife/client:

Truly I cannot beleieve so unworthily of any Scholar, honoring them so much as we both do, that they should envie this Lady, or should have so much malice or emulation, to cast such false aspirations on her, that she did not write those books ... But here's the crime, a Lady writes them and to intrench so much on the male prerogative is not to be forgiven; but I know Gown-men will be more civil to her, because she is of the Gown too ... Whatsoever I have written is absolute truth which I here as a Man of Honour set my hand to.<sup>19</sup>

Here the marquess not so subtly reminds those scholars he has supported that they owe him and his wife deference and that their "emulation," which here probably fits into the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition, "Ambitious rivalry for power or honours, contention or ill-will between rivals" or "dislike or tendency to disparagement, of those who are superior," is a sign of jealousy and inferiority.<sup>20</sup> These envious men have behaved dishonourably in their obligations to their patrons, including Cavendish herself, who will now seek others to give her the honour she deserves.

Who are the scholars who have broken trust with the Cavendishes? One must speculate here, but there are some clues. In *Poems, and Fancies*, Cavendish added a somewhat incongruous dedication, "To Naturall Philosophers," in which she both downplays and excuses her book, "For I had nothing to do when I wrot it, and I suppose those have nothing, or little else to do, that read it." She awaits their judgement, "If I be prais'd, it fixes them [her ideas]; 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."<sup>21</sup> So idle natural philosophers who apparently had nothing better to do, and were perforce useless, are given the role of putting a seal of approval on Cavendish's philosophy, which, at the same time, is the product of her own empty hours and something which might gain her immortal fame. Humility struggles with ambition here, but whichever emotion wins, it's clear that natural philosophers are unworthy of honour. Moreover, although she might have heard some of their ideas, her philosophy is original. Likewise, in the Epilogue to *Philosophical*

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**18** On Cavendish's use of paratexts and the concept of authorial authority in Cavendish's work, see Melanie D. Holm, "Authority Sovereignty: Pleasure and Paratext in Margaret Cavendish's 'Blazing Worlds,'" *Restoration Studies in English Literary Culture* 41 (2017): 5–28, and Katharine R. Larsen, *Early Modern Women in Conservation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 138–65.

**19** William Cavendish, "An Epistle to Justifie the Lady Newcastle," in Margaret Cavendish, *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, sig. A3r.

**20** OED "emulation," n., 2, 3.

**21** Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies*, sig. A6r.

and *Physical Fancies*, Cavendish claims that none of her ideas were stolen from René Descartes or Thomas Hobbes. She had dined with both in France but had not spoken to Descartes, who knew no English while she knew no French, and she had rarely exchanged words with Hobbes. Indeed, when she ran into Hobbes in London and invited him to dinner, "he with great civility refused me, as having some businesse, which I suppose required his absence."<sup>22</sup> It is extraordinary that Hobbes would claim a prior engagement when his former patron's wife asked him to dine, but by this time Hobbes was seeking to reestablish his position in Cromwellian England, and therefore might have been unwilling to be seen with William Cavendish's wife.<sup>23</sup> Cavendish clearly saw her interaction with Descartes or Hobbes—or indeed any other thinkers—in terms of patronage dynamics, a factor which she emphasized in the Epilogue:

I had rather be forgotten, then scrape acquaintance or insinuate my self into others company, or brag of received favours, or take undeserved gifts, or belie noble Benefactors, or to steal, although I were sure the theft would never be discovered, and would make me live eternally.<sup>24</sup>

Cavendish wanted neither the favours nor gifts of others to help her gain immortality, although her desire for fame was one of the main reasons she wrote and published in the first place. In fact, somewhat paradoxically, she employed a traditional patronage strategy of giving gifts of her books to other scholars and universities as a way to get her name out and have her own reputation elevated through their esteem. So she dedicates *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* "To the Two Universities," and she praises their worth so that they, in turn, can praise her—a very typical ploy between a patron and a client:

But I considering with my self, that if a right judgement, and a true understanding, & a respectful civility live any where, it must be in learned Universities, where nature is best known, where truth is oftenest found, where civility is most practiced, and if I finde not a resentment here, I am very confident I shall finde it no where, neither shall I think I deserve it, if you approve not of me, but I deserve not Praise, I am sure to receive so much Courtship, from this sage society, as to bury me in silence.<sup>25</sup>

In such a case, Cavendish claims, it will be honour enough "to lie intombed under the dust of a university." She didn't have to worry; the universities received the gifts of her books throughout the 1650s and 1660s with rapturous praise. A note from Thomas Barlow, the Provost of Queen's College, Oxford, in 1656, is typical of all the rest:

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<sup>22</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "An Epilogue to my Philosophical Opinions," *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, sig. B3r.

<sup>23</sup> For more on the relationship between William Cavendish and Thomas Hobbes, see Lisa T. Sarasohn, "Thomas Hobbes and the Duke of Newcastle: A Study in the Mutuality of Patronage," *Isis* 90 (1999): 715–37.

<sup>24</sup> Cavendish, "Epilogue," *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, B4v.

<sup>25</sup> Cavendish, "Epilogue," *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, sig. B2r.

The like thanks, and (if possible) infinitely more, I must return in behalf of the University, and my self; being amazed at your goodness, and undeserved Kindness, that a person so Illustrious, and (for place and parts so) Eminent, should look upon so unconsiderable, and impertinent a thing in black, as I am, but that I know the Sun doth shine on Shrubs, as well as Cedars, and Princes many times cast their Favours upon persons infinitely below them; whence they can expect no return but gratitude; and when I fail to pay that Tribute (so justly due to your Honour) may I have your hate, which will be the greatest curse I am capable of.<sup>26</sup>

Can we possibly take either Cavendish's letters to the universities or their replies to her at face value? It seems unlikely, but in William Cavendish's defence of Cavendish's originality, he claimed that "gown-men," that is, university scholars, would be more civil to her than other scholars, and perhaps he was right. It was possible in early modern England both to sincerely appreciate someone's expressed gratitude and at the same time think that there was some concrete benefit to be gained from them. This is part of the "tangible" rewards that Linda Levy Peck mentions in her discussion of patronage and that Bourdieu sees as the masked economic benefit lurking behind expressions of gratitude. The material gift Cavendish bestows is in itself a tangible possession, and many of the colleges, in both Oxford and Cambridge, which received her largesse deposited her books in their libraries. It may be that the "civility" which William Cavendish twice mentioned in his defence of Cavendish impelled them to do so. It was a social norm, inherited from Cicero and Seneca, which transformed gratitude into a signifier of virtue.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, gifts could cajole the recipient into the obligation of response. Instead of the chains "softer than Silke" which Cavendish used to describe her ties with Sir Charles, there were iron shackles which compelled a rhetoric of flattery and obeisance. The libraries didn't have any choice but to accept the gifts of books from a noble lady, even one in exile due to her husband's actions during the English Civil War. By compelling their actions, Cavendish's status as a writer could rise in their reflected glory. And this literary ennoblement could itself enhance Cavendish's sense that she was the equal of other literary giants, liberating her from the apologetic and humble self-abasement and defensiveness which characterizes many of her paratextual notices in her early works. For example, in *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, she pleads with her "Honourable Readers," if they are going to compare her works with those of ancient philosophers, "to lay by the weaknesses, and incapacity of our sex; my inexperienced age, my unpracticed time, my faint knowledge, and dim understanding."<sup>28</sup> But in *Natures Pictures*, published a year after *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, there is a change of tone, indicating a growing self-confidence on the part of the author. She dedicates her work, which contains "Comicall, Tragical, Poeticall, Philosophicall, Romanticall and

<sup>26</sup> *A Collection of Letters and Poems: Written by several Persons of Honour and Learning, upon divers Important Subjects, to the Late Duke and Dutchess of New Castle* (London: Curtis, 1678), 70.

<sup>27</sup> On the Classical roots of gift-giving, see Heal, *Power of Gifts*, 17–18.

<sup>28</sup> Cavendish, "An Epistle to my Honourable Readers," *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, sig. A1v.

Moral Discourses," to her idle readers who may benefit from reading it, and she hopes "you'll like it, if not, I'm still the same, / Careless, since Truth will vindicate my Fame."<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of Cavendish's increasing self-confidence is the autobiography she appends to *Natures Pictures, A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding, and Life*. As Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson write in *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*, it was quite unusual for anyone to write "a personal and secular autobiography" rather than a spiritual or political memoir in the early seventeenth century.<sup>30</sup> Despite claiming to be extremely bashful, to the extent of not being able to speak eloquently to anyone besides her own family members, Cavendish decides to do the future a favour by writing her autobiography, and thereby sidestep the present criticisms of her works, "not regarding carping Tongues, or malicious Censures, for I despise them."<sup>31</sup> Her future fame itself, in this rendering, becomes her client, one of the several inanimate qualities which will function as her servants.

But Cavendish is not only the patron of her own future fame; she is also the servant of the gods. The frontispiece of *The Worlds Olio* (Figure 17.1) pictures her placed between Minerva and Apollo, an image which also appears at the beginning of the 1662 *Playes*, the 1668 *Plays*, the 1668 *Grounds of Natural Philosophy*, and the reissues of *Poems, and Fancies* (1668), *The Worlds Olio* (1671), and *Natures Pictures* (1671).

The gods of wisdom and light seem lost in reverence of Cavendish, who is draped in an imperial gown and who stands under two flowering graces, symbols of her radiance and fecundity. The engraving, based on a portrait by Abraham Van Diepenbeeck, is a graphic expression of the fame and status Cavendish sought. The image is turned upside down in another epistle, "To the Reader," in *Natures Pictures*: "My endeavor is to express the sweetness of Vertue, and the Graces, and to dress and adorn them in the best expressions I can, as being one of their Servants, that do unfeignedly, unweariedly, industriously, and faithfully wait upon them." The language of patronage and service here emphasizes Cavendish's relationship with the gods; in both picture and words, the glory and virtue of the author and her inspirations are lifted up to the celestial sphere. In the 1664 *Sociable Letters*, the Lord N. W. (clearly a pseudonym for William Cavendish) tells the Lady (an avatar for Margaret Cavendish) to whom the letters are addressed that she is like an empress:

though she was not attended, waited and served with and by Temporal and Imperial Courtiers, yet she was attended, waited on, and served by and with the sweet Graces, and her Maids of Honour were the Muses, and Fame's house was her Magnificent Palace. Thus

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "The Dedication" and "To the Reader," *Natures Pictures* (London, 1656), sigs. a4r, c4r. Larsen views this kind of patronage as "appropriation and adaptation governing oral and epistolary interchange within these textual spaces" by female authors "as a legitimate and strategic tool for social negotiations and political intervention (3).

<sup>30</sup> *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*, ed. Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview, 2000), 12.

<sup>31</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Pictures*, 367.



Figure 17.1. Frontispiece of *The Worlds Olio* (1655). The University of Sheffield Library.

was she Royally Born, and Divinely Anointed or Induded, and Celestially Crown'd, and may Reign in the memory of every Age and Nation to the world's end.<sup>32</sup>

But by 1654 Cavendish felt that she was not being treated like an empress. She was fed up with her detractors and equally annoyed with the printers who had repeatedly mixed up portions of *Natures Pictures* and her earlier works by misplacing the order of her texts and poor transcriptions of her written copies (although she does admit that she has terrible handwriting).<sup>33</sup> Besides her pique, these charges against printers demonstrate another part of Cavendish's patronage strategy. She was writing for publication—not just to have her works placed in university libraries (some things are as true in the past as in the present) or read by those who had an idle hour to pass. She wanted immortal fame, to be sure, and the acknowledgement of her abilities, but she also wanted cultural or symbolic capital.<sup>34</sup> Honour and recognition were more important to her than the more tangible rewards she might have gained if the printers or sellers of her works would have been willing to share the profits they made on her books with her.<sup>35</sup>

Not that economic considerations would be entirely foreign to Cavendish. She and her husband were in desperate financial straits while living in exile. William had spent his fortune in support of Charles I, raising an army that, after some initial successes, was defeated at the Battle of Marston Moor in 1644. After his marriage to Margaret in 1645, the couple lived largely on credit and the good will of the lenders, who were so impressed by the story of Cavendish's misfortunes—and undoubtedly his title (he had been promoted to marquess from earl in 1643)—that they "promised him, that he should not want any thing in whatsoever they were able to assist him."<sup>36</sup> By the time the Cavendishes moved to Antwerp in 1649, they were able to rent the former home of the artist Peter Paul Rubens, and the marquess opened a riding school, where many aristocrats and nobles, including the uncrowned Charles II, the Duke of Guise, and Don John, the Governor-General of the Spanish Netherlands, were able to watch his mastery of dressage. In 1657–1658 Cavendish published his first book on horsemanship, *La méthode nouvelle et invention extraordinaire de dresser les chevaux* (discussed in Elaine Walker's chapter of the current volume), which, as Peter Edwards and Elspeth Graham point out, was published by Cavendish to restore "his reputation—amongst both English émigrés and the European nobility—through more purely cultural forms,

<sup>32</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "Letter 15," *Sociable Letters*, ed. James Fitzmaurice (Toronto: Broadview, 2004), 60.

<sup>33</sup> She castigates printers from her earliest works. See Cavendish, "The Epistle," *The Worlds Olio*, sig. O3r.

<sup>34</sup> Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 188. On William Cavendish's similar aim, see Karen Raber, "William Cavendish's Horsemanship Treatises and Cultural Capital," in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, ed. Peter Edwards and Elspeth Graham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 331–51.

<sup>35</sup> McCabe, "Ungainful Arte", 60 argues that instead of royalties, publishers gave authors multiple copies of their books and sometimes required a subvention to publish the book.

<sup>36</sup> On William Cavendish's financial difficulties, see Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the (1st) Duke of Newcastle & Other Writings by Margaret, Duchess* (London: Dent, 1916), 71–84, 77.

both performative and textual.”<sup>37</sup> When notables attended the marquess, his cultural capital rose, in part because, as he writes in his book, “Kings, Princes and persons of quality ... love pleasure horses, as an exercise that is very noble, and that which makes them appear most graceful when they show themselves to their subjects.”<sup>38</sup> Apparently, Cavendish had learned from his wife that one of the ways to achieve personal glory and gain the attention and favour of elite readers was to publish a work testifying to their exceptional status, regardless of the economic circumstances in which they lived.

With the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the Cavendishes returned to England and husband and wife retired to their estates, which William spent his time restoring. Cavendish spent her time writing her major scientific works and publishing two volumes of plays in 1662 and 1668 and a collection of imaginary speeches in *Orations* (1662). *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* was expanded in a 1663 edition, which became the basis of the 1668 *Grounds of Natural Philosophy*. She published a number of other plays in the 1668 *Plays*. In addition, Cavendish published two long critiques of the major scientific and philosophical theories of the mid-seventeenth century, the 1664 *Philosophical Letters* and the 1666 *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, reprinted in 1668. Cavendish appended a prose romance to *Observations*, *The New Blazing World*, which was destined to become her most famous work and earn her the fame she sought, at least in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In 1668, Cavendish completed her oeuvre with her *Life* of her husband.

The 1660s works demonstrate Cavendish’s increasing confidence in her own abilities and they sketch out a new patronage strategy. In the Dedication to *Playes*, Cavendish proclaims her devotion to her readers/clients and to herself:

TO those that do delight in Scenes and wit,  
I dedicate my Book, for those I writ;  
Next to my own Delight, for I did take  
Much pleasure and delight these Playes to make.<sup>39</sup>

Although *Playes* continues Cavendish’s customary practice of multiple epistles to the reader, full of apologies and explanations for her plays, she now gives herself a leading role in the acceptance of her works. In a sense, she has become her own patron. She no longer has to serve her readers—she only has to serve herself and, to some extent, her husband, to whom she also dedicates her work. She acknowledges that William’s own plays have inspired her to write her own, and although she had intended this to be her last work, she now feels impelled to write a life of her husband in some time to come. Once more, patronage is in the family.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Edwards and Elspeth Graham, “Introduction,” in *Authority, Authorship and Aristocratic Identity*, 31.

<sup>38</sup> William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, *A General System of Horsemanship in all It’s Branches, containing a Faithful Translation of that most noble and useful Work of His Grace* (London, 1743), 14. This is an English translation of *La Méthode Nouvelle*.

<sup>39</sup> Margaret Cavendish, “The Dedication,” *Playes* (London, 1662), sig. A2r.

As we have seen, it was not unusual for family members to use patronage to inculcate family loyalty. So when Cavendish published the 1663 edition of *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, she dedicated it to her husband, who, in spite of the hardships he had endured at fortune's hand, had encouraged her writing: "Yet you are pleased to Peruse my Works, and Approve of them, which is a Favour, few Husbands would grant their Wives; but Your Lordship is an Extraordinary Husband, which is the Happiness of Your Lordships, Honest Wife and Humble Servant."<sup>40</sup> But when Cavendish returned to addressing her readers in this work, it is clear that ultimately she has become her own major supporter:

I can assure you, Noble Readers, I was very Studious in my own Thoughts, and Contemplations, when I writ it, for all that time my Brain was like a University, Senate, or Council-Chamber, wherein all my Conceptions, Imaginations, Observations, Wit, and Judgment did meet to Dispute, Argue, Contrive, and Judge, for Sense, Reason, and Truth, and if you Please to give your Plausible Votes, they will have their Reward.<sup>41</sup>

Cavendish no longer needs the universities, or indeed any authoritative body, to approve her work. Her own brain will take over the job and reward her for revealing sense, reason, and truth. Her dependent status has been overturned. This judgement of her own self-worth is confirmed in a letter of thanks that the fellows of Magdalene College, Cambridge sent her in 1663, which was undoubtedly commenting on the goddess-like frontispiece of her works: "what shall we think of your Excellency, who are both a *Minerva* and an *Athens* to your self."<sup>42</sup> In another letter sent to her from the fellows of St. John's College, Cambridge in 1665, after she had gifted them with her poetry and the *Philosophical Letters*, they acknowledged her thoughts on natural philosophy and proclaimed her to be an "ornament to Learning, and a Patroness to the Learned."<sup>43</sup> And in the second letter, they remark that Cavendish owes Nature nothing, "for whatever lustre and beauty of body or mind, she hath deckt and enriched you withal, your Grace has largely recompensed her, and are perfectly quit with her in these your elegant Poems, and Philosophy." In the language of patronage, Cavendish's brilliance in interpreting Nature has released her from any obligation to Nature.

Whether these Cambridge professors were sincere in their compliments or merely hoping for Cavendish's favour is difficult to tell.<sup>44</sup> But Cavendish herself took them seriously, perhaps because it is clear from these letters that some of the professors had read her work closely: they specifically refer to her critiques of Henry More, René Descartes, and Johannes Van Helmont, which appear in *Philosophical Letters*. In a dedication to

<sup>40</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "To His Excellencie the Lord Marquis of Newcastle," *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (London, 1663), sig. Nnn1v.

<sup>41</sup> Margaret Cavendish, "To the Reader," *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, sig. Nnn1v.

<sup>42</sup> *A Collection of Letters and Poems*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> *A Collection of Letters and Poems*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> William Poole, a librarian at Oxford, has traced the fate of Cavendish's works at the university. I wish to thank Liza Blake for this reference.

*Sociable Letters*, “To All Professors of Learning and Art,” Cavendish wrote, “But although I have no Learning, you give me leave to Admire it, and to wish I were one of your Society, for certainly, were I Empress of the World, I would Advance those that have most Learning and Witt.”<sup>45</sup> In their thank-you notes, the professors do just that—Cavendish must have been very satisfied.

But Cavendish was not naive. She knew that patronage relationships could be tainted by self-interest and proceed from motives that were instrumental rather than sincere. In *Sociable Letters*, she commends two noblemen who “covet not Office, Authority and Wealth ... but when they are employed, they do not grow proud with their Authority and Place, nor richer by taking Bribes; nor do they partially Favour their Friends, nor are they Unjust to their Foes.”<sup>46</sup> According to Fitzmaurice, Cavendish probably had her husband in mind when she indicated the virtues of these lords. Indeed, Cavendish was all too aware that William had suffered because of the corruption surrounding the royal court both before and during the Interregnum, and she felt he had not been rewarded sufficiently—either with honour or place—by Charles II, even though he had been raised to the title of duke in 1663. Cavendish believed that advancement, which should be the reward of virtue and merit, was instead overwhelmed by favouritism and bribery, which was a cause of civil war. In Letter 88, Cavendish argued that a governor or general (William Cavendish was Prince Charles’s governor in 1638 and a commander during the Civil War) should be chosen for his worth and generosity, “But Officers, Gouvenours and Commanders are for the most part chosen by means of Bribes, Faction or Favour, and not for Fitness, Worth, and Merit.”<sup>47</sup> And she concludes in her *Life* of Cavendish, “My Lord ... had as great private enemies about His Majesty, as he had publick enemies in the field, who used all the endeavor they could to pull him down.”<sup>48</sup>

William Cavendish had not received the honour he deserved; by 1664, Cavendish also believed that she had been treated uncivilly by most of the philosophic community. Seeking to increase her honour and stature, she challenged the position and power of the immaterialist philosophers, Descartes, Henry More, and Van Helmont, and the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes. Cavendish had sent copies of her works to Henry More in 1663, to which he responded with surprise and thanks, but there is no evidence that he actually read any of them.<sup>49</sup> Hobbes had claimed that he did peruse a book of moral tales she had sent him in 1661 (probably *Natures Pictures*), but whether he had responded seriously to them or not is impossible to determine—he was living with his patron, the

<sup>45</sup> Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, 40.

<sup>46</sup> Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, 63.

<sup>47</sup> Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, 140.

<sup>48</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 116. William Cavendish wrote a “Letter of Advice” to Charles II shortly before he was restored to the throne. The “Advice” is printed in Thomas P. Slaughter, *Ideology and Politics on the Eve of the Restoration* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984), 179. On Cavendish’s political fortunes, see Sarasohn, “Thomas Hobbes and the Duke of Newcastle.”

<sup>49</sup> *A Collection of Letters and Poems*, 90–91.

Earl of Devonshire, at the time, who was her husband's cousin, so there may have been some contact or conversation. At any rate, Cavendish felt that her opponents should respond, even if they thought it was lacking in respect to dialogue with a woman. "But I cannot conceive why," she writes in a preface to *Philosophical Letters*, "it should be a disgrace to any man to maintain his own or others opinions against a woman, so it be done with respect and civility." In other words, as long as the debate is conducted with civility, it can commence. Such civility characterizes the relationship between equals in the hierarchical society of the seventeenth century: "I have done that, which I would have done unto me; for I am as willing to have my opinions contradicted, as I do contradict others." Any errors that readers might find in her book she will be glad to correct, "for a Philosopher or Philosophers is not produced on a sudden."<sup>50</sup>

She did succeed in gaining the equality with other natural philosophers she felt was owed her when Joseph Glanvill, a defender of the newly formed Royal Society and the author of *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661), responded to the gift of her books with a serious and respectful discussion of their contents. Likewise, Walter Charleton, who had been her physician since the 1650s and was the author of several philosophical and medical texts, engaged her work in a long letter and, moreover, procured an invitation for Cavendish to attend a meeting of the Royal Society, the only woman to do so before the twentieth century.<sup>51</sup>

Enter the female philosopher Margaret Cavendish. What she is doing in *Philosophical Letters* is claiming the dignity awarded by a patronage society to those of outstanding ability. Essentially, she is challenging her opponents to a duel that could only take place between those of equal honour and standing. The duel continues in her next book, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, which is an extended critique of the new experimental natural philosophy espoused by the members of the Royal Society, and particularly of Robert Hooke's *Micrographia*, the signature text of the Society.<sup>52</sup> "I am," she writes, "as ambitious of finding the Truth of Nature, as an honourable dueller is of gaining fame and repute." Perhaps the experimental writers will try to avoid the contest, claiming it is dishonourable to fight a lady. Such an excuse only demonstrates their lack of civility, but "the impartial World, I hope, will grant me so much Justice as to consider my honesty, and their fallacy, and pass such a judgment as will declare them to be Patrons, not onely to Truth, but also to Justice and Equity."<sup>53</sup>

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**50** Margaret Cavendish, "Preface," *Philosophical Letters: or, Modest Reflections upon Opinions in Natural Philosophy* (London, 1664), sigs. B1r–C2v.

**51** These letters are printed in Cavendish, *A Collection of Letters and Poems*, 123–24, 137–42, 108–17.

**52** I explore Cavendish's campaign against experimental science in *Reason and Fancy during the Scientific Revolution: The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 149–72.

**53** Margaret Cavendish, "The Preface to the Ensuing Treatise," *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (London, 1666), sig. D2v.

Patronage is now a characteristic of “the impartial World,” which becomes the defender of truth, justice, and equity, and consequently of civility and Margaret Cavendish. Moreover, the modern natural philosophers destroy the hierarchy of learning that the universities preserve in their respect for the ancients, introducing “a Chaos, [rather] then a well-ordered Universe by their doctrine.”<sup>54</sup> Cavendish is rewarding the universities for the regard they have given her, while condemning the Royal Society’s lack of civility.

In *Observations*, Cavendish included only a Preface, the epistle to Cambridge, and a dedication to her husband. Unlike in her earlier works, in which there are many paratextual letters, dedications, and *apologia* for her works, Cavendish seems to be confident enough in herself to plunge right into a long treatise on natural philosophy, followed by the *New Blazing World*. In one of her most famous expressions of self-regard and the only epistle addressed “To the Reader,” at the beginning of the romance, Cavendish writes, “For I am not Covetous, but as Ambitious as ever any of my Sex was, is, or can be; which makes, that though I cannot be Henry the Fifth, or Charles the Second, yet I endeavor to be Margaret the First.” And she adds that although fate and fortune have not given her a kingdom, “I have made a World of my own.”<sup>55</sup>

Cavendish now equates her position with Henry V, the most famous warrior king of England and, most remarkably, with Charles II, the present ruler of the kingdom. In her own mind, she now heads the hierarchy which defines English society and, at least in fancy, has the power to be the font of all patronage. In the *Blazing World*, Cavendish’s heroine and alter ego becomes the Empress she had longed to be in *Sociable Letters*. The Empress, to whom the Emperor has conceded all authority, establishes schools composed of her subjects, various kinds of beast-men, to study natural philosophy. Revenge is sweet—the beast-men serve at her pleasure, and when she fears that they will cause disorder and rebellion in her realm, she contemplates disbanding them. But at first she hesitates to destroy them, fearing to break her former laws and thus appear inconsistent. But her new favourite, the soul of Margaret Cavendish, advises that she can do this with impunity in order to escape the possibility that her subjects might cause dissension in the state, as they had in her own world, where there are “more Gifts by partiality, then according to merit.” So much for the Royal Society and any others who challenge the preeminence of the duchess or the duke, at least in Cavendish’s imaginary world. And in the last line of Part I of *Blazing World*, using the vocabulary of patronage, the Empress declares Cavendish to be “not a flattering Parasite, but a true friend; and, in truth, such was their Platonick Friendship, as these two loving Souls did often meet and rejoice in each other’s Conversation.”<sup>56</sup> Cavendish has truly become her own patron, uniting patron and client, writer and subject, giver and receiver of favour into one glorified being.

<sup>54</sup> Cavendish, “The Preface,” *Observations*, sig. C2r. In her recent book on Margaret Cavendish, *The Well-Ordered Universe: The Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), Deborah Boyle emphasizes the role order played in Cavendish’s philosophy.

<sup>55</sup> Margaret Cavendish, “To the Reader,” *The Description of a New World called The Blazing World* (London, 1666), sig. B2r.

<sup>56</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 118, 122, 123.

*Observations* and *Blazing World* were reprinted in 1668 and *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* was reprinted in 1668. In 1667, Cavendish finally published her *Life* of William Cavendish. This year was a busy one for Margaret Cavendish, who visited the Royal Society in a grand procession which asserted her status of duchess as she swept up to Gresham College, where a huge crowd awaited her entrance. She was met by the president of the Society, Lord Brouncker, who carried a royal mace that had been presented to the institution by Charles II. Although both Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn found her to be ridiculous, Margaret Cavendish must have staged this event as a visible expression of her power and patronage. Even Robert Boyle, the most noble and famous member of the Society, was pulled into her orbit when he performed several experiments for her, to which, according to Pepys, she reacted with "admiration, all admiration."<sup>57</sup>

By the time of her visit to the Royal Society, Margaret Cavendish had overcome the fears that had haunted her work. She had become adept at using the protocols of patronage—first through her family's position, and then by claiming the support of the universities—to insinuate herself into the honorific world of the seventeenth century. She learned how to use her position as a learned lady to counterbalance the disrespect and disregard with which she and her works were treated. As she produced more serious philosophic treatises, her own self-regard increased and she could almost literally become her own favourite and integrate an imperial persona into her consciousness. Patronage gave Cavendish the tools she needed to push the impartial world into a recognition that she demanded. In her very first work, Cavendish wrote, "'Tis true, the *World* may wonder at my *Confidence*, how I dare put out a *Book*, especially in these *censorious times*; but why should I be ashamed, or afraid, where no evil is, and not please my selfe in the satisfaction of innocent desires?"<sup>58</sup> Patronage, in all its permutations, gave Cavendish the cultural capital she needed, both internally and from her society, to become the glory of her age.

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<sup>57</sup> On Cavendish's visit to the Royal Society, see Sarasohn, *Reason and Fancy*, 25–33.

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## Chapter 18

# MARGARET CAVENDISH AND JULIUS CAESAR

Domenico Lovascio

MARGARET CAVENDISH'S LIVELY interest in ancient Rome may have been partly stirred up by her having been born in St. John's Abbey, just outside Colchester's town walls.<sup>1</sup> Known by the Romans as Camulodunum, Colchester was possibly the first recorded town in Britain—being mentioned in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* (77 CE)—as well as the first capital of the Roman province. As the ruins of a Roman town wall are still visible today, it is conceivable that Roman ruins were an even more tangible presence in Colchester in Margaret's times. In addition, Colchester Castle, where Margaret's brother Charles was executed in 1648, was built on the foundations of the Temple of Claudius, which had been burnt down by Boudica in 60/61 CE. Finally, the town charter, issued by King Henry V—in whom Margaret also had a passionate interest—also mentions the Roman past of Colchester. Such a local context pervasively filled with Roman ruins, memories, and impressions makes the abundance of allusions to ancient Rome in Margaret's writings quite unsurprising.

Yet Margaret's engagement with Roman history and personalities has not been subjected to as wide a range of critical takes as other topics of interest in her oeuvre, possibly by dint of her lack of formal classical training, coupled with her unceasing (and rather eccentric in the golden age of *imitatio*) effort to foreground the originality and idiosyncrasy of her own fancy and writings, which resulted in a (perhaps programmatic) lack of interest in seeking legitimization from ancient authorities: among her favourite images of herself was that of a spider spinning a web from its own insides.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, one ought not to forget that, as Lara Dodds poignantly suggests, "The painful experience of war and exile [led Margaret] to doubt classical models of virtue as well as the authority of the classical *auctor*."<sup>3</sup>

Only a handful of scholars have significantly explored Margaret's appropriation of Roman antiquity. Emma L. E. Rees has investigated Margaret's relationship with Lucretius, especially as regards her debt to Epicurean atomism and the structural influence of *De rerum natura* throughout her first printed work, *Poems, and Fancies* (1653).<sup>4</sup> In Rees's view, "Lucretius's use of verse to convey his philosophy suggested to [Margaret] a

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<sup>1</sup> Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Royalist, Writer and Romantic* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Sylvia Bowerbank, "The Spider's Delight: Margaret Cavendish and the 'Female' Imagination," *English Literary Renaissance* 14 (1984): 392–408.

<sup>3</sup> Lara Dodds, "Reading and Writing in 'Sociable Letters'; Or, How Margaret Cavendish Read Her Plutarch," *English Literary Renaissance* 41 (2011): 189–218 at 210.

<sup>4</sup> Emma L. E. Rees, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 54–79.

genre which she adopted, carefully and deliberately constructing the rendering of scientific theory in poetry as a culturally acceptable literary activity for a woman.”<sup>5</sup> For James Fitzmaurice, in spite of Margaret’s inability to read Latin and Greek, it is evident that she “both read and gave considerable thought to what she found in translation.”<sup>6</sup> Then, in what is to my mind one of the most illuminating contributions on Margaret’s work, Dodds examines Margaret’s relationship with Plutarch as “a case study in the relationship between female reading practices and the classical literary heritage” and “as a critical examination of the afterlife of humanist models of reading in seventeenth-century England,” concluding that, “Conditioned by political circumstance, familial and marital commitments, and, of course, the constraints of gender, Cavendish’s Plutarch reveals a trenchant commentary on the subject positions available to the female reader and writer.”<sup>7</sup> Finally, Katherine Romack has explored the self-identification of Margaret with Cleopatra that lies at the core of her defence of the Egyptian queen in *The Worlds Olio* (1655), finding that Margaret “not only applauded Cleopatra’s whorish performativity, but engaged in it herself, promoting a kind of soft-core erotica for married couples” as a way “to make companionate marriage sexy to the public, thus serving an important social imperative” at a time when traditional conjugal obligations had been destabilized in the wake of the Civil War and “the dissolution of familial unity resulting from the decay of patriarchal authority.”<sup>8</sup>

As for Margaret’s views on specific personalities from Roman history, it is not a mystery that she was virtually obsessed with Gaius Julius Caesar, the renowned Roman military and political leader who had conquered an incredibly wide range of territories for the Roman Republic and had paved the way for the rise of the Roman Empire. The Cavendishes’ admiration for Caesar (and the Caesars) was reflected in the paintings of ten Roman emperors and two empresses that were displayed at Bolsover Castle.<sup>9</sup> As Karen Hearn explains, “The emperors were copied after the paintings that Federico Gonzaga had commissioned from Titian in 1536 and which had been sold, as part of the Mantuan Gonzaga collection, to Charles I. The King displayed them in a gallery at St.

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<sup>5</sup> Rees, *Margaret Cavendish*, 56.

<sup>6</sup> James Fitzmaurice, “Introduction,” in *Sociable Letters*, by Margaret Cavendish (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview, 2004), 11–28, 18. See also James Fitzmaurice, “Margaret Cavendish’s ‘Life of William,’ Plutarch, and Mixed Genre,” in *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writings of Margaret Cavendish*, ed. Line Cottegnies and Nancy Weitz (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 80–102.

<sup>7</sup> Dodds, “Reading and Writing,” 190, 193.

<sup>8</sup> Katherine Romack, “‘I Wonder She Should Be So Infamous for a Whore?': Cleopatra Restored,” in *Cavendish and Shakespeare, Interconnections*, ed. Katherine Romack and James Fitzmaurice (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 193–211, 211, 207.

<sup>9</sup> As Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 273, points out, at Bolsover Castle William also “constructed a garden to the east and south of the Little Castle enclosed by a high wall on whose top ran a broad walk. The centrepiece was a fountain ... Surrounding this, below ground level, stone beasts and satyrs and the heads of the Roman emperors were visible from the wall-top walk, but not from the surrounding gardens.”

James's Palace, where [William] is likely to have seen them. In an age that valued classical example, [William] may well have commissioned or purchased these copies."<sup>10</sup>

Julius Caesar is a ubiquitous presence throughout Margaret's canon as unsurpassable *exemplum aemulandum*, so much so that it would not be an overstatement to argue that Margaret was head over heels in love with him. This is not only declared by Margaret herself in the oft-quoted passage from the CLXII of her *Sociable Letters* (1664)—"I only was in Love with three Dead men, which were Dead long before my time, the one was *Caesar*, for his Valour, the second *Ovid*, for his Wit, and the third was our Countryman *Shakespear*, for his Comical and Tragical Humour"—but also slightly more obliquely expressed in *The First Part of the Lady Contemplation* (1662), whose title character constantly provides the reader with significant insights into Margaret's own dreams: "I did imagine my self such a Beauty, as Nature never made the like ... And then that a great powerful Monarch, such a one as *Alexander*, or *Caesar*, fell desperately in love with me, seeing but my Picture, which was sent all about the world."<sup>11</sup>

Even though the idea conveyed by these passages of an adamant admiration for Caesar on Margaret's part is accurate and indisputable, a wider and more detailed investigation of Margaret's appropriation of Caesar may enable readers to appreciate such an admiring contemplation of Caesar's heroic traits and deeds as a more complex, nuanced, and versatile feature of her production. More specifically, I would like to suggest that Caesar as imagined by Margaret can be interpreted, to varying degrees, as a sort of discursive tool through which she negotiates her stances on the most disparate matters in a way that ends up complicating more straightforward (though not entirely illegitimate) readings of Margaret as a mere Julius Caesar obsessive.

## Fame

A flaunted effort to emulate Caesar is by all means the prevalent note throughout Margaret's allusions to him. And while it is true that Margaret occasionally presents faux debates aimed at determining whether Caesar had been good or evil, these ought to be more accurately seen in light of Margaret's fascination with arguments *in utramque partem* and her interest more in "understanding how an effective case could be made both pro and con than in actually settling on a fixed opinion."<sup>12</sup> Caesar is an object of

<sup>10</sup> Karen Hearn, "William Cavendish and the Fine Arts: Patronage before the Exile," in *Royalist Refugees: William and Margaret Cavendish in the Rubens House 1648–1660*, ed. Ben Van Beneden and Nora De Poorter (Antwerp: Rubenshuis & Rubenianum, 2006), 90–94, 93.

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *CCXI Sociable Letters* (London, 1664), 338; Margaret Cavendish, *The First Part of the Lady Contemplation*, 1.1, in *Plays* (London, 1662), 182.

<sup>12</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Natures Picture* (London, 1671), 167–69; Margaret Cavendish, *The Worlds Olio* (London, 1655), 129–31; Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 19. On arguments *in utramque partem*, see Joel B. Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 31–53.

emulation to whom Margaret turns repeatedly in her works. As she declares in her poem "Of Ambition":

TEN *Thousand Pounds a yeare* will make me live:  
*A Kingdome, Fortune* then to me must give.  
 I'll conquer all, like *Alexander Great*,  
 And, like to *Caesar*, my *Opposers* beat,  
 Give me a *Fame*, that with the *World* may last,  
 Let all *Tongues* tell of my great *Actions* past.  
 Let every *Child*, when first tis taught to speak,  
 Repeat my *Name*, my *Memory* for to keep.  
 And then great *Fortune* give to me thy power,  
 To ruine *Man*, and raise him in an *Hour*.  
 Let me command the *Fates*, and spin their *thread*;  
 And *Death* to stay his *Sithe*, when I forbid.  
 And, *Destiny*, give me your *Chaines* to tye,  
*Effects* from *Causes* to produce thereby.  
 And let me like the *Gods* on high become,  
 That nothing can but by my *will* be done.<sup>13</sup>

The stress Margaret places not only on fame but also on the importance of the repetition of one's own name and on the crucial role of fortune in the careers of successful men creates a clearly discernible network of allusions to Caesar, the darling of Fortune for so many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century commentators, with her focus on the realization of her own *will* (besides the obvious religious connotations) potentially hinting at William Shakespeare's Caesar's famous line "The cause is in my will, I will not come."<sup>14</sup> Besides, Margaret's poem conspicuously mentions Julius Caesar side by side with Alexander the Great. This pairing recurs very frequently in Margaret's references to the heroes of the classical past. Margaret's model is likely to have been Plutarch, who had juxtaposed the biographies of Alexander and Caesar in his *Lives*. Specifically, Margaret would have probably been aware that in "The Life of Julius Caesar" Plutarch narrates that

when he [i.e., Caesar] was in SPAYNE, reading the history of *Alexanders* actes, when he had red it, he was sorowfull a good while after, & then burst out in weeping. His frends seeing that, marueled what should be the cause of his sorow. He aunswered them, doe ye not thinke sayd he, that I haue good cause to be heauiue, when king *Alexander* being no older than my selfe is now, had in old time wonne so many nations and contries, and that I hithervnto haue done nothing worthy of my selfe?"<sup>15</sup>

From Plutarch onwards, the pairing of Caesar and Alexander became commonplace, and Margaret exploits it multiple times in her writings by coupling the two leaders as often

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies* (London, 1653), 93–94.

<sup>14</sup> William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniell (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson, 1998), 2.2.71.

<sup>15</sup> Plutarch, *The lives of the noble Grecians and Romanes compared together by that graue learned philosopher and historiographer, Plutarke of Chæroneia; translated out of Greeke into French by Iames Amyot ...; and out of French into Englishe, by Thomas North* (London, 1579), 768.

as possible on the grounds of their being equally possessed of extraordinary drive, ambition, and charisma.

That Margaret indisputably upholds Caesar as a model towards which to strive is also clear in *The Publick Wooing* (1662), when the reader is informed that an Englishman is the leader of the great Mogul's army, "and the Merchants do cry him up like to another Iulius Caesar."<sup>16</sup> In any event, no other passage can possibly epitomize Margaret's lifelong fondness for Caesar as effectively as her candid confession in the XXVII of her *Sociable Letters*:

[O]f all the Men I read of, I Emulate *Iulius Caesar* most, because he was a man that had all these Excellencies, as Courage, Prudence, Wit and Eloquence, in great Perfection, inso-much as when I read of *Iulius Caesar*, I cannot but wish that Nature and Fate had made me such a one as he was; and sometimes I have that Courage, as to think I should not be afraid of his Destiny, so I might have as great a Fame.<sup>17</sup>

Margaret describes Caesar as the quintessential general, statesman, writer, and orator. As this excerpt makes apparent, he was possibly everything Margaret wished she could have been, the supreme embodiment of her fantasies of glory; in other words, he functioned as a sort of proxy through which Margaret could vicariously experience those kinds of glorious achievements that were firmly out of women's reach. What she particularly yearned for, however, was fame, which for Margaret, as Susan James argues, "was the opposite of oblivion, and consists in being remembered as an honourable person"; in Margaret's usage, adds Jean Gagen, fame was generally deployed "as a synonym for honor, in the sense of recognition and reward of actual merit."<sup>18</sup>

The character of Lady Sanspareille, who spends her time "contemplating" and writing verse in *Youths Glory, and Deaths Banquet. The First Part* (1662) but by the end of the play sinks to an untimely grave after winning a glorious fame, should probably be read as a literary realization of Margaret. This especially emerges when she discloses to her father that

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<sup>16</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Publick Wooing*, 1.1, in *Playes*, 369. Although here Margaret seems optimistic about the possibility of emulating Caesar successfully, *The Sociable Companions* (1668) tells a different story. Here, as Dodds demonstrates, the scepticism displayed by the friends of Will Fullwit, a student of the classics, suggests "that the distance between past and present circumstances is too great for the classics to be fruitfully 'studied for action,' and, more pointedly, one of Will's companions warns that should Will try to 'make *Caesar* your Pattern, it were a thousand to one but you would shew your self rather a Fool than a *Caesar*'" (Margaret Cavendish, *The Sociable Companions*, 2.1, in *Plays, Never Before Printed* (London, 1668), 17; Dodds, "Reading and Writing," 208.)

<sup>17</sup> Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, 52.

<sup>18</sup> Susan James, "Introduction," in Margaret Cavendish, *Political Writings*, ed. Susan James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ix-xxix, xviii; Jean Gagen, "Honor and Fame in the Works of the Duchess of Newcastle," *Studies in Philology* 56 (1959): 519-38 at 525.

it is fame I covet, for which were the ambitions of *Alexander* and *Caesar* joyned into one mind, mine doth exceed them, as far as theirs exceeded humble spirits, my mind being restless to get the highest place in Fames high Tower; and I had rather fall in the adventure, than never try to climb; wherefore, it is not titled Honour, nor Wealth, nor Bravery, nor Beauty, nor Wit that I covet, but as they do contribute to adorn merit, which merit is the only foundation whereon is built a glorious fame, where noble actions is the architectour thereof, which makes me despairingly melancholly, having not a sufficient stock of merit, or if I had, yet no waies to advance it; but I must dye like beasts, forgotten of mankind, and be buried in Oblivions grave.<sup>19</sup>

The absence of proper outlets for a woman's ambition for fame tinges Lady Sanspareille's words with a depressing bitterness that betrays Margaret's own lifelong inner torment. For a woman like Margaret—inevitably excluded from heroic actions, public employments, or eloquent pleadings—fame could exclusively be achieved through authorship. As Margaret makes clear in another oft-quoted extract from the preface "To the Reader" in *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy to Which Is Added the Description of a New Blazing World* (1666),

I am not Covetous, but as Ambitious as ever any of my Sex was, is, or can be; which makes, that though I cannot be *Henry* the Fifth, or *Charles* the Second, yet I endeavour to be *Margaret* the First; and although I have neither power, time nor occasion to conquer the world as *Alexander* and *Caesar* did; yet rather then not to be Mistress of one, since Fortune and the Fates would give me none, I have made a World of my own: for which no body, I hope, will blame me, since it is in every ones power to do the like.<sup>20</sup>

It would be neither mistaken nor an exaggeration to state that no other words ever written by Margaret manage more effectively to exemplify the ambition for fame that motivated her throughout her life. As Dolores Paloma points out, "The ideals and ambitions [Margaret] sought to realize in her own life were appropriated from and expressed in terms borrowed from the heroic ethic of the masculine world," a world from which, however, Margaret was irremediably excluded.<sup>21</sup> As a matter of fact, in one of the two designs Abraham van Diepenbeeck had prepared for Margaret's *Poems, and Fancies*, she appeared as a classical heroine between the busts of Minerva and Apollo, with a confident and masculine posture. In addition, her "hand resting on her hip is a common pose in the portraits of kings, aristocrats and great men, not normally seen in the portraits of women."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, several of Margaret's plays tell "the stories of exceptional women who entered the traditional male domains of war, politics and academia,

<sup>19</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Youths Glory, and Deaths Banquet. The First Part*, 2.5, in *Playes*, 130.

<sup>20</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy to Which Is Added the Description of a New Blazing World* (London, 1666), sig. b\*\*r.

<sup>21</sup> Dolores Paloma, "Margaret Cavendish: Defining the Female Self," *Women's Studies* 7 (1980): 55–66 at 55–56.

<sup>22</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 179.

where they displayed a 'masculine' courage and ability, fulfilling Margaret's own frustrated ambitions for a 'heroic' life."<sup>23</sup>

Margaret's decision to achieve fame through writing set her apart from all other women in that, as Gagen observes, Margaret "alone of all the women writers of her day espoused writing as a career with the avowed intent of winning fame," fully aware "that in making her bid for fame by her venture into print she was arrogating to herself a goal for which, traditionally, only men had presumed to strive."<sup>24</sup> As James remarks, Margaret "began to publish her work and advertise her ambition for fame during the 1650s, at a time when the lives of exiled Royalists were in danger of being forgotten. In her own case, the fact that she had no children after several years of marriage may have increased her anxiety that she would disappear without a trace."<sup>25</sup> In doing so, Margaret was also advertising, as Katie Whitaker puts it, "an alternative model of feminine behaviour, based on the French fashion for heroic women" by presenting "the publication of her poetry not as a violation of the feminine virtues of modesty, silence and chastity, but as an honourable act, even a moral or religious duty."<sup>26</sup> After all, in Paloma's phrasing, she "didn't think much of the feminine world: it bred triviality, pettiness, and fearfulness"—even though such a position did change over time, as she eventually came to argue that "women shared men's rational souls, and were inferior only by nurture, not nature."<sup>27</sup>

## Valour

Among the qualities that enabled Caesar to achieve fame, Margaret seems to have been especially fascinated by his valour. In one of her not-so-common forays into the interpretation of ancient history, Margaret even puts Caesar forward as indisputable proof of the ancient Britons' valour and courage:

THE Britains of *England* were a Valiant People, but that they had not skill of Arms answerable to their Courage, as the Romans had; yet *Caesar*, and all the Emperours, could not conquer that Island in so short a time as *Alexander* had conquered most part of the World; therefore it seems their Courage was great, since their Skill was less, and could make it to the Romans so difficult a Work.<sup>28</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Caesar is here once more conceived as an unsurpassable model. His military prowess and martial attributes are so huge and resplendent that they even make his opponents bask in reflected glory. Quite inevitably, then, Caesar's greatness reverberates with yet stronger reason on his own soldiers, who emerge in *Orations of*

<sup>23</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 214.

<sup>24</sup> Gagen, "Honor and Fame," 520–21.

<sup>25</sup> James, "Introduction," xviii.

<sup>26</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 157.

<sup>27</sup> Paloma, "Defining the Female Self," 59; Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 192.

<sup>28</sup> Cavendish, *The Worlds Olio*, 125.

*Divers Sorts Accommodated to Divers Places* (1662) as models of masculinity and bravery, the instruments that decisively enabled Caesar to subdue the world:

Wherefore give me leave to remember you of *Caesar's* Souldiers, for surely you could not choose but hear of them, their Fame being so great, and sounding so loud, for their Patience, Sufferance, Hardiness, Industry, Carefulness, Watchfulness, Valours and Victories, yet were they no more than men, and I hope you are not less than men; But there are two sorts of Courages, and they, as the Story says, had them both, as Fortitude in Suffering, and Valour in Acting, which made them so fortunate in overcoming, as to Conquer the most part of the World; and though I cannot hope you will Conquer All the World, yet I hope you will have Victory over your Enemies, so shall you be Masters and not Slaves.<sup>29</sup>

Caesar's glory is here synecdochically extended to his army, and their example is used by Margaret to fire the blood of ordinary men in necessity. Margaret's frequent stress on Caesar's warlike *virtus* is not only dependent on her ill-concealed envy for masculine courage and ability but also on the fact that Caesar reminded her of the martial ethos that had been a staple for the men of her family of origin, the Lucases: Thomas Lucas, her grandfather, had been captain in the Essex militia; John Lucas, her father, was "a noted duellist of his day, and [her] three brothers [John, Thomas, and Charles] and a nephew were to spend part or all of their adult lives as professional soldiers."<sup>30</sup> Margaret hugely admired each one of them, as she did her husband William, whose military valour and martial ideal of nobility had fascinated her since she first met him.

In Margaret's opinion, as James points out, "the supreme values of a healthy commonwealth are wisdom and above all honour. Communities dedicated to this end are by no means pacific, since military glory and the fame that accompanies it are essential aspects of the honour code."<sup>31</sup> As a consequence, Caesar and his army were also deployed to lament upon the lack of real heroes among the men of the modern world, as occurs, for example, in an exchange between two merchants in *Loves Adventures* (1662):

2. *Merchant.*

For my part, I cannot think they are so good Souldiers as they were in *Caesars* time.

1. *Merchant.*

That may be, for there is no such souldiers as *Caesars* souldiers were, no not in the world; that is, there are no men so patient, obedienz, carefull, industrious, laborious, daring, adventurous, resolute, and active, in these Warrs, in this age, as the *Romans* were in *Caesars* time; and of all the souldiers, *Caesars* souldiers were the best, and of all commanders *Caesar* himself.<sup>32</sup>

Here, Caesar and his soldiers are used as a means to compare a glorious past with a corrupt present, as they feature all those traits—which Margaret makes a point of listing

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Orations of Divers Sorts Accommodated to Divers Places* (London, 1662), 29–30.

<sup>30</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 6.

<sup>31</sup> James, "Introduction," xxiv.

<sup>32</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Loves Adventures*, 2.6, in *Plays*, 12.

in painstaking detail—that were regularly attached to traditional representations of masculine martial virtue and especially associated with Roman *virtus*, such as *dignitas*, *integritas*, *constantia*, *fides*, *pietas*, *gravitas*, and *sobrietas*.<sup>33</sup>

## Marriage and Gender

Caesar, however, populates Margaret's imagination—or, as she would have had it, fancy—not only as a touchstone for military enterprises of great pith and moment but also as a historical personality that is quite unexpectedly susceptible of entering other, more unusually domestic realms for a Roman general. One example is cuckoldry. As the Adviser tells Lord Court in *The First Part of the Lady Contemplation*, “it is a hundred to one but a man when he is maryed shall be Cuckolded, were he as wise as Solomon, as valiant as David, as fortunate as Caesar, as witty as Homer, or as handsome as Absalom; for Women are of the same Nature as men, for not one man amongst a thousand makes a good Husband, nor one woman amongst a thousand makes an honest Wife.”<sup>34</sup> In an odd anticipation of the notion of gender equality simultaneously channelling the familiar early modern anxiety that a man should prove a cuckold and his wife turn whore, Margaret puts Caesar forward as an example of outstanding fortune that would not—in hypothetical terms—preclude cuckoldry.

Yet Caesar is also upheld as *exemplum* of the proper behaviour men ought to keep with women in *The Worlds Olio*: “But he that strives with his Wife, to win the Breeches, would have never had the wit to have fought the Battels of *Caesar*. ... It is more honour for a Man to be led Captive by a Woman, than to contend by resistance; for a Man can receive no dishonour to be taken Prisoner by the Effeminat Sex.”<sup>35</sup> Here, in clarifying that men ought not to strive for superiority with women, Margaret apparently debunks the widespread early modern stereotype of feminization as the most terrible danger men might be exposed to. *Apparently*, however, is the key word here, inasmuch as captivity under a woman is seen as a positive prospect for men exclusively within wedlock. Margaret was a strong advocate of the institution of marriage and made a conscious and sustained effort to make it look more appealing than, for early modern women, it otherwise would.

Wives were very important to husbands in many respects, Margaret believed, and this was an absolute staple of her matrimonial propaganda. As she forcefully argues in *The Worlds Olio*,

*Caesar* shewed himself a Fool in nothing but in quitting his Guard, and not hearkning to his Wife, which was to shew his Courage, and to let the World see he durst go unarmed, singly alone as it were, and his freedom from the chains of fond Affection; thus quitting Prudence and Love, he dyed too violent a Death. And *Seianus* quitting the Affection towards his Wife, and placing it upon *Julian*, raised such a Jealousie in *Tyberius*, as it

33 Clifford J. Ronan, “Antike Roman”: *Power Symbolology and the Roman Play in Early Modern England: 1585–1635* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 151–54.

34 Cavendish, *The First Part of the Lady Contemplation*, 2.7, in *Plays*, 190–91.

35 Cavendish, *Worlds Olio*, 71.

cost him his Life, otherwise he might have ruled the Empire, and so the most part of the World. Thus *Anthony's* leaving his Wife for the love of *Cleopatra*, lost him the third part of the World. ... And if Caesar had condescended to his Wives Perswasion, he had not gone to the Senate that day; and who knows but the next might have discovered the Conspiracy?<sup>36</sup>

There is a single thing Caesar's, Sejanus's, and Antony's falls have in common: they can all be traced back to their not heeding their own wives' advice. Despite what Margaret used to write about women's weakness and ignorance, here she suggests that a wise man ought to take his wife's counsel very seriously. This complicates more traditional readings of Margaret's views on marriage, which sometimes stress the extent to which she tended to follow conventions in accepting powerless wives as inferior and subservient to husbands. In the passage quoted above, Margaret seems to imply that wives (rather than women in general) are repositories of a particular kind of wisdom that husbands are not always ready to take in and understand, to their own detriment. In other words, husbands should "strive to please, and yield to" their wives "in all things but what will do them harm."<sup>37</sup>

Margaret's attempt to advertise marriage as an appealing institution can be read together with her own defence "*Of Cleopatra*," again in *The Worlds Olio*. Here, as Romack insightfully argues, Margaret "unequivocally aligns Cleopatra with matrimonial virtue," and, by "upholding Cleopatra's 'constancy,' [she] transforms Cleopatra's libidinous play into a strategy to be emulated by wives to ensure successful and happy marriages."<sup>38</sup> This way, continues Romack, Margaret portrays Cleopatra as a paradigmatic woman able to reconcile "sexual desire and chastity," thus "promoting, in effect, female desire for domesticity by lending a certain realism and attractiveness to marriage," so that "the wifely Cleopatra" becomes "both interesting and sexy—buttressing the affective and sexual ties of companionate marriage in ways that her masculine contemporaries could never have hoped to accomplish."<sup>39</sup>

Leaving marriage aside, Margaret also offers a somewhat unusual reading of Caesar's relationships with women in *Wits Cabal, The Second Part* (1662) in a conversation between Ambition, Faction, Pleasure, Superbe, and Portrait. To Ambition's statement that "Women are the greatest Conquerors, because they conquer conquering men, and make them become slaves"—including "the power-fullest men, as *Alexander* and *Caesar*"—Faction retorts that in fact

Women never made a Conquest of the two latter, and therefore cannot be said to be absolute Conquerors: for none are absolute Conquerors but those that conquer power; that is, those that get absolute dominion over all the World, which *Alexander* and *Caesar* are said to have done by their Valour and Conduct; and never any Woman or Women conquer'd

<sup>36</sup> Cavendish, *Worlds Olio*, 83.

<sup>37</sup> Cavendish, *Worlds Olio*, 71.

<sup>38</sup> Romack, "Cleopatra Restored," 194.

<sup>39</sup> Romack, "Cleopatra Restored," 195.

those men, as to get them to yield up their power for a womans sake, which shews they were not rul'd by women, although they lov'd women.<sup>40</sup>

To Faction's convoluted explanation, Portrait replies that "*Alexander nor Caesar* lived not so long a time, as to be Conquer'd by women: for women must have time and opportunity for to gain the Conquest in, as well as men have."<sup>41</sup> This is again countered by Faction, who remarks that "If *Alexander* and *Caesar* must have been old before they possibly could have been conquer'd, it proves that women do rather conquer Age, than power weakens the strength; and the truth is, women conquer nothing but the vices, weaknesses, and defects of men," and "they cannot conquer mens fix'd Resolutions, their heroick Valours, their high Ambitions, their magnificent Generosities, their glorious Honours, or their conquering or over-ruling Powers: Nor can women conquer their moral Vertues, as their Prudence, Fortitude, Justice, and Temperance."<sup>42</sup> Here Caesar (again considered side by side with Alexander the Great) is therefore taken as litmus test for the seductive power of women; the debate is whether Caesar—who was never thoroughly dominated by a woman—would have been conquered had he lived long enough. In other words, Margaret deploys Caesar here as an extreme of manliness whose hypothetical conquest by women would have been outstandingly impressive.

### Outcaesaring Caesar

In light of the references to Caesar that have thus far been surveyed in this chapter, it may come as a bit of a surprise that in the moralistic, proto-psychological review "Of the Emperors" in *The Worlds Olio*—which seems to suggest that Margaret had been reading Suetonius's *Twelve Caesars*—an innuendo on Caesar possibly hints at a not completely unqualified admiration: "*Caesar* might have proved a good Emperor, but he had not time to be an ill one."<sup>43</sup> This perspective contradicts the feeling of lamentable incompleteness that Margaret conveys in "Of Caesar," also in *The Worlds Olio*: "Half *Caesar's* Deeds dyed when he dyed: for though his Fortunes were to shew himself a Valiant Man, a Good Souldier, and a Carefull Commander, yet he lived not to shew Justice in the Publick, as what Laws he would make, or what Government he would form; so that *Caesar* onely lived to shew his Conduct in Wars, but not his Magistracy in Peace."<sup>44</sup> The difference is apparent in the fact that in the former passage Caesar's death is conceived as timely for his reputation, while in the second instance it is construed as an event that prevented him from leaving to posterity an even more glorious image to worship. With this contradiction, Margaret therefore inscribes herself in that long line of commentators from

<sup>40</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Wits Cabal, The Second Part*, 1.3, in *Playes*, 295.

<sup>41</sup> Cavendish, *Wits Cabal*, 1.3, in *Playes*, 295.

<sup>42</sup> Cavendish, *Wits Cabal*, 1.3, in *Playes*, 296.

<sup>43</sup> Cavendish, *Worlds Olio*, 128.

<sup>44</sup> Cavendish, *Worlds Olio*, 132.

the first century BCE down to the early modern era that had expressed mixed views on virtually every aspect of Caesar's biography.

Even more interestingly, however, Margaret sometimes turns out to be bold enough to depict herself (and her husband) as *superior* to Caesar, as occurs in "The Epilogue to the Reader" to *The New Blazing World*, where she claims that her

Creation was more easily and suddenly effected, then the Conquests of the two famous Monarchs of the World, *Alexander* and *Caesar*: Neither have I made such disturbances, and caused so many ... deaths, as they did ... And in the formation of those Worlds, I take more delight and glory, then ever *Alexander* or *Caesar* did in conquering this terrestrial world.<sup>45</sup>

Albeit with her unmistakable touch of irony and wit, Margaret advertises her own accomplishment as obtained even more quickly than the conquests of Caesar, who had been repeatedly praised by historians for his swiftness of action; she also points out that she has been gentler and more courteous than him in provoking considerably less trouble and strife while carrying out her deeds. Moreover, she underlines the fact that she has *created* worlds rather than simply *conquered* one. And as a creator, she seems to imply, she has attained an even higher standing than Caesar, since only deities have the power to create, not mere mortals. On these worlds of her own creation she can exercise absolute dominion and obliquely concretize her more covert aspirations to being not just a writer but a ruler, the self-fashioned Margaret the First.<sup>46</sup>

Such a sense of superiority also surfaces in the *Life of William*, where Margaret's effort to belittle Caesar is part of a strategy aimed at aggrandizing her beloved husband. Here Margaret mentions fortune again but to a different end, namely contending that "had *Caesar* not been fortunate, his Valour and Prudence would never have gained him so much applause."<sup>47</sup> She further elaborates that

many by flattering Poets, have been compared to *Caesar*, without desert; but this I dare freely and without flattery say of my Lord, That though he had not *Caesars* Fortune, yet he wanted not *Caesars* Courage, nor his Prudence, nor his good Nature, nor his Wit; Nay, in some particulars he did more then *Caesar* ever did; for though *Caesar* had a great Army, yet he was first set out by the State or Senators of *Rome*, who were Masters almost of all the World; when as my Lord raised his Army ... most upon his own Interest ... at such a time when his Gracious King and Sovereign was then not Master of his own Kingdoms, He being over-power'd by his rebellious Subjects.<sup>48</sup>

In this passage, as Fitzmaurice sums up, Margaret "reminds her reader that her husband's army was funded by himself, his friends, and his kin, not by the king. The

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<sup>45</sup> Cavendish, *Observations*, sig. Iir.

<sup>46</sup> In the late 1650s Margaret would indeed be hailed at Cambridge as "Margareta I, Philosophorum Princeps," an incomparable consummation of a life's work—if somewhat overblown and exaggeratedly hyperbolic to our twenty-first-century eyes.

<sup>47</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince William Cavendish, Duke, Marquess and Earl of Newcastle* (London, 1667), 177.

<sup>48</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 192.

implication here is that when Newcastle's money was gone, he had no choice but to retire into exile."<sup>49</sup> Margaret, adds Fitzmaurice, "also slips in a few particulars of her understanding of her subject's character: Caesar was likeable, as was the case with Newcastle. Caesar and Newcastle were both prudent; both were gifted with wit."<sup>50</sup> Yet Margaret's love for her husband is far too important for her to put anyone else above him. And this includes Caesar.

The disproportionate role of fortune in Caesar's ascending parable comes up again in *Natures Picture*, where Margaret can be seen to go as far as to make Caesar's greatness appear somewhat questionable as depending more on extrinsic than intrinsic factors. She does so while discussing her own take on the theory of reincarnation, which entails forgetfulness of one's previous life and identity, so that any given creature, once reborn, might

come to envy his own Renown, which was kept alive by Records from Age to Age; as if ... *Alexander* and *Caesar* should be created again, and should envy their own Actions, Victories, and Powers, or (at least) grieve and repine they cannot do the like: for if they were created again, they might miss of the same Occasions, Opportunities or Powers, Birth or Fortunes: for though the Body and Soul may be the same, as also the Appetites and the Desires; yet the outward concurrence may not be the same that was in the former Being.<sup>51</sup>

As Whitaker argues, Margaret maintained that fame "could come without rhyme or reason, without worth or virtue, the result merely of fickle Fortune," and if Margaret could not get fame by desert, she was willing to obtain it by chance, as long as she attained it.<sup>52</sup> In this specific passage, however, what Margaret seems to imply is that Caesar's (and Alexander's) more positive qualities would have been utterly meaningless without the right "Occasions, Opportunities or Powers, Birth or Fortunes," which appear to have a much higher relevance than inner qualities. The afflicting first-hand experience of the sufferings that came along with the Civil War made the overwhelming force of history and fate all too apparent and palpable to Margaret, so that it is rather unsurprising that in the *Life of William* she ended up placing such considerable relevance on the role of external forces, the workings of fortune, and their capacity to influence and even determine human lives.

Nonetheless, Margaret also seems to have thought that fortune had been somehow bestowed on Caesar because he did deserve it by virtue of his liberality. This is, at least, the idea expressed by the Second Virgin in *The Unnatural Tragedie* (1662): "there is no Prince that hath had the like good fortune as *Alexander* and *Caesar*, so none have had the like Generosities as they had, which shews, as if Fortune ... measur'd her gifts by the largeness of the Heart, and the liberality of the hand of those she gave to."<sup>53</sup> The

<sup>49</sup> Fitzmaurice, "Margaret Cavendish's 'Life of William,'" 85.

<sup>50</sup> Fitzmaurice, "Margaret Cavendish's 'Life of William,'" 85.

<sup>51</sup> Cavendish, *Natures Picture*, 603.

<sup>52</sup> Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 170–71.

<sup>53</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Unnatural Tragedie*, 2.10, in *Playes*, 332.

Third Virgin approves of this statement, arguing that it was not “the glory of Victory, and conquering the most part of the World, which made *Alexander* and *Caesar* to be so much reverenc’d, admir’d, and renown’d by those following Ages; but that their Heroick Actions were seconded with their generous deeds, distributing their good fortune to the most deserving and meritorious persons in their Parties.”<sup>54</sup> All things considered, it seems quite likely that Margaret felt exactly the same.

## Conclusion

Mapping out and taking a closer look at the allusions and references to Julius Caesar in Margaret Cavendish’s plays, poems, and prose works has exposed the complexities and nuances that characterize her appropriation of the most popular personality of the Roman past and will hopefully be helpful to future explorations of Margaret’s engagement with Roman history at large. More than a mere model to emulate (or even to exceed), more than just a proxy through which vicariously to experience fantasies of glory unattainable for women, Caesar emerges as a discursive tool of choice that Margaret deploys in very different contexts such as discussions of cuckoldry and marriage, or even using him as a litmus test for women’s seductive power, thus embedding the ancient within the contemporary while simultaneously capitalizing on Caesar’s status as an immediately recognizable figure for learned and unlearned readers alike. All in all, this chapter therefore opens a fresh window on Margaret’s active participation in seventeenth-century intellectual life, while at the same time providing further insights into how uneducated readers of the vernacular more generally, and women in particular, engaged with classical heritage.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Cavendish, *Unnatural Tragedie*, 2.13, in *Playes*, 338.

<sup>55</sup> Dodds, “Reading and Writing,” 193.

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## GENERIC BRICOLAGE AND EPICUREANISM IN MARGARET CAVENDISH'S IMAGINATIVE WORKS

### Line Cottage

THE LATEST RESEARCH in the field of Cavendish studies has definitively established how thorough Margaret Cavendish's literary ambition was. While earlier critics of the 1980s saw in Cavendish a woman writer with a prodigious but often inexplicable literary output, recent scholars have shown the unusual degree of self-fashioning and conscious plotting of her career as a writer.<sup>1</sup> What has emerged is how systematic her exploration of genre after genre was—first poetry, then natural philosophy (in treatises, essays, aphorisms, and letters), fiction (novellas and a longer romance), life-writing (both biography and autobiography), and finally drama. Her literary ambition has almost no equal in the period, except perhaps in Ben Jonson. She often voices this feminist, literary ambition with brashness, as in the preface to her scientific romance of a new world dominated by a woman, *The Blazing World*: "I am not covetous, but as ambitious as ever any of my sex was, is, or can be; which makes, that though I cannot be *Henry* the Fifth, or *Charles* the second, yet I endeavour to be *Margaret* the *First*."<sup>2</sup> Entering into dialogue with tradition, Cavendish systematically takes up conventional forms and refashions them in a strikingly idiosyncratic manner to serve a political and a gender-oriented agenda. Critics have shown, for instance, how her scientific romance, *The Blazing World* (1666), and her biography of her husband allowed her to affirm her royalism.<sup>3</sup> Others have focused on her appropriation of genres as pre-feminist strategies of assertion and have shown how she breaks away from a male-dominated literary tradition by subverting generic codes.<sup>4</sup>

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1 On this aspect of Cavendish's literary output, see Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998); Stephen Lucas, ed., *A Princely Brave Woman. Essays on Margaret Cavendish* (London: Ashgate, 2003); Line Cottage and Nancy Weitz, ed., *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writings of Margaret Cavendish* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003); Emma L. E. Rees, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Lara Dodds, *The Literary Invention of Margaret Cavendish* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2013); and Lisa Walters, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

2 Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World and Other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), 124.

3 For an opposite interpretation of Cavendish as leaning towards republicanism, see John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 177–211, and Walters, *Margaret Cavendish*, chap. 3.

4 See, among many others, Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish*; Rosemary Kegl, "The World I Have Made': Margaret Cavendish, Feminism and 'The Blazing World,'" in *Feminist Readings*

Finally, in the last twenty years or so, historians of philosophy have at last started taking her philosophy seriously, as entering into dialogue with that of her contemporaries in vital ways.<sup>5</sup>

In this essay, I return to Cavendish's appropriation of Epicurean philosophy in her imaginative, rather than her scientific, works because it allows us to address two issues central to her oeuvre. First, by incorporating philosophical and scientific issues into fictional genres, she leads us to question our understanding of literary genres in the seventeenth century. Second, she also self-consciously annexes a field specifically considered as "serious," and therefore theoretically reserved for men, by importing it into "lighter" genres deemed more acceptable for women—poetry and romance—while providing us with experimental forms, demonstrating, in Anna Thell's apt words, "the value and necessity of speculative, imaginative thought."<sup>6</sup> It is well known that Epicurean

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of *Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, ed. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dymna Callaghan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 119–41; Linda Payne, "Dramatic Dreamscape: Women's Dreams and Utopian Vision in the Works of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle," in *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660–1830*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1991), 18–33; Laura Rosenthal, "'Authoress of a Whole World': The Duchess of Newcastle and Imaginary Property," in *Playwrights and Plagiarists in Early Modern England: Gender, Authorship, Literary Property* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Lisa T. Sarasohn, "A Science Turned Upside Down: Feminism and the Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 47 (1984): 289–307; Sophie Tomlinson, "'My Brain the Stage': Margaret Cavendish and the Fantasy of Female Performance," in *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575–1760*, ed. Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (London: Routledge, 1992), 134–63; and Susan Wiseman, "Gender and Status in Dramatic Discourse: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle," in *Women, Writing, History: 1640–1740*, ed. Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (London: Batsford, 1992), 161–77.

**5** See for instance the work done by Eileen O'Neill in her introduction to her edition of Cavendish's *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), x–xlvi. See also Susan James, "The Philosophical Innovations of Margaret Cavendish," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 7 (1999): 219–44; David Cunniff, "Cavendish on the Intelligibility of the Prospect of Thinking Matter," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 23 (2006): 117–136; and Cunniff's entry, "Margaret Lucas Cavendish," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2012), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/margaret-cavendish/> (accessed April 20, 2018); Kourken Michaelian, "Margaret Cavendish's Epistemology," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17 (2009): 31–53; Lisa Sarasohn, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish: Reason and Fancy during the Scientific Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Sandrine Parageau, *Les Ruses de l'ignorance. La contribution des femmes à l'avènement de la science moderne en Angleterre* (Paris: Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2010); Eileen O'Neill, "Margaret Cavendish, Stoic Antecedent Causes, and Early Modern Occasional Causes," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 203 (2013): 311–26; and Brandie R. Siegfried and Lisa T. Sarasohn ed., *God and Nature in the Thought of Margaret Cavendish* (London: Routledge, 2016 [2014]).

**6** Anna M. Thell, "'[A]s Lightly as Two Thoughts': Motion, Materialism, and Cavendish's 'Blazing World,'" *Configurations* 23 (Winter 2015): 1–33 at 3.

philosophy was considered more woman-friendly than other schools of thought, as some women and slaves had been admitted into Epicurus's garden.<sup>7</sup> Now seems a particularly appropriate time to re-evaluate Cavendish's engagement with Epicureanism in light of the recent editions of some of her most important works: after Eileen O'Neill's 2001 edition of *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* in the prestigious "Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy" series, we now have a new edition of *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*, edited by Sara H. Mendelson for Broadview Press (2016), and, in 2018, the scholarly edition of *Poems and Fancies* edited by Brandie Siegfried, which should durably change our perception of Cavendish's poetry.<sup>8</sup> Thirty years after Lisa T. Sarasohn's ground-breaking 1984 article, which established the now standard narrative of Cavendish's shift from Epicurean atomism to a form of vitalist materialism—a view she further developed in *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish* (2010)—the work done on Epicureanism in the period, in particular on the occasion of the recent Oxford edition of Lucy Hutchinson's translation of Lucretius (2012), has shed fresh light on the revival of Epicureanism that is the background of Cavendish's durable engagement with Epicurus. As Siegfried's edition of Cavendish's *Poems and Fancies* makes clear, the significant editorial changes between the three successive editions of the poems (the last of which was published in 1668) show that Cavendish's attitude towards Epicurean atomism was far more complex than is generally thought. This is confirmed by Cavendish's continuing fascination, as late as 1668, with the Epicurean ethics popularized by Gassendi in France and Charleton in England, which is demonstrated by a play like *The Convent of Pleasure* (published in *Plays, Never before Printed*). The present chapter aims at taking stock of the current state of the field, but it will also discuss the possible influence on Cavendish's perception of Epicureanism of several contemporary works that have not always been given their full due: it is now established that Cavendish is indebted to her friend Walter Charleton's translations and adaptations of the defences of Epicurus written by Pierre Gassendi in Latin and that she was also aware, in her later published works at least, of Cyrano de Bergerac's *Etats et Empires de la lune* (Paris, 1657)—translated into English in 1659 as *Selenarchia, or, The Government of the World in the Moon*.<sup>9</sup> But Cavendish was also probably cognizant of three other works important for the revival of Epicureanism in

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7 Richard W. F. Kroll, *The Material World: Literate Culture in the Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 9, and Penelope Anderson, *Friendship's Shadows: Women's Friendship and the Politics of Betrayal in England, 1640–1705* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 118.

8 Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, ed. O'Neill; Margaret Cavendish, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*, ed. Sara H. Mendelson (Ontario: Broadview, 2016); Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies with The Animal Parliament*, ed. Brandie R. Siegfried (Toronto: Iter, 2018). My thanks to Brandie Siegfried for letting me see an early version of her work; this essay, drafted mostly before it came out, offers a different reading of the poems, however.

9 For the influence of Charleton on Cavendish, see Line Cottegnies, "Le 'renouveau' de l'épicurisme en Angleterre au milieu du dix-septième siècle de Walter Charleton à Margaret Cavendish—une histoire franco-britannique," *Études Épistémè* 14 (2008), and Lisa Walters's chapter in this

England in the mid-seventeenth century, which might have shaped her thinking about Epicurean atomism and ethics: the 1650 French translation of Lucretius by Abbé Michel de Marolles, *Le Poète Lucrèce* (which was the first translation of Lucretius into any vernacular language), John Evelyn's partial translation of Lucretius which follows suit, *An Essay on the First Book of T. Lucretius Carus De rerum natura* (London, 1656), and finally the often-mentioned but little-read *History of Philosophy* by Thomas Stanley in four volumes, published between 1655 and 1662.

Margaret Cavendish's versatility in her exploration of fictional and philosophical genres has often puzzled her readers, although critics have often questioned the existence of a dichotomy. Rather than seeing a divide between her imaginative works and her works of natural philosophy, they have tried (with more or less traction) to show the underlying consistency of her multi-faceted thought, which could take contradictory forms.<sup>10</sup> It has also been suggested that perhaps we should not try to reconcile the overt contradictions that can be perceived in her oeuvre, because Cavendish might have used her fiction and poetry to explore philosophical ideas imaginatively, in what I would like to call "moments of thought" or thought experiments,<sup>11</sup> which, like the multiple selves of Montaigne's *Essays*, should not be seen as a coherent whole but as a collection of successive states of being and thought. It is almost banal now to point out that a constant characteristic of her imaginative works is their generic hybridity. In her first published work, the 1653 *Poems, and Fancies*, she discusses natural philosophy in verse. Her longer romance *The Blazing World*, which is rightly considered the first work of utopian science fiction to have been written by a woman,<sup>12</sup> stages the heroine's

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collection. For the influence of Cyrano de Bergerac, see Line Cottagnies, "Brilliant Heterodoxy in Margaret Cavendish's 'The Blazing World' and in Cyrano de Bergerac's 'Etats et Empires de la lune et du soleil,'" in *God and Nature*, ed. Siegfried and Sarasohn, 107–20.

**10** Lisa Walters argues, for instance, that Cavendish's reliance on contradiction is a way of undermining the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction, and that her whole opus expresses an episteme which is both radical and revolutionary, but minimizes Cavendish's avowed royalism; *Margaret Cavendish*, 393.

**11** For a tolerance of contradiction, see Thell, "'[A]s Lightly as Two Thoughts,'" but also John Shanahan, "Natural Magic in 'The Convent of Pleasure,'" in *God and Nature*, ed. Siegfried and Sarasohn, 141–60, 169.

**12** While Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* can be connected with the line of lunar or stellar voyages stemming from Lucian down to Cyrano de Bergerac, it can also be seen as an early model for eighteenth-century utopian works such as Eliza Haywood's *Memoirs of a Certain Island Adjacent to the Kingdom of Utopia* (1725) or Mary Delariviere Manley, *Secret Memoirs ... From the New Atalantis* (1709). It has also been named in connection with Sarah Robin Scott, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, or Charlotte Perkins Gilman. For the connections between Cavendish and Lucian, see Sarah Hutton, "Science and Satire: The Lucianic Voice of Margaret Cavendish's 'Description of a New World Called the Blazing World,'" in *Authorial Conquests*, ed. Cottagnies and Weitz, 161–78, and between Cavendish and moon voyages, see Mary Baine Campbell, *Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Bronwen Price, "Journeys Beyond Frontiers: Knowledge, Subjectivity and Outer Space in Margaret

discovery of a new world adjacent to ours, her rise to power, and finally her rule over all aspects of society, in particular the scientific and intellectual life of her new subjects. The romance features lengthy disputations between societies of scientists reminding the reader of contemporary debates at and around the Royal Society.<sup>13</sup> It includes in particular the satire of what Cavendish saw as the shortcomings of current experimentalism, when the “Emperess” rebukes the devotees of the microscope for trusting their sensorial “delusions.”<sup>14</sup> Cavendish’s poetry and fiction thus reveal a complex and oblique relationship with the natural philosophy she appropriates. Through her use of fiction, she was striving for a “freer,” less codified approach to science and thought she could still contribute to the scientific debate of the day. Yet she was running the risk of being marginalized, even ignored. In fact, she never gained the status of a “virtuosa” among her contemporaries, although she was one of the first women admitted to visit the Royal Society in 1667,<sup>15</sup> and she repeatedly complained that male thinkers ignored her. The misunderstanding lingered for over three centuries, and it is only in 2001 that her major philosophical opus, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, made its entry into an important philosophy series.<sup>16</sup> What are we then to make of the fictional works which offer a commentary on the natural philosophy of her day? The generic conventions of her chosen media necessarily refract the issues at stake in a different way. By foregrounding the transmuting power of the female imagination, Cavendish genders science and appropriates a male field.<sup>17</sup> In doing so, she makes natural philosophy subservient to her

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Cavendish’s “The Blazing World” (1666),” in *The Arts of Seventeenth-Century Science: Representations of the Natural World in European and North-American Culture*, ed. Claire Jowitt and Diane Watt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 127–45; Cottagnies, “Brilliant Heterodoxy in Margaret Cavendish’s ‘The Blazing World’”; and Frédérique Ait-Touati, *Fictions of the Cosmos: Science and Literature in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), chap. 6.

**13** For the influence of Bacon’s *New Atlantis*, see among others Line Cottagnies, “Utopianism, Millenarianism and the Baconian Programme of Margaret Cavendish’s ‘The Blazing World’ (1666),” in *New Worlds Reflected: Travel and Utopia in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Chloë Houston (London: Ashgate, 2010), 71–91, and Frédérique Ait-Touati, “Making Worlds: Invention and Fiction in Bacon and Cavendish,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Early Modern Literature and Science*, ed. H. Marchitello and E. Tribble (London: Palgrave, 2017), 489–504.

**14** On satire, see Hutton, “Science and Satire,” and for a revision of the common view, Emma Wilkins, “Margaret Cavendish and the Royal Society,” *Notes and Records: The Royal Society Journal of the History of Science* 68 (2014): 245–60.

**15** For a contemporary testimony, see Samuel Pepys, *The Diary*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (London: Bell, 1970–83), 8:186, 196, 209; 9:123; and Samuel Mintz, “The Duchess of Newcastle’s Visit to the Royal Society,” *Journal of English and German Philology* 51 (1952): 168–76.

**16** Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, ed. O’Neill.

**17** Cavendish often describes imagination as inherently female and works of fiction as an honest occupation for women, although this is a double-edged argument: “*Poetry*, which is built upon *Fancy*, *Women* may claime, as a *worke* belonging most properly to themselves: for I have observ’d,

self-celebration as a female author (or “authoress”).<sup>18</sup> But the paradox remains: why did a woman with no formal education, but extraordinary literary ambition, turn to natural philosophy? And, given her ambition for fame and glory,<sup>19</sup> why did Cavendish choose to discuss intellectually demanding issues in fictional genres, thereby making her texts vulnerable to criticism? To make matters worse, rather than remaining safely within the boundaries of accepted scientific wisdom, she chose to focus repeatedly on a sensitive philosophical trend, Epicureanism. Thus not only did her choice of fiction as vehicle for science undermine her claim to authority, her choice of an ancient philosophy that was considered dangerously heretical in the seventeenth century did as well. I would suggest that in two important works that bracket her literary career—her 1653 poetry miscellany, *Poems, and Fancies*, and her 1668 play, *The Convent of Pleasure*—Epicurean physics and ethics offered the “authoress” a “soft” entry into a world of ideas from which she had been excluded by virtue of her gender and education. Epicurean philosophy enabled her to create utopian spaces for a subversive female subject and, as such, proved instrumental in her development as a self-fashioning woman author.

Cavendish clearly conceived the two sides of her oeuvre as interrelated. Her prose romance, *The Blazing World*, was first intended as an appendix for her treatise, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, like *New Atlantis* to *Sylva Sylvarum*.<sup>20</sup> If read as a companion piece for the latter, the romance offers an ironic and sometimes parodic perspective on many of the issues under study. A case in point is her satire of experimentalism, with the hair-splitting debates among the scientists of the utopian “Blazing World.” However, Cavendish was writing from a marginal position, as a woman who had no formal education and yet, braving contemporary reactions, ventured into print, and as a bold explorer of genres heterogeneous with the subject matters they treated. When Claude Levi-Strauss coined his famous concept of “intellectual bricolage,” he precisely saw heterogeneity as one of its main characteristics. Distinguishing between two kinds of scientific knowledge, he pitted the “engineer” (or expert in a given field) against the “bricoleur,” who is able to “make do with whatever is at hand, that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project.”<sup>21</sup> Levi-Strauss used this notion of

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that their *Braines* work usually in a *Fantasticall motion*,” *Poems, and Fancies* (London, 1653), sig. A3. All subsequent quotations from this edition.

**18** “A True Relation of my Birth, Breeding and Life,” in *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, to which is added the True Relation of my Birth, Breeding and Life by Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle*, ed. C. H. Firth (London: Routledge, n.d.), 178.

**19** “[A]ll I desire, is *Fame*, and *Fame* is nothing but a *great noise*, and *noise* lives most in *Multitude*; wherefore I wish my *Book* may set a worke every *Tongue*” (*Poems, and Fancies*, sig. A3).

**20** On the complementarity between Bacon’s two works, see David Colclough, “‘The Materialls for the Building’: Reuniting Francis Bacon’s ‘Sylva Sylvarum’ and ‘New Atlantis,’” *Intellectual History Review* 20 (2010): 181–200.

**21** Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, anonymous trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966 [1962]), 19–20.

"bricolage" as an analogy to define "mythical thought," but it is tempting to apply the concept to the generic creativity that Cavendish manifests in her work. One striking illustration of this hybridity at work is her poetry written on such subjects as the dance of atoms or the mechanisms of the passions.<sup>22</sup> On numerous occasions, Cavendish underlines the novelty of her gendered, clean-slate (*tabula rasa*) approach to science and philosophy. In some instances, she denounces the shortcomings of a female aristocratic education, which generally included not much more than learning how to spell and read, sewing and dancing lessons, as well as a smattering of French.<sup>23</sup> But she repeatedly claims to have turned what could be considered a handicap into a strength, putting forward a wholly positive conception of originality that rejects the slavish and pedantic imitation of previous authors. In this respect, her gender effectively made her one of the first "Moderns" against the supporters of the "Ancients," anticipating a later public debate.<sup>24</sup> In *Poems, and Fancies*, she even boasts provocatively about failing to have read any of the authors who previously wrote on the topics she discusses.<sup>25</sup> The engraved frontispiece of a later work, *The Worlds Olio* (1656), shows her at her writing desk beneath conspicuously empty bookshelves, while the motto underlines her intellectual self-reliance:

Studios She is and all Alone, [...]  
Her Library on which She looks  
It is her Head her Thought her Books.  
Scorning dead Ashes without fire  
For her own Flames doe her Inspire.

As is well known now, Cavendish launched into an extensive reading programme in the 1660s, which led her to revise her scientific ideas significantly. But back in 1653, when she first began writing imaginatively about science, she chose to explore a philosophical doctrine which, even though it was going through a revival, was still considered as excitingly marginal in the field of seventeenth-century philosophy—Epicurean atomism.

The idea of an Epicurean renaissance in the 1640s and 1650s was originally put forward by Thomas Franklin Mayo and Robert Hugh Kargon and has more recently been qualified by scholars such as Reid Barbour, Stephen Clucas, Howard Jones, David Norbrook, and Catherine Wilson.<sup>26</sup> The period saw the publication of major texts

<sup>22</sup> *Poems, and Fancies* (London, 1653), 5–46 in particular.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. "A True Relation of my Birth, Breeding and Life," in Cavendish, *Life*, 157.

<sup>24</sup> See Cottegnies, "The 'Native Tongue' of the 'Authoress,'" in *Authorial Conquests*, ed. Cottegnies and Weitz, 103–19. For the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, see Paddy Bullard and Alexis Tadié, ed., *Ancients and Moderns in Europe: Comparative Perspectives* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> *Poems, and Fancies*, sig. [A6].

<sup>26</sup> See Thomas Franklin Mayo, *Epicurus in England (1650–1725)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934); Robert Hugh Kargon, *Atomism in England from Harriot to Newton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966); and more recently Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998); Stephen

important for the history of Epicureanism in the seventeenth century—in particular Walter Charleton’s multi-volume adaptation of Gassendi’s works (from 1652) and John Evelyn’s first partial English translation of Lucretius’s *De rerum natura* (1656).<sup>27</sup> The influence on English thought of Gassendi, who was instrumental in “christianizing” Epicurus, cannot be underestimated.<sup>28</sup> The history of the atomic revival, however, is one of continuity rather than clear-cut epistemological shifts, and publication dates are not the only relevant factor in constructing a history of the reception and circulation of heterodox ideas: scribal publication and oral exchanges also need to be taken into account. While in exile in Paris and later in the Netherlands, the Marquess (later Duke) of Newcastle was an important patron for Royalists, such as Hobbes, Davenant, Cowley, Evelyn, Denham, Finch, Kenelm Digby, and Charleton himself. Margaret Cavendish necessarily approached some of the most influential and important thinkers of her day, including Gassendi himself, with whom William Cavendish had been corresponding and who visited them when they were in Paris.<sup>29</sup> She also corresponded with Charleton.<sup>30</sup> It is easy to see why Epicureanism, with its reputation of being women-friendly, could be perceived as a marginal entry into science, as it required no previous formal academic education. To try to clear Epicurus’s reputation, Gassendi had shown that the women the philosopher accepted in his garden community were not courtesans (as was often claimed by

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Clucas, “The Atomism of the Cavendish Circle: A Reappraisal,” *The Seventeenth Century* 9–10 (1994): 247–73; Howard Jones, *The Epicurean Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1992 [1987]); Catherine Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); David Norbrook, “Introduction,” in Lucy Hutchinson, *The Works, vol. I: The Translation of Lucretius*, ed. Reid Barbour and David Norbrook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), i–cxvi; and David Norbrook, Stephen Harrison, and Philip Hardie, ed. *Lucretius and the Early Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

**27** See in particular Walter Charleton, *The Darkness of Atheism Dispelled by Reason* (London, 1652), *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charltoniana* (London, 1656), and finally *Epicurus’s Morals* (London, 1656); John Evelyn published a translation of bk. 1 of Lucretius as *An Essay on the First Book of T. Lucretius Carus De Rerum Natura* (London, 1656). Evelyn never saw the other five books through print; the manuscripts are held in the British Library, except for bk. 2, which is lost (BL Evelyn MSS 33–34).

**28** See Lisa T. Sarasohn, *Gassendi’s Ethics: Freedom in a Mechanistic Universe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), and Sabina Fleitman, *Walter Charleton (1620–1707), Virtuoso: Leben und Werk* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1986).

**29** Waller and Petty later recall the intellectual life at the Cavendishes’ Paris abode; see William Petty, “Epistle dedicatory,” *Discourse made before the Royal Society ... Concerning the Use of Duplicate Proportion in Sundry Important Particulars together with a New Hypothesis of Springy and Elastique Motion* (London, 1674), sigs. [A8v]–[A9v], and Waller’s oral testimony, recorded in John Aubrey, *Letters Written by Eminent Persons*, 2 vols. (London, 1813), 2:626.

**30** Cf. *Letters and Poems in Honour of the Incomparable Princess Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle* (London, 1667), 111, for example.

his detractors).<sup>31</sup> Epicurean thought thus gave Cavendish a place from which to think about philosophy and science; it also stimulated her imagination, because it allowed her to think about matter as free from too strict a sense of hierarchy. Finally, it gave her a publishing niche, as she could claim the status of a popularizer, writing more specifically for the curious female reader. It is not surprising, therefore, that Cavendish explicitly set out writing *Poems, and Fancies* for female readers. Even though she increasingly came to fear the reprobation of her female readers, she first seems to have thought that if they gave her their sympathy, she could act as their champion: "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*."<sup>32</sup>

It is not known whether she actually had access to a manuscript translation of Lucretius: no print translation of Lucretius would have been available to her before Evelyn's version of Book 1 in 1656, except Marolles's French translation which inspired Evelyn.<sup>33</sup> What is known, however, is that Cavendish was well aware of Epicurean atomism as early as 1653. When she describes an ideal library in her 1656 miscellany *Natures Pictures*,<sup>34</sup> she includes Epicurus among the few authors she admits. *Poems, and Fancies*, which could almost qualify as a work of scientific vulgarization, includes explicit references to Epicurean atomism: Cavendish muses on various aspects of atomism in a way that is fanciful but illustrates several contemporary debates.<sup>35</sup> She can thus be credited with being one of the first English authors to assert her belief in heliocentrism, and she does so in a poem.<sup>36</sup> Critics, perhaps taking Cavendish's claims to "singularity"<sup>37</sup> at face value, have tended to overemphasize the eccentricity of her poetry. The collection consists of an apparently random combination of "fairy poems," poems about atoms, the passions, her own thoughts, but also animals, the Civil War, etc., not to mention the frequent prose interruptions in which she instructs her reader on how her text should be read. When read in its context, however, the volume is much less of an oddity, as

31 See Pierre Gassendi, *De vita et moribus Epicuri* [1647]. *Vie et mœurs d'Épicure*, ed. Sylvie Taussig (Paris: Alive, 2001), 301–4.

32 "To all Noble, and Worthy Ladies," sig. [A3v].

33 The first complete translation of Lucretius was published in 1682 by Thomas Creech as *Titus Lucretius Carus His Six Books of Epicurean Philosophy*. Lucy Hutchinson was herself working on her own manuscript translation in the 1650s, but it was not published, although it might have circulated. See Norbrook, "Introduction," in Hutchinson, *The Works*, vol. I, and Reid Barbour, "Lucy Hutchinson, Atomism and the Atheist Dog," in *Women, Science and Medicine 1500–1700*, ed. Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), 122–37, and Reid Barbour, "Between Atoms and the Spirit: Lucy Hutchinson's Translation of Lucretius," *Renaissance Papers* (1994): 1–16.

34 *Natures Pictures* (London, 1656), 357–61.

35 See Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish*.

36 See *Poems, and Fancies*, 149 [error for 173]. This defence of heliocentrism she shares with Cyrano.

37 Cavendish, "A True Relation," in *Life*, 175.

Hero Chalmers and, more recently, Brandie Siegfried have argued.<sup>38</sup> It is worth pointing out, for instance, that “scientific” poetry (neo-Latin or English) was a well-established sixteenth-century tradition in England, which Robert M. Schuler attributes to the rediscovery of Manilius and Lucretius one century earlier.<sup>39</sup> As Brandie Siegfried convincingly shows, Cavendish’s volume bears intriguing similarities to *De rerum natura*.<sup>40</sup> It is no coincidence if Cavendish’s volume, in a distant echo of Lucretius—or perhaps George Buchanan’s 1586 *De Sphaera*, for that matter<sup>41</sup>—opens with a poem about the creation of the world, entitled “Nature calls a Councell, which was Motion, Figure, matter, and Life, to advise about making the World.”<sup>42</sup> In a volume published in London in 1650, Anne Bradstreet, a contemporary of Cavendish’s and reputedly one of the first American authors, also muses on scientific phenomena in a series of poems on “The Four Elements,” “The Four Humours in Man’s Constitution,” “The Four Ages,” “The Four Seasons,” etc.<sup>43</sup> But Bradstreet’s scientific background is the conventional Galenic theory of the humours, which makes Cavendish’s poems look more audacious. As for the fairylore, Cavendish probably derives it from the famous *Hesperides* (1648) of Robert Herrick, whose poetry was widely read among Royalists in the period and whose taste for miniaturization she shares.<sup>44</sup> But her preoccupation with the infinitely small could also stem from a fascination with the new scientific discoveries entailed by microscopic observations, and can perhaps even be linked with her interest in such polemical doctrines as the plurality of worlds, which was, incidentally, also an Epicurean tenet. Cavendish comes back repeatedly to this idea, and muses about the existence of multiple worlds, in her poetry collection. This enduring fascination led her, years later, to write her work of “science fiction,” *Blazing World*, about the discovery of a new world, contiguous to ours like two pearls in a necklace. Here in her poetry, however, she muses on the existence of the infinitely small and meditates on minuscule multiple worlds, sometimes replicated *ad infinitum*, worlds within worlds within worlds, like “a Nest of Boxes”: “For *Creatures*, small as *Atomes*, may be there, / If every *Atome* a *Creatures Figure* beare” (44). In a poem like “A World in an Eare-Ring,” she merges two poetic traditions heterogeneous to each other—a gallant, *précieux* line and the scientific tradition—and “feminizes” both by turning a female jewel, the earring, into a vehicle for another, miniature world: “the *Ladies* well may weare / A *World of Worlds*, as *Pendents* in each *Eare*” (45).

38 Hero Chalmers, “‘Flattering Division’: Margaret Cavendish’s Poetics of Variety,” in *Authorial Conquests*, ed. Cottagnies and Weitz, 123–44, and Siegfried, “Introduction,” *Poems and Fancies*.

39 See Robert M. Schuler, ed., “Three Renaissance Scientific Poems,” *Studies in Philology* 75 (1978): 117.

40 Siegfried, “Introduction,” *Poems and Fancies*, 18–22.

41 Or even such religious poems as Du Bartas’s *Divine Weeks* (first complete translation, London, 1605).

42 *Poems, and Fancies*, 1.

43 Cf. Anne Bradstreet, *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* (London, 1650).

44 Cf. Marjorie Swann, “The Politics of Fairylore in Early Modern English Literature,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000): 449–73.

In spite of its relative fancifulness, Cavendish's enterprise perfectly echoes Lucretius's "method" and his justification for choosing verse:

So since our Methods [sic] of *Philosophy*  
Seems harsh to some, since most our Maxims flie,  
I thought it was the fittest way to dress  
These rigid Principles in pleasing Verse,  
With fancy sweetning [sic] them; to bribe thy mind  
To read my Books, and lead it on to find  
The Nature of the World, the Rise of Things,  
And what vast profit to that knowledge brings.<sup>45</sup>

Cavendish too uses the appeal of poetry to convey more serious scientific arguments. Her poetry obeys a principle of variety, as is revealed by the favourite gendered metaphors she uses to define her own "method," those of the "olio," "hodge-podge," or "motley":<sup>46</sup> she thus compares herself to a cook, incorporating serious intellectual issues into lighter poetry, or elsewhere to a seamstress dressing them under pleasant garb.<sup>47</sup> These are apt metaphors for her implicit didacticism: her poetry was not primarily designed for the male, knowing readers, but for female readers—at least at the beginning of her writing career. In her more forthright pre-feminist moments, she shows a clear sense of belonging to a community that has been kept in ignorance: "we are kept like birds in cages to hop up and down in our houses [...]; thus wanting the experiences of nature, we must needs want the understanding and knowledge and so consequently prudence, and invention of men."<sup>48</sup> In an edition of *The Blazing World* that was issued separately from *Observations on Experimental Philosophy*, she even claims to be writing the romance specifically for women readers (a claim that does not feature in the combined edition): "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 contemplation did afford."<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Lucretius, *Titus Lucretius Carus His Six Books of Epicurean Philosophy*, trans. Thomas Creech (London, 1699 [1692]), 29.

<sup>46</sup> For instance, in *Poems, and Fancies*, 128–29, or in *The Worlds Olio*, in which it is a structuring metaphor.

<sup>47</sup> Cavendish also describes Nature as a cook (*Poems, and Fancies*, 127–28). In *Playes* (London, 1662), she casts herself as "a plain, cleanly English Cook-maid, that dresses Meat rather wholsomely than luxuriously" (sig. [A8v]). Another favourite metaphor of hers is that of the dress (e.g. "Natures Dresse," *Poems, and Fancies*, 127). Interestingly enough, she took special pride in designing her clothes herself, as she tells us in her autobiography (*A True Relation*, 175).

<sup>48</sup> "To the Two Universities," *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (London, 1655), n.p.

<sup>49</sup> *The Blazing World* (London, 1668), n.p., Wing N 850. For more detail about the complex editorial history of *The Blazing World*, see Line Cottegnies, "Appendix: A Bibliographic Note: Cyrano's 'Estats et Empires de la Lune' and Cavendish's 'Blazing World,'" in *God and Nature*, ed. Siegfried and Sarasohn, 209–15, 210–11.

In *Poems, and Fancies*, she thus muses about an Epicurean theory of matter: she echoes more specifically Lucretius's philosophy of matter as expanded in Books 1 and 2 of *De rerum natura*—with some forays into Book 4, for his analysis of perception, and Book 6, for the meteors. There is little doubt that her atomism in the volume is Epicurean in outlook, although it is usually assumed that the influence of Lucretius on her writings had to be indirect.<sup>50</sup> Direct echoes are perhaps indeed few and far between; however, most of the qualities and characteristics of the atoms described by Cavendish can be found in Lucretius. Like the Latin poet, she describes nature as being composed of four categories of atoms, all of different shapes, all eternal and infinite in number: the square atoms cohere to make up earth, the round ones water, the long atoms constitute the air, and the sharp ones fire. The square atoms are in fact her invention, for Lucretius had remained unspecific about the shapes of atoms, describing them simply as smooth or irregular, dense or loosely linked, round or long, small or big. Lucretius, however, had not expressed a strict correlation between particular atom shapes and the various elements,<sup>51</sup> as for him no matter could be composed of just one kind of atoms.

There are deeper similarities between Lucretius's theory of matter and Cavendish's, as shown by Brandie Siegfried.<sup>52</sup> Some of the basic principles are the same: for both thinkers, nothing can be made out of nothing, and the variety of created things is the result of the various movements and combinations of atoms in a vacuum. For both, the universe is conceived as infinite and the hypothesis of a plurality of worlds is evoked. But there are also major differences. Cavendish falls short of affirming the role of chance in the creation of the world and she carefully avoids discussing the notion of the controversial "swerve" or *clinamen*.<sup>53</sup> More daringly, contrary to Epicurus (or most mechanists of her days), she gives her atoms an autonomy, which already foreshadows her embrace of vitalism in the mid-1650s: "Small *Atomes* of themselves a *World* may make" (5). She thus creates a world without God's agency, while Nature, which she occasionally describes as a female principle, is almost divinized.<sup>54</sup> As a consequence, God takes no part in the Creation she describes in the opening poem, which evokes Lucretius's argument about the indifference of gods to men. But Cavendish ignores the potentially audacious

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<sup>50</sup> See Sarasohn, "A Science Turned Upside Down," 304n1, Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish*, 49–61, and John Rogers, *Matter of Revolution*, 177–211.

<sup>51</sup> *De rerum natura*, 2:334–522. Brandie Siegfried interprets this in the context of an interest in Euclidian geometry ("Introduction," *Poems and Fancies*, 26–28).

<sup>52</sup> See her "Introduction," *Poems and Fancies*, 18–26.

<sup>53</sup> Siegfried, "Introduction," *Poems and Fancies*, 18.

<sup>54</sup> "Eternal God, Infinite Deity, / Thy Servant, NATURE humbly prays to Thee, / That thou wilt please to favour Her, and give / Her parts, which are Her Creatures, leave to live" (*Philosophical Letters*, London, 1668), 543. See Sophia B. Blaydes, "Nature Is a Woman: the Duchess of Newcastle and Seventeenth-Century Philosophy," in *Man, God, and Nature in the Enlightenment*, ed. Donald C. Mell, Jr., Theodore E. D. Braun, and Lucia Palmer (East Lansing: Colleagues, 1988), 51–64, and Sara Mendelson, "The God of Nature and the Nature of God," in Siegfried and Sarasohn, ed., *God and Nature*, 27–42.

consequences of some of these propositions, in particular on the immortality of the soul and on divine providence. By failing to comment on these, she seems to refuse to condemn Lucretius at a time when the contemporary critical debate concerning Epicurean atomism was raging.<sup>55</sup>

Cavendish's version of atomism is also at variance with Epicurean atomism as far as the motion of atoms is concerned:<sup>56</sup> Lucretius describes them as continually clashing; for Cavendish, they alternately clash<sup>57</sup> and enter into attraction or "sympathy" with one another (a term reminiscent of Neo-platonic or Paracelsian thought). But the most important discrepancy between Cavendish and Lucretius concerns the vitalism she attributes to atoms. As Stevenson has shown, Cavendish's turn to a vitalist, corpuscular theory of matter can be seen as growing out of her initial Epicurean atomism, which served as a stepping-stone to a personal theory of matter.<sup>58</sup> In her more mature philosophical works of the 1660s, she offers a thorough critique of Epicurean atomism, perhaps because she had realized by then the potentially daring implications of her initial positions. In *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (1666), in particular, she returns to the problem of sensation and rationality to offer a biting critique of Epicurean materialism: "how absurd it is to make senseless corpuscles the cause of sense and reason, and consequently of perception, is obvious to every ones apprehension and demonstration" (sig. [Yy1]). Even though her description of natural phenomena, in the same volume, still owes much to the atomism she so forcefully criticizes, it is clear that by this stage in her intellectual development Cavendish no longer needed Epicureanism, having elaborated a more satisfying, syncretic doctrine.

How can we assess, then, the status of Cavendish's Epicurean "stage" in her intellectual development? A critic like John Rogers, at one end of the spectrum, sees in her conversion away from atomism an audacious attempt to construct a gendered vitalist utopia, with a view to liberating "women from the constraints of patriarchy." By attributing free will to bodies of matter, he claims, Cavendish created the basis for a revolutionary political system which could free her gender, although she might have recoiled

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**55** On the identification of Hobbes with a contemporary Epicurus, see Samuel Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962). It is only in her 1668 *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* that Cavendish clearly comes to criticize Epicurean atomism. See Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish*, 60–62, and Sarah Hutton, "Anne Conway, Margaret Cavendish and Seventeenth-Century Scientific Thought," in *Women, Science and Medicine*, ed. Hunter and Hutton, 218–34, in particular 225–26.

**56** The central role she attributes to motion shows the influence of Hobbes. See Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish*, 62–84, and Sarah Hutton, "In Dialogue with Thomas Hobbes: Margaret Cavendish's Natural Philosophy," *Women's Writing* 4 (1997): 421–32.

**57** Atoms are often presented as at war with one another, a metaphor that reminds us that she was writing during the Civil War.

**58** Cf. Jay Stevenson, "The Mechanist-Vitalist Soul of Margaret Cavendish," *SEL* 36 (1996): 527–43, in particular 536–37. Stevenson takes issue with the idea of a radical conversion to vitalism in the 1660s. See also Siegfried, "Introduction," *Poems and Fancies*, 45.

from the Republican implications of such a scheme.<sup>59</sup> But Cavendish was far from being a consistent thinker, and she defies generalization; it is therefore difficult to extend Cavendish's theory of matter to the political field: in fact, it could be argued that her dissociation of a theory of matter from politics testifies to a wider epistemic change—the end of the analogical correspondences that, for centuries, had held together microcosm and macrocosm. Her poetry miscellany might be read as the perfect illustration of this phenomenon: in her poetic world, analogies and similitudes no longer hold the universe together and the epistemological bonds between microcosm and macrocosm seem to have come loose. The collection thus includes a series of poems in which Cavendish plays on ossified analogies and metaphors by giving free rein to her imagination in a form of compulsive metaphorizing—her own recurrent word is “to similize.” Her successive analogies comparing nature or the human body with a whole series of heterogeneous objects clearly function as a symptom of the de-anchoring of similitudes.<sup>60</sup> At the other end of the critical spectrum, Anna Battigelli formulates a more cautious assessment of the importance of Epicurean atomism in Cavendish's development, which is still valid today. For her, Epicurean thought allowed the duchess to question the reliability of the senses and to experiment with a mechanist theory of matter. Cavendish, however, grew dissatisfied with “the democratic implications of a universe governed by individual atoms”.<sup>61</sup> Faced with the contemporary political chaos, she felt she ought to reject such a system and only retain Epicurean atomism as a metaphor for political and psychological conflict.

In any case, Epicureanism obviously constituted a necessary stage in Cavendish's intellectual development, although she might have grown wary of its metaphysical (and possibly political) implications by the mid-1650s. She would just have had to read Evelyn's embarrassed justification for publishing Lucretius in English, in 1656, to become fully aware of Epicurus's heretical reputation. Evelyn felt the need to sandwich his 67-page-long translation (with Latin text) of Book 1 between a long preface and a hundred-page-long essay entitled, “Animadversions upon the first Book of T. Lucretius Carus,” a line-by-line refutation that tapped both Gassendi and Charleton but was highly critical of Lucretius.<sup>62</sup> Like Evelyn, she might have thought that she had to distance herself from the atheistic inferences of Epicureanism. The final section of her 1666 *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*—which can be read as a running commentary on the recently

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<sup>59</sup> Rogers, *Matter of Revolution*, 181, 200. Walters shares this perspective but sees Cavendish as more radical (see note 10 to this chapter).

<sup>60</sup> For instance, “Similizing the Windes to Musick,” “Similizing the Clouds to Horses,” “Similizing Birds to a Ship,” “Similizing the Sea to Meadows, and pastures, the Marriners to Shepheards, the Mast to a May-pole, Fishes to Beasts,” “Similizing the Head of Man to a Hive of Bees,” etc. (*Poems, and Fancies*, 138, 142, 156 [146], 149).

<sup>61</sup> Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish*, 60.

<sup>62</sup> For the almost schizophrenic result, see Line Cottagnies, “Michel de Marolles's 1650 Translation and its Reception in England,” in *Lucretius and the Early Modern*, ed. Norbrook, Harrison, and Hardie, 179–80.

published *History of Philosophy* by Thomas Stanley—likewise includes a ten-page-long critique of Epicurus. Cavendish used this section as an opportunity to reassert her current philosophical principles. Here her revision of Epicurean atomism is used as the cornerstone of her new vitalist system, based on a conception of Nature as “an infinite self-moving body” (sig. [2Hh1v]). What becomes clear here is that Cavendish’s thought gradually emerged from and took shape out of her confrontation with the atomist hypothesis. Both atomism and vitalism thus gave her the confidence and authority she wanted as a female subject to shape herself into a writer concerned with posterity.

Although Cavendish was obviously well informed about Epicurean atomism early in her writing career, she seems to have become interested in Epicurus’s ethics only much later. This is evidenced by *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668), which focuses on the idea of the Epicurean garden. Here she developed the potentialities that she had ignored in her elaboration of Epicurean atomism: the moral philosophy of Epicurus, which gave her an opportunity to stage a female utopia, but also, paradoxically, its containment and failure. Cavendish would have had two sources in English at hand to inform her about Epicurean ethics: Walter Charleton’s 1656 *Epicurus’s Morals*, which was an adaption of Gassendi’s *De Vita et moribus Epicuri* (Paris, 1647) and Jean-François Sarasin’s *Apologie pour Epicure* (Paris, 1651),<sup>63</sup> and Thomas Stanley’s third volume of *The History of Philosophy*, published in 1660, which includes a long section on Epicurus, also loosely adapted from Gassendi, with paraphrases from Diogenes Laertius and Lucretius.<sup>64</sup> We know from *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* that by 1666 Cavendish had been reading Stanley’s philosophical compendium.<sup>65</sup> In these pages, Cavendish read a handy synthetic account of Epicurus’s physic but also received a crash course in Epicurean ethics. There she found a source for some of the themes and issues she explored in *The Convent of Pleasure*, such as a justification of pleasure as the source of felicity or an extremely eloquent caution against married life as a hindrance to pleasure and tranquillity.<sup>66</sup> There

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<sup>63</sup> Jones, *Epicurean Tradition*, 202–3.

<sup>64</sup> “Epicurus his Life and Doctrine. Written by Petrus Gassendi,” followed by a synthesis of his physic and ethics. See *The History of Philosophy. The Third and Last Volume, in Five Parts* (London, 1660), 105–275; for Epicurean ethics, see more particularly 226–75.

<sup>65</sup> “I gave myself to the perusing of the Works of that Learned Author Mr. Stanly, wherein he describes the Lives and Opinions of the Ancient Philosophers,” Margaret Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (London, 1668), 350.

<sup>66</sup> See Stanley, discussing Epicurus’s “Domestick Prudence,” *The History of Philosophy*, 240: “If you find you cannot, without much trouble, live single; that you can patiently bear with a crosse-wife, and disobedient children; that you will not so much as vex, to behold your children crying before you; that you shall not be perplexed and distracted with various sollicitudes, how to provide all things requisite to a married life, how to prevent all the inconveniences, and the like: in this case, to marry a wife, and to beget children, for whom you may provide with a conjugall and fatherly prudence, is lawfull. But unlesse you know your self to be such, you see, by Marriage and Issue, how much you will hinder the happinesse of your life, True tranquillity.” For more about marriage, see Walters in [Chapter 11](#) of this volume.

she would also have found a clear presentation of a practical morality based on the praise of sobriety, continence, moderation, fortitude, and friendship.

With *The Convent of Pleasure*, Cavendish offers a philosophical experiment, creating a society obeying Epicurean ethics, with an obvious twist, since hers is an all-female version of an Epicurean community. Lady Happy, an orphan heiress, decides to found a separatist community, a lay “convent,” based on freely chosen chastity, to escape from the torments of marriage, which are described as a form of slavery. This alternative social model is clearly perceived as threatening to a patriarchal order based on marriage and the submission of women. Cavendish had already written about a female community in a previous play, *The Female Academy* (1662),<sup>67</sup> but this academy was an educational institution in which young ladies were being taught how to become good wives. This is not the case in *The Convent of Pleasure*, where the reference to Epicurean philosophy, made explicit from the beginning, is used to legitimize an alternative social model. As early as in Act 1, scene 2, Lady Happy, whose very name evokes the Epicurean ideal, solemnly declares her desire for independence: “Men are the only troubles of women [...]. I will not be so inslaved, but will live retired from their Company.”<sup>68</sup> In another play, *Wits Cabal*, Mademoiselle Ambition, a character who anticipates Lady Happy, denounces a conception of social interactions based on men’s desire to acquire power over others—a system which, Ambition argues, destroys women: “[E]very Creature naturally desires and strives for preeminency, as to be superiour, and not inferiour [...]; only Women [...] are so far from endeavouring to get power, as they voluntarily give away what they have.”<sup>69</sup> As a corrective to such a pessimistic view of society, Lady Happy’s community explicitly obeys egalitarian, Epicurean principles: “My Cloister shall not be a Cloister of restraint, but a place of freedom, not to vex the Senses but to please them” (220). Happy’s perspective is deliberately non-Christian. Invoking, as did Lucretius, the indifference of the “gods” towards men as a legitimizing factor, she sets the satisfaction of the senses as a goal, but within the limits of temperance and reason, a principle that is the hallmark of orthodox Epicureanism.

For her *hortus conclusus* is one based on freedom, as distinguished from licentiousness and excess: “[T]he gods are bountiful, and give all, that’s good, and bid us freely please our selves in that which is best for us: and that is best, what is most temperately used, and longest may be enjoyed, for excess doth wast it self, and all it feeds upon.” This ethical programme constitutes an audacious critique of Christian austerity, which, Lady Happy suggests, only contributes to legitimizing the subjection of women. She chooses to “serve Nature” instead (220). Oblivious to the men’s hostile reactions, she promulgates the “laws” of her community: equality in all things, down to the furniture of each of the rooms or the dresses attributed to each of “Nature’s Devotees,” friendship, chastity, and the satisfaction of simple pleasures. Even the diet she advertises is a reflection of the

<sup>67</sup> *The Female Academy* was published in Cavendish’s first volume of plays, *Playes* (London, 1662).

<sup>68</sup> *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*, ed. Anne Shaver (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 220. All subsequent quotations from this edition.

<sup>69</sup> Cavendish, *Plays* (1662), 254.

pleasant sobriety she aims at: it is based on simple, natural foods which can be grown within the community, such as fish, cereals, fruit, and clear water.

For every Sense shall pleasure take,  
 And all our Lives shall merry make:  
 Our Minds in full delight shall joy, [...]  
 Each Season shall our Caterers be,  
 To search the Land, and Fish the Sea;  
 To gather Fruit and reap the Corn,  
 That's brought to us in Plenty's Horn;  
 With which we'll feast and please our tast,  
 But not luxuriously make a wast.

(220–21)

All care is taken to cater for the slightest wishes of the inhabitants of the “convent”: “None in this World can be happier,” as one of them concludes (225).

This separatist community is thus governed by strict neo-Epicurean principles: it is defined by retreat into a pastoral community, the celebration of nature and natural needs, the gods’ benign indifference to men, pleasure envisaged as the condition of happiness—the latter being defined as the absence of turmoil and control over one’s own passions—and finally the importance of friendship. All these Cavendish could have read about in Charleton’s 1656 *Epicurus’s Morals* or in Stanley’s 1660 synthesis. But it is Epicureanism with a twist that finds its way into *The Convent of Pleasure*: Epicurus never described single-sex communities, nor did he advocate chastity as such; he was not against sexual fulfillment as long as it did not lead to over-indulgence.<sup>70</sup> Cavendish seems aware of the subversive nature of this feminist project, since *The Convent of Pleasure* shows the containment of the revolutionary separatist model, as if she knew that such a threatening marginality could not be tolerated. The second half of the play stages the failure of the female community. The alarmed “gentlemen” gather before the walls and literally lay siege to the convent. Both the community and Lady Happy’s “Heretical Opinions” (222), as one of the men calls them, are perceived as a threat to the social order. The gentlemen register a situation they describe as quasi-revolutionary and consider using violent means to squash what they see as a form of rebellion, such as burning down the “convent.”<sup>71</sup>

But it is from within that the convent will have to be destroyed: a “foreign Princess,” who proves to be a man cross-dressed as a woman, gets admitted into the

**70** Lucretius’s *De rerum natura* starts with an ode to Venus as the principle governing the world. Interestingly, early feminist utopias were usually based on such a valorization of chastity, from Christine de Pizan down to Mary Astell, who will later also advocate similar utopian all-female communities. See *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, For the Advancement of their true and greatest Interest* (London, 1694).

**71** This scene is an obvious echo of Fletcher’s *The Women’s Prize, Or The Tamer Tamed* (see Act 1, scene 3). We know that Cavendish knew Beaumont and Fletcher’s plays: “Noble Readers, do not think my Playes, / Are such as have been writ in former daies; / As Johnson, Shakespear, Beamont, Fletcher writ.” Cavendish, *Playes*, 1662, sig. [A7v].

Convent—although his gender is only revealed to the reader (spectator) at the beginning of Act 5, when it is first mentioned in a stage direction.<sup>72</sup> The conventional motif of cross-dressing, a commonplace of the romance tradition and of Shakespearean comedy, receives an original treatment here.<sup>73</sup> The Prince, although astutely described by one of the women as having “a Masculine Presence,” seduces Lady Happy as “the Princess,” who is herself cross-dressed as a succession of male heroes in the various theatrical entertainments they perform together. At the end of the play, after being saluted as a man by his ambassador, the Prince bluntly confirms his true identity and proclaims his marriage with Lady Happy without further ado. He then dissolves the convent and seizes the building. The climactic seduction scene, placed at the beginning of Act 4, reveals what could be seen as Cavendish’s ambivalence towards a separatist community. At various points in the play, the ladies entertain themselves with theatricals, including masques. This allows the “Princess” to cross-dress as a shepherd and thus to become Lady Happy’s male suitor in the pastoral masque they perform. As the masque seems to overflow its boundaries, Happy and the “Princess” woo each other in pastoral verse (Act 4, scene 1). This passage has often been read as about same-sex love, but, paradoxically for a moment which could be seen as most subversive, the role-playing brings about a return to the patriarchal order, even though it allows the exploration of marginal fantasies of homoerotic desire in fairly explicit terms.<sup>74</sup> The neo-Epicurean utopia is here eventually proven vulnerable, as it is destroyed by the emergence of love and desire within an all-female community that was in theory based on the exclusion of such feelings. At the beginning of the experiment, when Lady Happy publicizes the Epicurean rule, she specifically describes her community as based on a “natural,” alternative religion which demands that passions be kept under control. When she falls in love, she feels she has betrayed this new religion because she has allowed desire to threaten her tranquillity:

O Nature, O you Gods above,  
Suffer me not to fall in Love;  
O strike me dead here in this place  
Rather then fall into disgrace.

(239)

However, Lady Happy finally reintegrates the social order, and the Prince abruptly proclaims their marriage with great authority (Act 5, scene 1). The same-sex plot has suddenly dissolved, as if now irrelevant. As with Olivia in *Twelfth Night*,

<sup>72</sup> “Enter an Ambassador to the PRINCE,” 243.

<sup>73</sup> The model that comes most readily to mind is that of Pyrocles, in Sidney’s *Arcadia*, who dresses up as a woman, Zelmane, to approach the woman he loves, Philoclea. Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), bk. 2, chap. 11, 286.

<sup>74</sup> For different readings of the cross-dressing, see Theodora A. Jankowski, “Pure Resistance: Queer(y)ing Virginity in William Shakespeare’s ‘Measure for Measure’ and Margaret Cavendish’s ‘The Convent of Pleasure,’” *Shakespeare Studies* 26 (1998): 218–55, and Gisèle Venet, “Margaret Cavendish’s Drama: An Aesthetic of Fragmentation,” in *Authorial Conquests*, ed. Cottagnies and Weitz, 213–28, more specifically 223–25.

homoerotic desire develops more or less harmoniously into different-sex romance and marriage. Cavendish, however, highlights the profound jarring note on which this final containment is based. Like Isabella at the end of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, perhaps in an even more spectacular fashion, the heroine remains obstinately silent at the decisive moment of the revelation. In this key scene, the Prince's proposal is not even addressed to her but to the "Councillors of th[e] State" whose authorization he requires, although he is ready to "have her by force of Arms" (244) anyway—presumably to abduct, if he is not allowed to marry her. In this final, violent scene of the play, the Prince disposes of the building of the convent, and, as if to erase all physical traces of the community, he desecrates it by giving it to the fool Mimick. The containment both of same-sex desire and of the utopian separatist community is thorough and seems to negate the very possibility of such an all-female community. This denouement ostensibly foregrounds the failure of the neo-Epicurean experiment, perhaps its impossibility: first because it ignores the reality of the senses, and then because a patriarchal society posits female submission. A community like Lady Happy's cannot exist within an authoritarian society geared towards marriage and reproduction. The utopia of retreat is a failure because Lady Happy's natural religion is as irreconcilable with society as it is.

A question remains unanswered, however: is the neo-Epicurean, single-sex community bound to fail because it is inherently flawed (chastity being untenable), or is it destroyed by devious means—the intrusion of the wolf in sheep's clothing into the fold? In Act 3, scene 1, the ladies perform a dramatic entertainment which consists of a series of tableaux on the woes of married life, a vivid and witty visual illustration of the troubles of conjugal life that was perhaps suggested by Stanley's *The History of Philosophy*.<sup>75</sup> It shows in quick succession a woman abandoned by her husband, one whose husband is a drunkard, a compulsive gambler, another woman whose children are hungry, another in the pangs of labour, etc. This clearly negative depiction of marriage effectively runs counter to the heroine's passive acceptance of her new status at the end of the play. In a passage that is again reminiscent of *Twelfth Night*, Lady Happy finally confronts her Fool, Mimick, who seems to provide the moral of the play:

L. HAPPY. What you Rogue, do you call me a Fool?

MIMICK. Not I, please you Highness, unless all Women be Fools.

PRINCE. Is your Wife a Fool?

MIMICK. Man and Wife, 'tis said, makes but one Fool.

(246)

Cavendish's encounter with Epicurean ethic gave her the impetus and the intellectual framework to imagine a female utopian space, but as the play almost ends with this deeply ironical comment on marriage, it finally seems to deplore the necessary, if ambiguous, repression of the subversive potential of such an alternative community.

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**75** See note 66 to this chapter.

To conclude, both *Poems, and Fancies* and *The Convent of Pleasure* illustrate Cavendish's fruitful engagement with Epicureanism and show how a heterodox philosophical doctrine could become an empowering instrument to elaborate her own thought. Cavendish was quick to see the potentialities of a doctrine that was not mainstream and therefore ready for appropriation and experimentation. In both works, although in very different ways, she enters into a dialogue with Epicureanism, which turns out to be a stepping-stone in the development of her own philosophy. In her early works, Epicurean atomism allows her to present a woman-friendly theory of matter, although she falls short of elaborating on its republican implications and eventually rejects mechanism to develop her own brand of vitalism. Epicurean ethic lent itself more easily perhaps to her fiction of a female utopia, although she also stages its ambivalent containment under more "realistic" social pressures. Even though in both cases she ends up distancing herself from Epicurean physics and ethics, they are not simply forgotten but incorporated into her own thought. Both works exemplify Cavendish's generic "bricolage" through which she gives a pre-feminist slant to literary genres she perceives as "male." By opening up her poetry miscellany to a heterodox scientific discourse and by resorting to gendered metaphors and references, she creates her own brand of poetry that questions the pre-eminence of male-oriented poetical and scientific discourses. In *The Convent of Pleasure*, Cavendish rehearses and subverts the conventions of the romantic Shakespearean comedy both to celebrate its subversive, liberating potential and to highlight the more sinister subtext of containment it also frequently stages. Through her confrontation with Epicureanism, Cavendish was able to forge empowering intellectual tools and gain the authority she sought.

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## Chapter 20

# CAVENDISH AND THE NOVEL

Brandie R. Siegfried

IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY treatments of the novel's evolution as a genre, Margaret Cavendish is mostly missing.<sup>1</sup> When we do catch a glimpse of her, she makes her appearance as a literary critic rather than a contributing author in her own right. In the topic's magnum opus, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740*, for instance, Michael McKeon places her in the company of Meric Casaubon and Père le Moynes, who are at pains to distinguish between historical accounts on the one hand and fictional romances on the other.<sup>2</sup> Here, Cavendish insists that her *Life of William*—the biography of her husband released the year after her science romance, *The Blazing World*, was published—is historical and not to be confused with “pleasant Romances,” which amount to “telling Romansal Falshoods for Historical Truths.”<sup>3</sup> Cavendish voices precisely the period's urge to tease fact from fiction at a moment in time when “narrative” accounts of any sort seemed to be mixing the two modes, an urge ripe for careful scrutiny and therefore rightly at the heart of McKeon's guiding premise. “To formulate the problem of the origins of the novel in terms of how one dominant prose form ‘became’ another,” he writes, “is really to ask how romance responded to the early modern historicist revolution. In seventeenth-century prose narrative, verisimilitude and the claim to historicity are incompatible and competitive expressions of that revolution.”<sup>4</sup> Cavendish's contemporary, Casaubon, insists on this fundamental incompatibility, for he is not convinced that “a thing is true, because it is possible; no, nor because probable: nay, it is certain that many lyes and falshoods are founded upon this very thing, *probability*.” The truth

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1 Though she is not mentioned in either, Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* and M. M. Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* are also particularly useful for thinking about Cavendish's place in the evolution of the genre. An explicit early consideration of Cavendish appears in R. B. Johnson, *Novelists on Novels: From the Duchess of Newcastle to George Eliot* (London: Douglas, 1928). More serious references to Cavendish in this regard began in the 1970s and have continued to increase so that, currently, it is not uncommon for *The Blazing World* to receive at least a nod. For two excellent discussions addressing the plurality of stories now available for the rise of the novel more generally, see Margaret Reeves, “Telling the Tale of the Rise of the Novel,” *CLIO: A Journal of Literature, History, and the Philosophy of History* 30 (2000): 25–49, and Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996).

2 Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

3 Margaret Cavendish, “The Preface,” *The Life ... of William Cavendish, Duke ... of Newcastle* (London, 1667), sigs. b2v, C2r.

4 McKeon, *Origins*, 53.

of history is anchored in certainty, not adrift in probability. In a similar vein, Le Moyne rejects the notion that history is a subcategory of rhetoric, for “how can you reconcile Truth, the soul of History and the goal of the Historian, with verisimilitude, the form of Oration and the aim of the Orator?”<sup>5</sup> Just as certainty is preferable to probability, so verifiable facts are preferable to accounts that may nevertheless claim the more moving truths of subjective experience without such anchors. Gesturing toward future events, McKeon suggests that contrary to the sentiments expressed by these resisting critics—particularly for early eighteenth-century readers eager to consume the newly emerging novel at rates far surpassing their desire for histories—verisimilitude eventually would “prevail, but only in the long run and only as the reformulated doctrine of ‘realism.’”<sup>6</sup>

McKeon’s further point is of special interest here, for it jolts Cavendish out of her cameo appearance in this trio of voices and suggests that her place in the history of the novel is considerably more interesting than one might suppose. As McKeon goes on to explain,

In the short run and throughout the critical period of the origins of the English novel, the claim to historicity is dominant. And when it is refuted, the terms are less likely to be those of Aristotelian verisimilitude than those of extreme skepticism. The claim to historicity and its more extreme negation of “romance” are preferable, at first, for obvious reasons: they are a far more direct and immediate reflection of empirical and skeptical epistemology.<sup>7</sup>

Empirical and sceptical epistemologies are precisely those which Cavendish herself evaluated regularly in her body of philosophical work, which included *Poems, and Fancies* (1653), *Philosophical Fancies* (1653), *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1663), *Philosophical Letters* (1664), *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (1668), and *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (1666, revised 1668), to which she appended her fictional narrative, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*. In the latter, she diverges notably from Casaubon and Le Moyne, for she is less interested in narrowly defining history as a category of truth untainted by probability than she is in sorting out the varieties of truth to be had in multiple modes of experience. Indeed, unlike Casaubon, she frequently insists that probability is all that can really be hoped for when narrating truth, given the limits of human understanding. And in contrast to Le Moyne, who resisted any reconciliation between “the soul of History” and mere verisimilitude, Cavendish argues, “Next to finding out truths, the greatest pleasure in study is to find out

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<sup>5</sup> Meric Casaubon, *Of Credulity and Incredulity, in Things Natural, Civil, and Divine* (London, 1668), 155, and Père le Moyne, *De l’histoire* (Paris, 1670), 85.

<sup>6</sup> McKeon, *Origins*, 53. For additional studies that take up the question of realism, see Rachel Carnell, *Partisan Politics, Narrative Realism, and the Rise of the British Novel* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Lennard Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Jesse Molesworth, *Chance and the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Realism, Probability, Magic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Ian Watt, *The Literal Imagination: Selected Essays* (Stanford: Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> McKeon, *Origins*, 53.

probabilities.”<sup>8</sup> That is, Le Moyne must rely on a notion of certitude for his contrast, but it is certitude that Cavendish rejects. When she insists that her *Life of William* is not made up of “Romansical Falshoods” (fiction), she means that biography’s purpose is generically distinct from that of romance, not that fiction has nothing to do with truth.

With that distinction in mind, and as we think about Cavendish within the early genealogy of the novel—a family tree that, as all serious critics of the genre acknowledge, included elements from epic and romance, augmented by the refinement of dialogue and setting advanced by Renaissance drama—Cavendish’s own words on the new genre she was developing in *The Blazing World* are certainly worth hearing.<sup>9</sup> That book was appended to her science treatise, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (hereafter *Observations*), an amalgam of what we would now think of as both the “physical” and “social” sciences, linking her ideas on magnetism, astronomy, and matter’s self-directing mechanisms (including the vital energies inherent to each kind of matter) to her thoughts on religion, collective political identity, and how individual minds assert both autonomy and connection. In fact, her novel’s prologue, “To the Reader,” firmly asserts that she is simply shifting the mental expectations of one genre, “my serious Philosophical Contemplations,” to another, which she refers to as “Fiction.”<sup>10</sup> Science and philosophy deal in facts, but their comprehension of Nature (the world overall, as well as human nature), is limited, since history itself shows that “Philosophers may err in searching and enquiring after the Causes of Natural Effects, and many times embrace falsehoods for Truths.”<sup>11</sup> She is careful, here, not to dismiss errors in philosophy and science as unintentional fabrication, for the inevitability of human error in the pursuit of knowledge “doth not prove that the ground of Philosophy is meerly [sic] Fiction, but the error proceeds from the different motions of Reason.” On her theory of mind, remember, reason is a function of material elements of perception receiving input from material things—perceptions brought inward for cogitation by inner features (also material in

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**8** *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (London, 1655). In both this and *Poems, and Fancies* (1653), Cavendish borrowed from Epicurean and Stoic philosophy to flesh out a stance that posits how our grasp of truth may shift. Depending on circumstances, an understanding of theories of probability (which posit that a given set of actions is likely to have particular results but may have others) or necessity (which account for things beyond our control) may be equally useful for pointing us toward further knowledge.

**9** For good discussions of the novel in relation to Renaissance drama, see Jean Jules Jusserand, *The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare*, trans. Elizabeth Lee (London: Unwin, 1890); Steven Moore, *The Novel, An Alternative History: Beginnings to 1600* (New York: Continuum, 2010); and Kate Louise Rumbold, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Cultures of Quotation from Samuel Richardson to Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

**10** Margaret Cavendish, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*, ed. Sara H. Mendelson (Ontario: Broadview, 2016), 59, hereafter *Blazing World*. All subsequent citations refer to this edition.

**11** In 1605, Francis Bacon asserted that the “literary” (his word) and the empirical categories were complementary, two forms of scientia, or knowledge, that contextualize each other. See chap. 2 of Francis Bacon, *Of the Proficiency and Advancement of Learning* (London, 1605).

nature) developed precisely for that purpose. There is no Platonic realm of truth accessible to material perceptions (and no non-material mind à la Descartes to transcend that materiality), and for this reason, ultimately “all do ground their Opinions upon Reason; that is, upon rational probabilities, at least, they think they do.”<sup>12</sup>

After clarifying for her reader both the strengths and the weaknesses peculiar to the pursuit of fact-based truth—our perceptions of reality are both generally reliable and physiologically limited—and after explaining how and why such intellectual ventures must always be understood as probabilities or approximations, whereby “some may come nearer the mark than others,” she then turns to the new genre she is developing.<sup>13</sup> The shift in literary form will allow for a novel engagement with many of the same elements already developed in her science treatise, but the trajectory will be entirely distinct, since “[t]he end of Reason is Truth; the end of Fancy is Fiction.” As she leads her readers into new territory, here, she wants to be clear about what her new genre is meant to achieve. “But mistake me not,” she warns, “when I distinguish *Fancy* from *Reason*; I mean not as if *Fancy* were not made of the Rational parts of *Matter*; but by reason I understand a rational search and enquiry into the causes of natural effects; and by *Fancy* a voluntary creation or production of the *Mind*.” Cavendish distinguishes between two modes for understanding two corresponding aspects of reality: science and philosophy treat of the *actual* (the rational observation and elucidation of the facts or “natural effects” available to perception), while fiction aims at *potential* (the propositional form of reason which extrapolates freely from those facts toward larger patterns of truth via imagination). No surprise that key elements of Aristotle’s famous model for understanding the wholeness of reality emerge here, since, in contrast to Plato’s or Augustine’s non-material models of transcendent truth, Aristotle’s paradigm in *Metaphysics* was as firmly anchored in the material world as Cavendish’s.<sup>14</sup> Another way of grasping what she is getting at in her preface, then, is to say that she wants two very different *mindsets* for dealing with human approximations of the larger unities (actual and potential) that make up the “one Truth in Nature.”<sup>15</sup> Factual exposition is one mode useful for getting into the state of mind most appropriate for the pursuit of truth; fiction is a different mode, useful for getting into another state of mind altogether. The particular benefit of this latter mode, which is in part meant to “recreate [refresh] the *Mind*, and withdraw it from its more serious contemplations,” is that it more fully and formally insists on something so easily lost to view in the dense treatises of science or the chronicles of history: the quest for knowledge

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<sup>12</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 59.

<sup>13</sup> Note that there is never any question regarding the importance of her science treatise. What follows is not, she insists, “a disparagement to Philosophy, or out of an opinion, as if those noble study were but a Fiction of the *Mind*.” *Blazing World*, 59.

<sup>14</sup> Much of Cavendish’s early philosophical work engaged with Aristotle on various levels. In “Further Observations upon Experimental Philosophy” she even goes out of her way to defend “Aristotle, who is beaten by all.” She goes on, “In my opinion, he was a very subtle philosopher, and an ingenious man.” *Observations*, 195.

<sup>15</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 59.

must include invention (how do we apply what we observe?) and problem-solving (what can the past teach us for solving the great riddles of life?)—simply describing events, processes, or phenomena is insufficient. That is, some parts of science are (and must be) like a game, an inviting fictional arena with a different set of rules for engaging with possibility.<sup>16</sup>

After explaining the particular purpose of the new literary form she has developed (that is, to refresh the mind in the game-like mode of propositional or imaginative reasoning), Cavendish then moves on to explain the elements of that form. What follows, she notes, is fiction, yet it is *not* an amorously fanciful spree untethered from the philosophical pursuits of *Observations*: “But lest my Fancy should stray too much, I chose such Fiction as would be agreeable to the subject I treated of in the former parts [her science treatise].” Once more, she is quite careful to make a distinction between what her reader might reasonably suppose about her fictional project and what that project actually entails. In this case, she notes that she is not creating a science romance in the mode of “Lucian’s” or “The French man’s [Cyrano de Bergerac’s] *World in the Moon*.”<sup>17</sup> Rather, the novelty of her form is to be found in its progressing frames of reference: “The first part whereof is *Romancical*, the second *Philosophical*, and the third is meerly *Fancy*, or (as I may call it) *Fantastical*.”<sup>18</sup> Close attention to the distinctive features of each part of her “Fiction” suggests that she managed to develop something that happily borrows from Cervantes (and Shakespeare) but goes beyond, incorporating elements that would later come to be thought of as characteristic of eighteenth-century novels. To put it another way, while Cavendish correctly can be understood to model an early iteration of an enduring form of genre literature—in this case, science fiction—she is also moving in the direction of a new verisimilitude, one that relies more on a dramatization of human psychology than on believable “facts” or histories.

The elements of that portrait of believability, detailed below, allow for further questions meant to encourage a richer and more nuanced sense of the rootedness of the later English novel in the narratives of its immediate seventeenth-century predecessors. With respect to Cavendish specifically, there is no particular need to limit this backward glance to *The Blazing World*, since her oeuvre is so generically diverse. For instance, we might wonder how our historical understanding of Samuel Richardson’s epistolary novels *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747–1748) might be enhanced, were we to read

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**16** For a good discussion of Cavendish’s persistent desire to link philosophy to pleasure, see Lisa Walters’s chapter in this volume.

**17** See Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac, *Histoire Comique contenant les Estats et Empires de la Lune* (Paris, 1657); and Lucian of Samosata, *The True History*, translated by Francis Hickeys and printed with *Certaine select dialogues of Lucian* in 1634. Cavendish borrows elements of plot and theme from both. For a good discussion of Cavendish in relation to de Bergerac, see Line Cottegnies, “Brilliant Heterodoxy: The Plurality of Worlds in Margaret Cavendish’s ‘Blazing World’ (1666) and Cyrano de Bergerac’s ‘Estats et Empires de la Lune’ (1657),” in *God and Nature in the Thought of Margaret Cavendish*, ed. Brandie R. Siegfried and Lisa T. Sarasohn (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 107–20.

**18** Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 60.

them in light of Cavendish's *Sociable Letters* (1664) or in relation to *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* (1656) and *The Blazing World*, where female protagonists are seen as prey yet exercise agency and independence of mind despite their difficult circumstances. Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) might take on interesting evolutionary hues in light of Cavendish's heroine-become-empress who, after successful ventures in another land, returns to subdue her home world and its male authorities. What happens to our understanding of parody when the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) gaze back at *The Blazing World's* coterie of animal-men philosophers? Does Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) borrow the strategy of the intrusive narrator from Cavendish's early models? Might Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) humorously take from Cavendish as well as Cervantes? Or consider Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, where revivification—and the question of what defines a soul—echoes Cavendish's imagined possibilities for "soulification" in *Observations*.<sup>19</sup> Would we appreciate Jane Austen's matchless dialogue even more were it set alongside Cavendish's epistolary fiction, *Sociable Letters*, where we encounter the same "paradoxical form of an impersonal intimacy" that is at once "a kind of perspective and simultaneously the way that perspective is developed within the text"?<sup>20</sup> These questions are the unexplored backdrop for what follows, which is a foray into aspects of Cavendish's narrative fiction meant to aid in future, more thoroughgoing considerations of *The Blazing World* in the history of the novel.

## The Romancical

With these research possibilities in mind, we turn to the three-part structure of *The Blazing World*. The first component Cavendish stresses as central to the form she is developing is the "Romancical," a genre famous for magical landscapes, otherworldly creatures, conflicts with monstrous and metaphysically dangerous enemies, and meditations on the meaning of beauty and love. Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1532), Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590–1596), Sidney's *Arcadia* (1581, 1590), and Wroth's *Urania* (1621) kept this genre pertinent to concerns of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century readers. Spenser's work gave Cavendish a strong model for the allegorical potential of the genre; Sidney provided early examples of particularly bold, beautiful, and articulate female characters (Philoclea and Pamela); and Wroth gave female interiority a riveting complexity independent of, though entangled with, male experience. Cervantes's *Don*

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<sup>19</sup> For recent related discussions useful for thinking about Cavendish, see William Poole, "Francis Godwin, Henry Neville, Margaret Cavendish, H. G. Wells: Some Utopian Debts," *ANQ* 16 (2003): 12–18.

<sup>20</sup> See D. A. Miller, *Jane Austen or, The Secret of Style* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 60. See also Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986). Twenty-first-century novelists such as Siri Hustvedt and Danielle Dutton pay overt homage to Cavendish, not only as a well-spring of artist thought but as a subject worthy to be a focus of fiction in her own right. See Siri Hustvedt, *The Blazing World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), and Danielle Dutton, *Margaret the First: A Novel* (New York: Catapult, 2016).

*Quixote* (1605) proffered a richly insightful burlesque of the genre and began the work of linking the psychological exploration of romance to the realistic social observation that would become the distinctive feature of the eighteenth-century novel. All of these influences are apparent in *The Blazing World*, but it is also worth noting that romance—despite its declining popularity—would have been a natural choice for Cavendish, especially given the series of highly dramatic catastrophes experienced by the English in the early 1660s. The Great Fire of London, another round of plague, and the disastrous sea battle with the Dutch who sailed upriver to destroy the English navy in its own harbour—all were profoundly shocking, with aftereffects that left those documenting these events turning to the bizarre imagery of the biblical Book of Revelation as the best analogue for experience.

Taking up romance's reliance on wandering heroes whose recursive perambulations propel them from one situation to another (with shifts in circumstance and expectation), the first segment of Cavendish's book combines the drama of England's recent collective experience with elements recollected from episodes from her own life. Notably, *The Blazing World's* plot traces Cavendish's personal history, including the experience of exile, struggles with foreign languages, and an unexpected encounter with a powerful man who falls in love with the heroine, marries her, and grants her unprecedented freedom as a philosopher and world-manager. The roots of the heroine's renown are revealed to be due, in part, to her singular situation in the world of men, as well as to philosophical dialogues with various thinkers. Finally, the book develops a growing certainty that enduring fame would be the result of multiple versions of the philosophical self couched in print and taken up by other minds.<sup>21</sup> As threads of collective experience and individual identity are thus woven together upon this loom of romance—recent English history is thoroughly entwined with Cavendish's personal experience and hopes—her readers are encouraged to be double minded as they approach an otherwise all too familiar opening scene:

A Merchant travelling into a forreign Countrey, fell extreemly in Love with a young Lady; but being a stranger in that Nation and beneath her both in Birth and Wealth, he could have but little hopes of obtaining his desire; however his love growing more and more vehement upon him, even to the slighting of all difficulties, he resolved at last to steal her away.<sup>22</sup>

The account begins with an omniscient point of view, stressing not the heroine's sense of things but the kidnapper's rationalizations for abduction, especially his fierce "Love" and equally fierce frustrations at differences of "Birth and Wealth" that would make

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**21** For the parallel account in Cavendish's early memoir, see *A True Relation*, in *Natures Pictures* (London, 1656). See also "Phantasm's Masque," in *Poems, and Fancies* (1563, 1664, 1668), where she similarly redacts her own biography into the account of a fictional heroine. Note that Utopian fiction similarly takes up recognizable elements of history. For a good discussion of this in relation to Cavendish, see Marina Leslie, *Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

**22** Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 61.

appropriately persuasive overtures impossible. Furthermore, we learn that “when he fancied himself the happiest man of the World, he proved to be most unfortunate,” a moment of dramatic irony in which his mounting joy is reversed by “Heaven,” which, “frowning at his theft, raised such a Tempest, as they knew not what to do, or whither to steer their course.” This corrective action swiftly propels his ship to the “North-pole,” where the kidnapper and crew freeze to death and “the young Lady onely, by the light of her Beauty, and heat of her Youth, and Protection of the Gods” remains alive. As it turns out, there is a passage from the pole of her world to the pole of another, and the ship carries her though it—from the home of her youth into a new and foreign realm of wonder.

At this point, the narrator disrupts the story to directly address the reader and explain how a particular theory of science might explain this multiple-worlds phenomenon. If this is a slightly heavy-handed reminder that Cavendish’s own science treatise is joined to her *Blazing World* at their respective poles, it is also the point at which the narrator insists on joining us more overtly in observing and occasionally commenting on the action. When this omniscient, intrusive narrator moves back to the story proper, she turns our attention to the perspective of the victim-become-heroine, for “the distressed Lady, she seeing all the Men dead, found small comfort in life.” In the old world, the heroine’s point of view did not yet matter, but the narrative of the new world begins with her perspective. Alone and surrounded by rotting bodies on the stranded ship, the lady scans the horizon in hopes of some further recourse, only to discover coming towards her across the ice, “strange Creatures, in shape like Bears, onely they went upright as men.”<sup>23</sup> She is taken to safety as their guest, but her discomfort in the extreme cold is obvious, so the bear-like creatures of the city decide to take her to the warmer abode of the Emperor. On their way, they encounter “Fox-men,” “Bird-men,” “Satyrs” (as Mendelson notes, probably referring to orangutans), and various other creatures who combine animal forms with particular types of intelligence and expertise. In fact, the narrator tells us, they had developed “extraordinary Art, much to be taken notice of by experimental Philosophers.”<sup>24</sup> More particularly, in this instance, there was “a certain Engine, which would draw in a great quantity of air, and shoot forth wind with a great force; this Engine in a calm, they placed behind their ships, and in a storm, before; for it served against the raging waves.”<sup>25</sup> The propositional aspect of reason that romance is meant to foster becomes apparent in the first of many scenes where something familiar, such as a bellows, is shown to have potential properties useful for solving problems yet to be explored in the “real” world of the reader.

The heroine and her guides pass several cities on their way, “some of Marbel, some of Alabaster, some of Agat, some of Amber, some of Coral, and some of other precious materials not known in our world.”<sup>26</sup> Shakespeare’s poetic rendering of time’s

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23 Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 62.

24 Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 65n1.

25 Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 65–66.

26 Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 68.

transformative power chimes softly here: "Full fathom five thy father lies, / Of his bones are coral made; / Those are pearls that were his eyes; / Nothing of him that doth fade, / But doth suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange."<sup>27</sup> Shakespeare's prospect of rich transformation sets the stage, so to speak, for the metamorphosis of thought in Cavendish's book as the narrator takes her travellers from literary and biographical memory to imagined realms of propositional reasoning. As the heroine and her guides approach the "Imperial City," also called "Paradise," we learn that it is a place of waterways (allowing for convenient travel) and magnificent buildings. If this sounds suspiciously like an amalgamation of London, Paris, and Antwerp, it should<sup>28</sup>—but the language of this passage also takes up biblical visions of the New Jerusalem, where "home" is the place of new beginnings drawn out of life's ferocious and confounding experiences. For readers steeped in the Book of Revelation, where a torn world gives way to a new realm typified by buildings and temples made of "pearls," "jasper," "gold," and "clear glass"—and where the dwellings are lit by their own radiance, "like a most rare jewel"—Cavendish's "Imperial City" would have been immediately recognizable.<sup>29</sup> In fact, she further cues her readers to her sources by stressing the religious orientation of the city's dominant structures. The passageway from the city to the palace "had on either hand a Cloyster, the outward part whereof stood upon Arches sustained by Pillars ... the Palace it self appear'd in its middle like the Isle of a Church" and "between the outward and inward part of the Cloyster, were the Lodgings for Attendants." Subsequent descriptions of the various apartments of the palace again rely heavily on the Book of Revelation, and we are not surprised to learn, given the religious orientation of the place, that the heroine is mistaken for the divine female figure at the gates of the New Jerusalem, invoking the humour of displaced associations: "No sooner was the Lady brought before the Emperor, but he conceived her to be some Goddess, and offered to worship her." She refuses, explaining she is only mortal, and the Emperor responds by giving her "absolute power to rule and govern all that World as she pleased."<sup>30</sup> This is where a fairy tale might end, but it is precisely here that Cavendish's book of unveiling opens out to the landscape of her *Observations*.

Taking on her new identity in this foreign realm, the heroine-made-Empress accouters herself in garments studded with precious jewels, including a diamond buckler

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<sup>27</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 1.2.397–402.

<sup>28</sup> For further discussion of Cavendish's fruitful experiences in cosmopolitan Antwerp, see James Fitzmaurice's chapter in this volume.

<sup>29</sup> See Revelation 21–22.

<sup>30</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 68–70. Worth noting here is Williams's prefatory poem to *Sociable Letters*, wherein reason is the "Emperour in every Head ... And thus her [Cavendish's] thoughts, the Creatures of her Mind, / Do Travel through the world amongst mankind ... / And Observation Guides them back again / To reason, their Great King, that's in the Brain." See "Upon her Excellency the Authoress" in Margaret Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, ed. James Fitzmaurice (Toronto: Broadview, 2004), 44.

that “shewed like a Rain-bow,” then heads out to learn all she can, for she “desired to be informed both of the manner of their Religion and Government.”<sup>31</sup> She will also investigate their theories of natural philosophy. She erects schools and founds several learned societies, and she encourages the local inhabitants to apply themselves to professions “most proper for the nature of their species.”<sup>32</sup>

The Bear-men were to be her Experimental Philosophers, the Bird-men her Astronomers, the Fly-, Worm- and Fish-men her Natural Philosophers, the Ape-men her Chymists, the Satyrs her Galenick Physicians, the Fox-men her Politicians, the Spider- and Lice-men her Mathematicians, the Jackdaw-, Magpie- and Parrot-men her Orators and Logicians, the Gyants her Architects, etc.<sup>33</sup>

Here it is worth recalling that in the segment of *Observations* titled “Of the Rational Soul of Man,” Cavendish argued strongly that the “natural soul, otherwise called reason” belongs to all things, and “we cannot in reason conceive that man should be the only creature that partakes of this soul of nature.” In fact, “Truly, if all other creatures cannot be denied to be material, they can neither be accounted irrational,” since reason is imbedded in the smallest “particle” of matter itself.<sup>34</sup> The beasts here are not merely a parody of the exclusively male Royal Society’s fellows; they also provide a vision of lively intelligence working in unexpected forms, within the very creatures Descartes insisted had no power of reasoning.<sup>35</sup>

## The Philosophical

The transition from the “Romancical” to the “Philosophical” includes a touch of orientalist intrigue that smacks of the sociological impulses of early seventeenth-century travel literature. Court “Eunuches” and prohibitions against female participation in public religious or political events cause the Empress to wonder whether these men

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**31** Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 70. The description of the Empress’s attire is intentionally reminiscent of the Rainbow portrait of Elizabeth I. In the Second Part of *Blazing World*, Cavendish will again allude to Elizabeth by way of recognizable elements borrowed from the Armada speech, when the Empress addresses her troops. Of course, both this and Queen Elizabeth’s original dress harkened back to the image of the Bride standing at the gates of the New Jerusalem at the end of John’s book, Revelation.

**32** Echoes of Bacon’s *New Atlantis* may be discerned throughout. For a more lengthy discussion, see Frédérique Ait-Touati, “Making Worlds: Invention and Fiction in Bacon and Cavendish,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Early Modern Literature and Science*, ed. H. Marchitello and E. Tribble (London: Palgrave, 2017), 489–503.

**33** Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 71.

**34** Cavendish, *Observations*, 221.

**35** See René Descartes’s “Letter to the Marquis of Newcastle, November 23, 1646,” in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985–91), 3:304.

"were Jews, Turks, or Christians?"<sup>36</sup> The unremarkable way in which the narrator tells us that females are never allowed out is chilling, despite the tantalizing savour of Persian-inflected captivity narratives.<sup>37</sup> There is something worrying about this narrator. In addition to being occasionally intrusive, she is also unreliable, refusing to assert a moral context for the slave status of the females of this world. Moreover, she has suggestive memory lapses, as when, after first enumerating the kinds of beings inhabiting the new world, she assures us that there were "many more, which I cannot remember."<sup>38</sup> This creates a paradox, the effects of which tend to linger below the tale's waterline only to surface at key moments throughout the subsequent narrative, typically in order to startle us from a too-accommodating posture of complacency as readers. Essentially, by allowing a crack in memory, our storyteller reveals her position of observation to be imperfect, even potentially in error, yet this increases the characterization of the narrator—gives us, that is, an observing character who might be mistaken but is therefore more authentic. This tale starts to feel true, somehow, despite the presence of animal-men and purple or "Grass-green" eunuchs, thanks to this strand of verisimilitude: the verity that in any account that relies on our memory of truth, we are bound to forget something.

The door of the "Romancical" hangs on this subtle hinge—which consists of our actual experience of memory's flaws being yoked to the "trustiness" of a similarly flawed fictional character—and quietly swings open to a "Philosophical" drama of dialogic inquiry. As the tale moves to the "Philosophical," then, we are led not by a flawless guide speaking with absolute authority but by a narrator who bustlingly interrupts the flow of her own story to explain things to the reader, a storyteller who acknowledges the limitations of her own memory with a casual candour that seems "real." This sense of a real consciousness at work in the story is further sustained by the piling up of seeming irrelevancy, of more and more detail that is both engrossing and excessive. The entire first section of *The Blazing World* seems to recapitulate Cavendish's early insistence in *Poems, and Fancies* that the mind is never really fully knowable because at its most characteristic moments it exceeds the tools of scientific narrative (in contrast, think of Hobbes's insistence that he could explain human nature by means of geometric principles). In "The Circle of the Brain Cannot Be Squared," she writes, "A circle round, divided in four parts, / Hath been great study 'mongst the men of arts ... / For while the brain is round, no square will be; / While thoughts divide, no figures will agree." The poem goes on to dismiss additional geometrical analogies, concluding, "For such is man's curiosity, and

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**36** Mendelson notes that contemporaries were familiar with Ottoman practices through the work of Robert Withers, *A Description of the Grand Signor's Seraglio, or Turkish Emperor's Court* (London, 1656). See also James, *Political Writings*, 17n25.

**37** For a good discussion of such narratives, see Eric Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). For a broader context, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

**38** Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 71.

mind, / To seek for that which hardest is to find.”<sup>39</sup> *The Blazing World’s* narrator and heroine each dramatize this sense that human curiosity—even when temporarily off track or seemingly disorderly—mirrors Nature’s infinite capacity to exceed expectation. This sense that human consciousness is a jumble of both receptive experience and leaping curiosity requires a new form of engagement from the reader.<sup>40</sup>

As the narrator turns our attention from physical features of the new world (seascapes, landscapes, architectural detail, and biomorphic descriptions of the new world’s inhabitants) to the heroine’s conversational exploration of ideas with her animal-men, the story develops a particular relationship between the heroine’s wandering (which resulted in new encounters with strange yet familiar forms) and her subsequent wondering (which details her intellectual trek across the terrain of seventeenth-century theories of science). By mustering the palpabilities of animal-men—letting bears and foxes, spiders and worms, all trail their familiar features across the page—the narrator anchors consciousness per se to the material world, for here “tracking” bears is tracking thought; “following” foxes is listening to reasons; “noting” spiders is heeding the logic of algebraic geometry expressed in webs of silk. Because this narrator is both realistically unreliable *and* constantly focused on the heft of nature as the grounds for narration, the seemingly fantastical elements of the tale now function more fully as elements of propositional reason. That is, as our heroine heads into the lively disputations for which the book is famous—where arguments from the attached volume, *Observations*, emerge sometimes in the discourse of the Empress and sometimes in the assertions of the animal-men—the landscape of understanding has been narratively perturbed so that probability is understood to grant proximity to truth, no more and no less. And now, as the heroine engages in conversations with her various societies of animal-men on questions at the heart of moral philosophy and physical science (which in Cavendish’s day were still thoroughly entwined), the declarations she makes must be more carefully considered, weighed against the possibility of error and human fallibility.

The heroine-Empress, like the narrator, is an interesting protagonist for this venture, one whose views occasionally exhibit the same sorts of cracks in the seemingly stable landscape of cold reason which were previously revealed at the site of the narrator’s openly flawed memory. Mere nuance at the start of the philosophical segment, this point becomes more apparent as the conversations progress. For instance, the Empress’s blanket condemnation of “their telescopes”—a stance Cavendish does not take in her science treatise, where, although she does vigorously criticize naive and indiscriminate presumptions about nature based on drawings of things viewed through flawed lenses, she also openly relies on the partial knowledge gained from those same lenses for some of her own suppositions—is not narrated as the proper stance toward the

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39 Cavendish, “The Circle of the Brain Cannot Be Squared,” *Poems and Fancies*, ed. Brandie R. Siegfried (Toronto: Iter, 2018), 134.

40 For a slightly different take on this aspect of Cavendish’s works, see Line Cottegnies’s chapter in this volume.

tools of science but as the annoying overgeneralization that becomes the provocation for the Bear-men to reveal their own previously unacknowledged motivation. When commanded to destroy their "Telescopes," they kneel and patiently explain that in addition to the sheer delight in gazing at "Celestial bodies" there is another pleasure at stake. "Besides," they go on,

we shall want employments for our senses, and subjects for arguments; for were there nothing but truth, and no falshood, there would be no occasion for to dispute, and by this means we should want [lack] the aim and pleasure of our endeavours in confuting and contradicting each other; neither would one man be thought wiser then another, but all would either be alike knowing and wise, or all would be fools.

The Empress consents but insists that their disputations be held within "Schools."<sup>41</sup> At the outset of this scene, the Empress espouses a notion of truth that relies on a highly uncharacteristic (for Cavendish) embrace of certainty: since telescopes cannot provide certain knowledge, they should be destroyed. The Empress does not revise that position—she merely allows for a restricted form of vanity to appease her people.<sup>42</sup> The Bear-men, rather than arguing for probable knowledge and the methodologies that would help nudge the results of their inquiries into closer proximity to truth, simply argue for unfettered inquiry and purposeless social status. Neither of these positions is embraced by Cavendish in the prologue to the story, which suggests that we are not watching a heroine who is merely the author's avatar for wish-fulfillment; rather we are following the intellectual journey of a compellingly attractive but clearly flawed character, a wondering heroine *for* whom we cheer but *at* whom we aim a measuring gaze. In fact, the lingering influence of the prologue is the slender thread which, like Ariadne's, is meant to guide us back to the simple premise with which Cavendish began: fiction aims at *potential*; it is the propositional form of reason which extrapolates freely from facts toward larger patterns of truth via imagination. With that thread lightly in hand as we retrace our steps through this exchange, the scene's true rhetorical path may be discerned, for the implication through negation is simply this: open debates, divorced from vain desires for social status, are better for the sake of truth than dogmatic assertions (the Empress) or aimless inquiry (the Bear-men). The further inference is that since all modes of perception (instrumentally augmented or not) are limited, multiple means of garnering further information provide a better approximation of reality than any single effort could.

These moments stack up in the philosophical segment, and one of the results is a growing sense of distance between the author (whose views are set forth in the prologue), the narrator (who is intrusive and unreliable), and the heroine of the story (who

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<sup>41</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 79.

<sup>42</sup> Remember that in *Observations*, Cavendish critiques the naive "certainties" that artificial lenses bring their viewers; she strongly urges methods that run such encounters through various modes of reasoned/rational critique, such as those she models throughout her treatise.

often contradicts the author's philosophy and the narrator's commentary).<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the back-and-forth of the question-response segment echoes "An Argumental Discourse," which opens *Observations*:

When I was setting forth this book of *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, a dispute chanced to arise between the rational parts of my mind concerning some chief points and principles in natural philosophy; for, some new thoughts endeavouring to oppose and call in question the truth of my former conceptions, caused a war in my mind; which in time grew to that height, that they were hardly able to compose the differences between themselves, but were in a manner necessitated to refer them to the arbitration of the impartial reader ... to reduce them to a settled peace and agreement.<sup>44</sup>

The various conversational exchanges in *The Blazing World* merely multiply, humorously, the process that *Observations* granted as central to any serious inquiry.

As the Empress continues her investigations, her queries eventually lead to considerations of matter and the possibility of immaterial beings. Disembodied spirits promptly enter the scene. Authoritative (in places even bombastic) yet accommodating of her questions, these entities proffer an alternative to the animal-men whose various intelligences dramatized the core of Cavendish's philosophy—all matter is intelligent, and all intelligence is material—and the Empress finds her mind taken up with assertions about immateriality, the possibility of occult knowledge (or hermetic philosophy), and the paradox of material minds producing immaterial thought. As in the exchanges with the animal-men, the Empress and the "Spirits" do not neatly divide their discursive parts so that the protagonist always advances Cavendish's own ideas. Sometimes she does, but at other times the Spirits do, as when they articulate a many-worlds theory or suggest that there is only one supernatural good "which was God," thus contradicting their own existence.<sup>45</sup> In fact, as they continue, the Spirits almost word-for-word recount key passages from *Observations*. For instance, on the topic of Nature, they assert,

Nature is but one Infinite self-moving, living and self-knowing body, consisting of three degrees of inanimate, sensitive and rational Matter, so intermixt together, that no part of Nature, were it an Atome, can be without any of these three degrees; the sensitive is the life, the rational the soul, and the inanimate part, the body of Infinite Nature.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> This is not to say that Cavendish never puts her own ideas in the mouth of her heroine. She does. But she does not always do so, and frequently other creatures are given the opportunity to iterate views from *Observations* while the Empress expresses agreement in some cases or confusion at the complexity of the idea in others. Jen Boyle's in-progress digital edition of the *Blazing World* with glosses from *Observations*, currently titled *Observations upon a Blazing World*, will make such moments easier to trace.

<sup>44</sup> Cavendish, *Observations*, 23. The catechism-like structure is most noticeable in *Blazing World*, 23–42.

<sup>45</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 114.

<sup>46</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 114.

These Spirits begin to look suspiciously like the seemingly disembodied character of ideas per se rather than spiritual entities with minds of their own.

No surprise that the Empress's mind leaps from questions about a "Plastik power in Nature" to whether "all Beasts could speak?" More questions arise, but not systematically as in disquisition—they pile up helter-skelter the way they do in a curious person eagerly engaging with the expanse of possible knowledge: do souls choose bodies? Are spirits naked? Were animals always able to talk? Were "all those Creatures that were in Paradise ... also in Noah's Ark?" A lengthy dismissal of numerology is developed, and the math of infinitesimals, though granted its due, is revealed to be a limited tool for expressing Nature's infinite capacity.<sup>47</sup> The seemingly trivial is interspersed with larger questions, including the possibility of metaphysical evil, the function of memory in relation to forethought, the definition and nature of a world per se, and what it means to have a soul.<sup>48</sup> Parodies of contemporary thinkers such as Van Helmont and Henry More are interspersed with queries of more import, a strategy that insists on a mode of reading necessarily steeped in the game of sorting.

### The Fantastical

With the hanging questions of worlds and souls piling up like clouds on the horizon of thought, the Empress decides to work up a cabbala of her own. She needs a scribe, but Aristotle, Pythagoras, Plato, Epicurus, and the like are all rejected as "so wedded to their own opinions, that they would never have the patience to be Scribes."<sup>49</sup> Contemporary philosophers are also rejected—Galileo, Gassendi, Descartes, Helmont, Hobbes, and More (in fact, everyone whose theories have been discussed in the preceding passages)—since they would "scorn to be Scribes to a woman." Instead, the Spirits suggest someone else, "a Lady, the Duchess of Newcastle," who is described as "not one of the most learned, eloquent, witty and ingenious, yet she is a plain and rational Writer, for the principle of her Writings, is Sense and Reason."<sup>50</sup> With the introduction of the Duchess of Newcastle as a character within the novel, the frame now widens to include not only the "Romancical" with which we began, and the "Philosophical" through which we have just ranged, but also the "Fantastical," which redoubles the opportunity for comedy even as it more firmly establishes the common ground shared by the book's other two genres. Indeed, granted that romance is the genre of the human psyche exploring a moral universe, and given that natural philosophy is the mode for systematically examining how real worlds work, the "Fantastical" is not so much a third category as a fusion of the other two—the hermaphroditical genre for understanding how the mind makes worlds. This is where Cavendish's debt to Cervantes is most visible and where her ingenuity with "fiction" is most distinctive.

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<sup>47</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 108, 110, 112–15.

<sup>48</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 111, 104–5.

<sup>49</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 119.

<sup>50</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 119.

As the two women set about making their worlds, we learn that the Duchess “was most earnest and industrious to make her world, because she had none at present.” She considers the opinions of Thales, Epicurus, and Aristotle and

endeavored to create a World according to Aristotle’s Opinion; but remembering that her mind, as most of the Learned hold it, was Immaterial, and that according to Aristotle’s Principle, out of Nothing, Nothing could be made; she was forced to desist from that work.

The absurd logic here is meant to further distance the character of the Duchess from Cavendish the author through a delicious strand of narrative irony—Cavendish the author has not been “converted” to the notion of immaterial soul or mind as the character of the Duchess has.<sup>51</sup> In fact, *Observations* emphatically rejects the idea of non-material mind—Cavendish does not believe it, and she does not want us to believe it. The character of the Duchess, in contrast, continues to struggle with possible paradigms for creating her own world, even as the narrator turns to similar struggles bedeviling the Empress:

In the meantime the Empress was also making and dissolving several worlds in her own mind and was so puzzled, that she could not settle in any of them; wherefore she sent for the Duchess, who being ready to wait on the Empress, carried her beloved world along with her; and invited the Empress’s Soul to observe the frame, order and Government of it. Her Majesty was so ravished with the perception of it, that her soul desired to live in the Duchess’s World; but the Duchess advised her to make such another World in her own mind; for, said she, your Majesties mind is full of rational corporeal motions, and the rational motions of my mind shall assist you by the help of sensitive expressions, with the best instructions they are able to give you.<sup>52</sup>

Subsequent scenes all revolve around the pleasure of the game: what governments do you most admire and why? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? The exchanges on various topics are surprisingly similar to the sorts of decisions and problem-solving involved in the popular modern game of WorldCraft, a game that combines the pleasures of creation and competition with fascinating questions about what a desirable world looks like and how it should be run. Notably, it is the Duchess who interjects doubt as to the reliability of the Spirits with whom the Empress has been so thoroughly engaged in the previous two dozen pages. When the Empress insists she will be instructed by the Spirits to avoid “gross errors” in her cabbala, or world-patterning, the Duchess replies, “Alas! ... Spirits are as ignorant as Mortals in many cases, for no created spirits have a general or absolute knowledge.”<sup>53</sup> In short, the hilarious moment when the author appears as a character in the novel happens with the explicit object of dismissing certainty.

What follows is an interesting hall of mirrors in which Cavendish the author is sometimes reflected in the character of the Duchess and sometimes in the character of the Empress. After considering cabbalas based on theology, mathematics, ethics, and political

<sup>51</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 124–25.

<sup>52</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 126.

<sup>53</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 120.

theory, the Duchess prods the Empress in the direction of the kind of book in which they both currently appear, a “fictional” yet material world which the reader holds in her hands: “I would advise you, rather, to make a Poetical or Romancical Cabbala, wherein you can use Metaphors, Allegories, Similitudes, etc., and interpret them as you please.” After settling on this, the Empress gives the Duchess leave to “return to her Husband and Kindred into her native world, but upon condition, that her soul should visit [the Empress] now and then” for the sake of their “intimate friendship.” In subsequent visits they discuss frustrated ambition and melancholy; the niceties of why and how an aristocratic title may be used; the possibility of the Duchess becoming an empress of another world as the heroine had; and the shameful attitude of playwrights in Cavendish’s world who “condemn” a good “Relation” [story] “into a Chimney-corner, fitter for old Women’s Tales, then Theatres.”<sup>54</sup>

Eventually, after an especially long visit, the Duchess misses her husband, William, and the Empress decides to accompany the Duchess to the world where the Newcastles reside. They enter the Duchess’s world, visit courts of law and churches, take a view of the royal family, and travel through Nottinghamshire, into Sherwood Forest, and on to the Duke’s house, where they observe William for a time as he directs his horses in “the Art of Mannage” and then practises “the exercise of the Sword.” This spiralling journey comes to another comedic pitch when the Duchess, worried that her “Husband used such a violent exercise before meat,” promptly leaves the “areal Vehicle” in which she and the Empress had been travelling and enters William’s head. The Empress follows, and the imperturbable William, ever the good host, graciously welcomes them.<sup>55</sup> This world of the mind is filled with an “immaterial assembly” who witnesses oratorical debates between the Duchess and Fortune, and appearances by Truth and Honesty, who denounce the Newcastles’ bad fortune as undeserved. The scene concludes with friendship all around.<sup>56</sup>

Note that the intrusive narrator is still at work in the Fantastical segment, and she jostles her way into the middle of the tale of travel in the Duchess’s world: “But one thing I forgot all this while,” she interrupts—and after an aside on souls, air, and the vehicles used for soulful travel, she reluctantly subsides, “And now to return to my former Story.” This time, however, the narrator’s bumptiousness is matched by the outrageousness of the scene taking place in William’s head, and it helps us to see something quite particular about Cavendish’s latest manoeuvre—she is creating a moment of laughing with her reader by laughing at herself and William. The laughter here is stripped of judgemental tones even as judgement is the locus of the oratorical entertainment.<sup>57</sup> This structure for laughing with her reader is also a prompt *for* her reader on how to engage with the final short segment, “The Second Part of the Description of the New Blazing World,” wherein

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<sup>54</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 129.

<sup>55</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 132.

<sup>56</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 128–41.

<sup>57</sup> The debate with Fortune concerning William’s unfair treatment at the hand of an ungrateful monarch allows for judgement to be directed elsewhere.

the Empress once more seeks the counsel of the Duchess on the question of how to get back to “the World she came from.”<sup>58</sup> The book began with a young woman being swept across a watery passage from one world into another, and it ends with that same woman, now an empress, needing to find her way back in hopes of providing “assistance” against those attacking her “Native Country, where all her Friends and Relations did live.” The imaginative Duchess suggests that they employ mermen to find the original passage, and once found, they begin preparations. When all is ready, they decide that the Duchess will travel with her friend in the soul of the Empress, and after a spectacular victory—a burlesque in which the Empress performs snippets from Queen Elizabeth’s Tilbury speech while harnessing her Fish-men to bear her up so that she seems to walk on waves—the Empress, the Duchess, and the narrator at last fold into one another.

The final scene of the book intensifies this fan-like folding and unfolding of authorial identity: the Duchess is back in her world, but her friends often ask her to tell of the Empress and the “Blazing-world,” which she does, explaining of the Empress that she “spent most of her time in the study of Natural Causes and Effects ... and she loved to discourse sometimes with the most Learned persons of that World.”<sup>59</sup> Still within the fictional frame, the Duchess takes her listening friends back to the spectacular jewel-based architecture of the city of “Paradise,” now adding “Unicorns” and “Gyants” to the tale as we retrace our steps from the Fantastical, past the Philosophical, and back to the Romancical. The book ends the way Shakespeare concludes *The Tempest*, with a character/narrator/author inviting the audience to hear all three speaking in one, and encouraging the audience to take up and continue the tale in their own minds as they leave this one: “and if any should like the World I have made, and be willing to be my Subjects, they may imagine themselves such, and they are such; I mean, in their Minds, Fancies, or Imaginations; but if they cannot endure to be subjects, they may create Worlds of their own, and Govern themselves as they please.” Cavendish’s “Fiction” essentially ends with the directive, “Play on!”

To conclude, *The Blazing World* takes the burlesque of romance further than Cervantes did, reaching toward forms of verisimilitude that would eventually become common elements of the eighteenth-century novel. First, in the course of creating a genre suited to pleasure and propositional reasoning, Cavendish underscores her endeavour’s philosophical premise—knowledge is probable, not certain—by crafting an intrusive, unreliable narrator. Additionally, in order to create an engaging heroine meant to mirror Cavendish’s sense that the mind always exceeds the strictures of method even as it benefits from reason, she develops a special mode for expressing consciousness, what James Wood (speaking of Shakespeare) calls “a rambling consciousness,” typified by “those moments when a character is allowed to drift, to go on mental safaris, to travel into apparent irrelevance, to be beside the point.”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Cavendish relies on dialogue as a means of unveiling hidden motivations and contradictions in thought, a

<sup>58</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 143.

<sup>59</sup> Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 161.

<sup>60</sup> James Wood, *The Irresponsible Self: On Laughter and the Novel* (New York: Picador, 2004), 33.

move that gives us a different sense of the “truth” of the moment than the narrator’s commentary. Finally, the novelist invites the reader to laugh with her by laughing at her, placing a recognizable version herself in the most absurd circumstances that nevertheless enhance bonds of friendship for the characters within the tale while inviting readers to feel they, too, share those bonds. Jane Austen would eventually burnish these same elements to a fine sheen of insight and delight.

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## Chapter 21

# THE DEVONSHIRE CAVENDISHES: POLITICS AND PLACE

Sue Wiseman\*

WHAT CAN THE Chatsworth Cavendishes tell us about the literary and political culture of seventeenth-century England? As Mark Girouard puts it, the dynastic house and land were part of the “pursuit of pleasure and power” in a race to maintain position. That in the case of the Chatsworth Cavendishes the family’s seventeenth-century history and later significance are bound together is shown in almost any item of modern Chatsworth marketing or souvenir. For example, many Chatsworth souvenirs take the form of tableware—and, like the serving bowl shown (Figure 21.1), how they present Chatsworth is suggestive with regard to past and present. This bowl shows us a view of William Talman’s 1687–1688 remodelling of the house. Designed for fruit-serving, the bowl utilizes spooning depth to offer a close-up symmetrical view of the façade and a synoptic iconography of the house. It excerpts for the purchaser the key takeaway details of a Chatsworth visit, showing a seat of power: hill landscape in the distance shaped by the presence of the house, colonnaded façade, designed gardens, statuary, river. However, this peaceful scene of aristocratic dominance may be compared with another seventeenth-century vignette of Chatsworth from a distance that takes in the landscape around it. Published in English in the year Talman completed his remodelling but written earlier, a poem describes seeing Chatsworth in a different context:

Derwin appeares but as a crooked line,  
And Chatsworth as a point it doth entwine.  
W’had gone but little further, when we found  
The Hills soft back, cut deep with many a wound.  
And did the earth in whitish ranks espie  
Cast up in heaps, upon the surface lye.<sup>1</sup>

So Thomas Hobbes interpreted the lead-mining geography in which Chatsworth sat, a geography the heritage dish has cleansed not only of mines but, notably, of the people who made it.

Given that power and connection are bound up together, the names of elite people and their places feature heavily in the following exploration of some of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century family dynamics. If Chatsworth the house has come to stand for the Devonshire dynasty, the family that owned it were often elsewhere in pursuit

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1 Thomas Hobbes, anonymous translation, *De mirabilibus peccati being the wonders of the peak in Darby-shire, commonly called the Devil’s Arse of Peak: in English and Latine* (London, 1678), 18.



Figure 21.1. Brown and white tableware bowl with view of William Talman's 1687–1688 remodelling of Chatsworth House. Sue Wiseman.

of pleasure or power and were in London, at other houses, at the houses of relatives, or, in the case of the 2nd and 4th Earls, travelling. As Girouard notes, the family might be at Chatsworth for well under half the year.<sup>2</sup> To better understand the early modern significance of the Devonshire Cavendish family, their situation in relation to the wider clan, their national pretensions, and their strong association with Chatsworth and with Derbyshire, what follows briefly explores the fortunes of just three of the family's seventeenth-century members. It focuses on William, the 2nd Earl of Devonshire; his long-lived widow, Christian (née Bruce); and their grandson, William Cavendish, the 4th Earl and 1st Duke.

### **“Family Was Everything”: Sons, Daughters, Stepchildren**

The Chatsworth Cavendishes owe their existence to the rise of Elizabeth Hardwick of Hardwick, whose career bound together marital, political, and architectural power.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (Yale University Press: London, 1978), 6 and n6. See Peter D. Brown and Karl W. Schweizer, *William Cavendish, Fourth Duke of Devonshire Memoranda on State of Affairs 1759–1762* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1982), 3.

She clearly wanted that importance displayed in the county of her birth, Derbyshire, and the lands she acquired in that county give the locations of families interwoven with those of the Devonshire Cavendishes—the Newcastles, Pierreponts, and Talbots. Elizabeth Hardwick (married successively to the local Robert Barlow, treasurer William Cavendish, William St. Loe, and the Earl of Shrewsbury) had already begun building her version of Chatsworth when her second husband, William Cavendish, died in 1557. Her fourth (and final) husband, the 6th Earl of Shrewsbury, was an aristocrat. Just as she married him, in 1568, he was tasked, or cursed, with being gaoler for Mary, Queen of Scots. For all the problems the marriage was to bring, it also brought Bess of Hardwick into the aristocracy.

On the same day she attained aristocratic status, Elizabeth Hardwick sought to consolidate her place in it, for on that day her heir Henry married Shrewsbury's daughter Grace and her daughter Mary Cavendish married Gilbert Talbot, his son. In this move she tied her children fast to rank and privilege, but she also became mother-in-law to two of her stepchildren. Francis Bickley, the historian of the Cavendish family, thought that "family was everything" to Elizabeth Hardwick. Understanding family in its economic and dynastic sense, the countess seems to have consolidated land and capital with minimal attention to human relations or suffering. The plan worked in setting the personnel for a dynastic drama. Even though her marriage ended in acrimonious separation and her heir, Henry, died without legitimate children, the properties passed to her other two sons, William and Charles. These sons founded the twined dynasties of Newcastle and Devonshire. Charles Cavendish inherited Welbeck and set in train the Newcastle dynasty, discussed extensively elsewhere in this volume. William Cavendish, who inherited Chatsworth and Hardwick, became Baron Cavendish of Hardwick in 1605 and purchased the title of Earl of Devonshire in 1618.<sup>3</sup> The Devonshire Cavendishes, then, were densely allied to other Cavendishes, but through the marriages they were also more distantly allied to many families in the area. Thus Elizabeth Hardwick's stepson and son-in-law, Gilbert Talbot, became the 7th Earl of Shrewsbury, and the Shrewsbury daughters allied the Devonshire Cavendishes to the Saviles of Rufford and beyond. It is in this context, tightly bound through layered marriages but also in relations of rivalry, that the Chatsworth Cavendishes emerge.

The Countess of Shrewsbury died in 1608, leaving Chatsworth to her eldest son, Henry. Henry sold the house to his brother William, and in 1616, when Henry died, William Cavendish, Lord Cavendish of Hardwick, who possessed Oldcotes, Hardwick, and Chatsworth, became an important landowner. In 1608 he had married his son, William Cavendish, to Christian Bruce, and in the same year he engaged his son's near contemporary, the freshly graduated 20-year-old Thomas Hobbes, as his tutor. The period between Hobbes's arrival in the Cavendish-Devonshire household and his charge's early death in 1628 sees the household marked by engagement also with Ben Jonson and some other writers. The period seems to indicate some literary patronage and pretensions on

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3 Francis Bickley, *The Cavendish Family* (London: Constable, 1911), 33.

William's part and so serves as a foil illuminating by contrast the achievements and aesthetic and philosophical investments of the Newcastle households.

For all that Hobbes is rightly seen as at the hub of intellectual circles including Charles Cavendish of Welbeck and the Earl, later Duke, of Newcastle, the philosopher was also an important presence in the Chatsworth household. He seems to have been significant not only in the intellectual and potentially political thinking of the 2nd Earl of Devonshire, and probably in that of his son and that of the Williamite 1st Duke too, but if we focus on the Chatsworth Cavendishes, we see that he was also a participant in the household's aesthetic sociability. Indeed, it seems that Hobbes described his twenty years' service with the 2nd Earl of Devonshire as "by far the most agreeable period of my life," noting that William "was not only a master, but a friend as well."<sup>4</sup> The pair set out on a tour that included Venice, Rome, and Naples, and Hobbes's biographer finds the years 1615–1620 obscure in Hobbes's life, beyond rumour that the young 2nd Earl used to send Hobbes to borrow money for him.<sup>5</sup> Hobbes was a close companion and servant.

While for many years it has been assumed that the young Sir William Cavendish married and then immediately went on a European tour with his new tutor, in fact records may suggest a more complex trajectory and perhaps less time abroad than we have assumed. Hobbes's biographer finds the young Cavendish in London in the 1610s and as a member of the added Parliament of 1614.<sup>6</sup> After the death of Prince Henry in 1612, William Cavendish seems to have had considerable contact with the new Prince Charles, both as an earl's son on ceremonial occasions and when the king and prince were on progress in the north. Thus James I was at Derby and in Nottinghamshire in 1609 and William participated in the games associated with the installation of the Prince of Wales in 1616, was among the mourners at Queen Anne's funeral in May 1619, may well have been present when James I visited Welbeck in 1619, and was almost certainly present when he visited Hardwick in the same year.<sup>7</sup> Thus Sir William Cavendish, as he was styled, had many contacts with the royal family and particularly James and Charles.

In the later part of the 1610s, Sir William Cavendish took up the place in ceremonial life designated for earls' sons and began to associate socially with the court. At this point, texts associated with the Cavendish-Devonshire household start to emerge. One such text is a christening entertainment by Ben Jonson.<sup>8</sup> The text itself is short and the occasion or occasions of its performance enigmatic. The text itself has three central female antimasque roles and they are the female staff of a lying-in chamber—Holdback the midwife, Dugs the wet nurse, and Kecks the dry nurse. The entertainment uses a fight

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<sup>4</sup> "Vita Carmina Expressa," quoted in A. P. Martinich, *Hobbes: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19.

<sup>5</sup> See Martinich, *Hobbes*, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Martinich, *Hobbes*, 29–30.

<sup>7</sup> John Nichols, *Progresses of King James I*, 4 vols. (London, 1828), 3:27.

<sup>8</sup> Ben Jonson, *A Cavendish Christening Entertainment*, ed. James Knowles, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, gen. ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 5.

for primacy among these three to make an entertainment that moves with the guests as they come in, drawn in by a “Forester,” and is still continuing as they leave, adjudicated in the meantime by the figure of the Mathematician.<sup>9</sup> The script of the brawl concerns the honour and decorum of the nurse’s calling worked through in terms of wet and dry vices. It opens with Holdback, the midwife, demonstrating the boy to the gossips:

HOLDBACK. Now God multiply Your Highness and my honorable lord, too, and my good lady, the countess! I have one word for you all, “Welcome!”—which is enough to the wise and as good as a hundred, you know. This is my day! My lords, and my lady, how like you my boy? Is’t not a goodly boy? I said his name would be Charles when I looked upon Charles’s Wain t’other night, he’s born under that star. I ha’ given measure, i’faith. He’ll prove a pricker, an God will, by one privy mark that I found about him. Would you had such another, my lord gossips, every one of you, and as like the father! Oh, what a glad woman, and a proud, should I be to be seen at home with you upon the same occasion!

(lines 19–28)

Celebrating the baby at the same time as offering her professional service, Holdback gives us some identifications related to the guests. She welcomes Prince Charles, who is to stand godparent, and an unnamed countess and, elsewhere, she refers to “my Lord Chancery,” taken by the recent editor to be Lord Chancellor.<sup>10</sup> Thus, if the identification of Chancery as a malapropism for Chancellor is accurate, as the evening begins, the entertainment establishes a sharp contrast between employees and guests. On the one hand are the countess, Prince Charles, and, it seems, the Lord Chancellor. The Lord Chancellor seems to be very likely to have been Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor 1618–1621, who was indeed a contact of the Devonshire William Cavendish.<sup>11</sup> Counterposed to court and government are the farcical female characters, presumably men of contrasting size comically cross-dressed, playing the raucous and corrupt female servants as a grotesque foil to the finest in the land.

The rolling fight gradually moves around the house, culminating in violent accusations:

KECKS. Indeed, you had like to have overlaid it the other night and prevented its christendom, if I had not looked unto you, when you came so bedewed out of the wine cellar and so watered your couch that, to save your credit with my

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<sup>9</sup> There are a few candidates, and Hobbes is possible. On Hobbes’s later acknowledgement as a mathematician, see Katherine Dunlop, “Hobbes’s Mathematical Thought,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, ed. A. P. Martinich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 76–105.

<sup>10</sup> Jonson, *Christening Entertainment*, l:39 and note.

<sup>11</sup> On the possible acquaintance of William Cavendish and Bacon by late 1615, see Martinich, *Hobbes*, 28–29; on later contact, see 38–41, 53–54, 65–66.

lady next morning, you were glad to lay it upon your innocent bedfellow, and slander him to his mother how plentifully he had sucked. This was none o'your dry jests now, this was a soaker.

HOLDBACK. Ay, by faith, was't. An you overflow so, it's even time to stop the breach and pack you both hence. Get you in! Here comes a wise man will tell us another tale.

(lines 159–66)

The “wise man” is a “Mathematician,” who prophesies the greatness of the child. Kecks is accusing Dugs, the wet nurse, of being so sodden drunk that she almost “overlaid” the baby, a hazard of sleeping with infants where the infant is suffocated or killed by an adult sleeper. Such accidents were but a step from infanticide, both in execution and accusation, and in the early modern imagination the two went together, so though the accusation mellows to become a mere incident of drunken bedwetting, we can see clearly a purposive directness in the fashioning of farce from the very darkest fears of post-partum disaster, focalized for an audience, some of whom were in the midst of such an experience, through the staging of servants—and the midwife, which was the only certificated occupation open to women—as grasping, lying, malicious scroungers and sots.

In its current form, the entertainment seems like a text made of a compound of others and which suffers from gaps and uncertainties which include who it was performed for (or first performed for) and when and where it might have been staged. The text's most recent editor, James Knowles, sees the “Christening Entertainment” as more likely to have been produced by the Newcastle household. However, possibly encouraged by the inauguration of Charles as the new Prince of Wales in 1616, the Cavendishes had a crop of Charleses, with at least one each to the Devonshire and Chatsworth branches. The entertainment is found in MS Harleian 4955, a scribal text that in the section it is in records a number of texts that seem to address both the Newcastle and Devonshire families. Indeed, some material in the early part of this manuscript addresses all the children of the Hardwick-Shrewsbury alliance, such as the celebratory poem by Francis Andrews enumerating the family's houses, ending with Rufford, a Savile house via the daughter of the 6th Earl of Shrewsbury:

Worsope a duke, Hardwicke an Earle,  
Welbeck a Vicount, Bolser a Pearle  
The rest are Jewells of the Sheeres  
Bolser the pendant of the Eare  
Yet an old Abbey hard by the way  
Rufford giveth Almes more than they.<sup>12</sup>

So the book's contents for this period suggests that in the 1610s and 1620s patronage might be a little more fluid among multiple households than the later dominance of the Newcastles suggests, and the entertainment may well sit in such a space.

<sup>12</sup> London, British Library, MS Harley 4955, fol. 67v.

However, in the text itself is a line of puns which may associate the text with the Chatsworth branch:

Holdback. ... Nurse, ha' done, let the music ha' their play. You have made a joyful house here, i'faith! The glad lady within i'th' straw I hope has thanked you for her little carl, the little Christian.

(lines 40–42)

If a carl is a small churl and a small Charles (the baby is these), it is also, after baptism, a little Christian. At the same time, however, the use of the term might also suggest that the entertainment was at least at some point performed for the Devonshire Cavendishes, as it also implies that the baby might be a small version of Christian, William's wife and—possibly—the baby's mother. According to James Knowles, the Chatsworth (Devonshire) Charles was born in 1619.<sup>13</sup> It is likely, then, that some or all of this material was used by the Devonshire family and possible that at some point in 1619, marked in London by other princely godparentings, either in London or in Hardwick, Ben Jonson's christening entertainment was staged by the Devonshire Cavendishes.<sup>14</sup>

Other textual productions include the anonymous publication of essays by Hobbes's pupil, *Horae Subsecivae Observations and Discoveries* (1620). Among the essays the earl writes is one evaluating a country life, "so farre as it hath relation to men of great qualitie, and estates."<sup>15</sup> Besides traditional praise for being "away from the presse, business, and imployment" of court and city, there is a focus on country life's "disaduantageous inconueniences," particularly that it "secludes us from a knowledge of the Court, and government there, and also eclipseth from our acquaintance, the Great men, and guiders of the State."<sup>16</sup> Young William Cavendish's engagement with the essay form might suggest Bacon and others, but it might also be more narrowly focused as a rite of passage to adulthood completed on return from his European tour and as he embarked on family life.

While the 2nd Earl's aesthetic achievements are small in comparison to those of the Newcastle family, those are mainly found later and, of course, William died just two years after inheriting his title—in 1628. He was said to have feasted himself to death, and certainly he left his estate in dire jeopardy. As well as being contrasted with the Newcastle brothers William and Charles, the Devonshires can also be compared with three women of the same generation—the Talbot sisters and Christian Cavendish herself. As we recall, the Earl of Shrewsbury's son, Gilbert Talbot, had been married to Shrewsbury's daughter, Mary. Talbot, Mary Stuart's gaoler, spent his life in furious and widely reported

<sup>13</sup> Knowles writes, "The Cavendish–Devonshire case centres on Charles Cavendish, second son of 'Lord Cavendish and Christian his lady', who was baptized on 15 June 1619, not 1620 (London Guildhall, MS 4508/1)."

<sup>14</sup> Nichols, *Progresses*, 554.

<sup>15</sup> *Horae Subsecivae Observations and Discoveries* (London, 1620), 135.

<sup>16</sup> *Horae*, 138, 161, 163.

litigation but left three notable daughters. The most obscure is Mary Talbot, who in 1604 married the Earl of Pembroke, who became Mary Wroth's lover, and the best-known, Aletheia, married the Earl of Arundel and was a patron and collector. As significant is a third daughter, Elizabeth Talbot (1582–1651), who married Henry Grey, heir to the Earl of Kent, and lived at Wrest. She was probably the pupil of Sir John Florio and was the dedicatee of his translation of Montaigne's essays. Her connections included Sir Robert Cotton and John Selden, with whom she lived at her London house after her husband died in 1639, and at least one publication, *A choice manual of rare and select secrets in physic and chyruery* (1653), is associated with her and seems to draw on her recipes.

The wife of William Cavendish from 1608, Christian Cavendish, was effective politically and in estate management; she was also tenacious and long-lived. When she was widowed in 1628, Christian Cavendish inherited an estate that was almost bankrupt. The 2nd Earl had become so indebted that he had just persuaded Parliament to pass an act allowing him to sell his entailed lands. Under Christian Cavendish, the estates remained in the family and she was strikingly successful in remaking the fortunes he had so dissipated, restoring reputation and fortune together to regain a prime place in the county and country for her son, the 3rd Earl. So astute was Christian in pursuit of her ends that Charles I is said to have commented on her control of his judiciary.<sup>17</sup>

Three incidents are illuminating with regard to Christian Cavendish: the marriage negotiations with her recorded by the Countess of Leicester in her letters to her husband, her Royalist activity during the English Civil War, and her possible (at present partially) excavated relationships with writers including the Earl of Pembroke and Edmund Waller. However, that this powerful and well-connected figure might well repay sustained investigation is suggested by the texts readily available. Three examples give a sense of her influence.

On April 13, 1637 the Countess of Leicester wrote to the Earl of Leicester,

Ho[lland] received an answear from my lady De[vonshire] to his proposition, wich he showed me. It was full of sivilitie, craft and coldness. I am confident she meanes little of what she saide, and yeet I believe shee is understood. Shee speaks much of the libertie shee gives her sone, and yeet every on persceavs that he dares not eat or drinke but as she appoints. Nothing can be more manifest then that shee has advertions to us, upon what reasons I do not know. Your sivilities to my lord of De[vonshire] are not much considered, for I never heard a word of acknowledgement.<sup>18</sup>

This is the first letter in a sequence referring to the Leicesters' courting of the future 3rd Earl of Devonshire—William Cavendish—as a match for their daughter. This letter's evaluation of the situation may be accurate, for no match ensued. However, as the elaborate manoeuvres take place, the countess discloses her view of the future 3rd Earl as almost wholly lacking in agency. She writes that "my lady De[vonshire]" speaks "much

<sup>17</sup> For this widely retold story see, e.g., Martinich, *Hobbes*, 86.

<sup>18</sup> G. Dyfnallt Owen, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Right Honourable Viscount De L'Isle, V. C., Preserved at Penshurst Place, Kent*, "The Countess of Leicester to the Earl of Leicester," April 13, 1637, HMC 77:101.

of the libertie she gives her sone, and yeet every on perceavs that he dares not eat or drinke but as she apoints.”<sup>19</sup> The image of Christian Cavendish as controlling and cold may not be accurate but, certainly, she was an able and astute operator in personal and political matters.

It is clear that the Countess of Devonshire was motivated by politics. Her biographer tells us that she was deeply involved in Royalist plotting in the 1650s, and evidence survives of her attempts to broker the Duke of Lauderdale’s release. During the civil wars Lauderdale had presented himself as a broker and had paid the penalty. Exiled in 1648 to The Hague, he then came back with Charles Stuart (later Charles II) to the battle of Worcester, where the Royalists were routed and he was among the prisoners.<sup>20</sup> Cavendish writes to him in 1658 that “it was in dispute amongst your friends how your business should bee laid” and sets out her own position with regard to conflicting plans. Some thought that his freedom should be taken to Parliament, “which they knew immediately would give you your liberty,” but she was concerned to keep the Protector involved:

I confess I was in no means willing that should be done in regard I knew you had some enimes now sitting there that when it came to the debate of your estate, would have put a spoke in your wheele besides it would have been a way would very much have disoblged my Lord Protector who already hath made so large a promis in your Lordships particular that truly I am very confident he will show your L[ordship] as much favour as possibly he can, within this 3 dayes I received a message from the Lieutenant General that the business should be done a and to my likeing.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, attempts to free Lauderdale, such as the one Christian Cavendish is here promoting, came to nothing and he was in prison until 1660. However, the countess’s deep involvement in Royalist plotting, her influence, and her many connections are apparent here, even if in this case it turned out she was claiming more influence than she had. Her biographer records troops dispatched to fetch her from her brother-in-law’s house at Ampthill to forestall her activities.<sup>22</sup> That Christian Cavendish was in communication with Lauderdale, however, may suggest something about her religious as well as her political persuasion.

In her later years Christian Cavendish seems to have welcomed a range of writers at her house at Roehampton. In 1661 the dedication by one apparently tasked with oversight of the printing process described the Earl of Pembroke’s poems as a “Monument that your Ladship hath erected to his memory, will outlast the calculation of all Astrologers.” She has facilitated publication when:

<sup>19</sup> Countess of Leicester to the Earl of Leicester, April 13, 1637.

<sup>20</sup> Ronald Hutton, “Maitland, John, Duke of Lauderdale (1616–1682), Politician,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (May 25, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Christian Cavendish to Earl of Lauderdale, April 5, 1658, London, British Library, MS Additional 38,855, fol. 87.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Pomfret, *The Life of the Right Honourable and Religious Lady Christian Late Countess Dowager of Devonshire* (London?: 1685), 79.

all the Muses seemed to be fled, and to have left nothing behind them, but a few lame lambicks, canting at the corners of our desolate streets; yet they are now content to be awakened by your Ladships command, & under your Patronage to come abroad, and meet, and salute the peace that gave them their first being.<sup>23</sup>

Christian here is acclaimed as one of the first to return to publishing after the Restoration, helping to bring a truly poetic culture back to life. She appears to have been a patron of Sir Edmund Waller and was probably the recipient of more verses than we are currently aware of. While her son, William Cavendish, the 3rd Earl, lived a retired life, his mother did not, and her household at Richmond was clearly a centre for cultural royalism and patronage.

Politics and building were the lifelong preoccupations of Christian Cavendish's grandson, William Cavendish, the 4th Earl and later the 1st Duke.<sup>24</sup> William seems to have been recognized as promising at an early age. In 1648 Hobbes recommended a curriculum for him, and in the late 1650s, when his grandmother was plotting in London, he spent time in Paris and Florence. After the Civil War, at the Restoration, he was once again apparently close to the court, being chosen to serve Charles II at his coronation in 1660. In the same year he was married to Mary Butler, the daughter of the 1st Duke of Ormond, though, as was much noted at his death, he was a multiple adulterer and had a long-term mistress from the London stage—Mrs. Heneage.<sup>25</sup>

In June 1688, four years after he acceded to his lands and houses, the 4th Earl received a carpenter's bill for "takeing downe the partition att the end of the hall & wainscoate takeing down in the hall & boards taking up there and shoreing in the hall and in the Leicester Apartment, and in the white roome over the hall."<sup>26</sup> The same summer saw him inviting William of Orange to intervene in England's affairs under the Roman Catholic James II. Both events were to shape the role of the Chatsworth Cavendishes in the later years of the seventeenth century. The carpenter's bill is for early work on the reshaping of Chatsworth to become, broadly, the house we know today, though it seems that the earl initially planned only some alterations to the Elizabethan house.<sup>27</sup> On November 17 of the same year, many of the workmen employed on William's steadily enlarging rebuilding project were with him and other troops at Derby.

The duke's appearance at Derby with a troop of horse followed a long trajectory of increasing political discontent and alliance with the country party. When James II

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**23** John Donne, "To the Right Honourable Christiania, Countess of Devonshire, Dowager," in *Poems Written by the Right Honourable Earl of Pembroke* (London, 1660), sigs. A1v–A2r. The relationship marked here must be with John Donne the younger.

**24** David Hosford, "Cavendish, William, first duke of Devonshire (1641–1707), politician," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (October 4, 2008).

**25** See Hosford, "Cavendish, William."

**26** Building accounts, Chatsworth, quoted in Francis Thompson, *A History of Chatsworth* (London: Country Life, 1949), 46. Quotation modernized.

**27** John Barnatt and Tom Williamson, *Chatsworth: A Landscape History* (Macclesfield: Windgather, 2005), 52–53; see also Thompson, *History of Chatsworth*.

acceded to the throne, Cavendish was one of the seven signatories of the invitation sent to William of Orange, and it was his responsibility to raise troops in Nottingham at the prince's landfall. When others joined him and the numbers grew, confusion and competition ensued. Remaining in Nottingham in some confusion, they all set off through the Midlands towns to Oxford, arriving on December 15 and going from there to continued frantic activity in Parliament, where he was instrumental in the safe arrival of William and Mary. In 1689 he became a member of the Privy Council and for the rest of his life was a recipient of what David Hosford calls the "trappings of power and position."<sup>28</sup>

The duke, as he was from 1694, did not pursue a political career with energy, and, as a consequence, the 1688 muster was his political apogee. He owes his fame to his magnificent house, Chatsworth, and to his lifelong passion for building and altering each wing in turn until, as the engraving in Jan Kip and Leonard Knyff shows us, he had made an extraordinary mansion. Key to this project was William Talman, the architect. Talman was not a famous architect when he began work on Chatsworth. There has been a longstanding assumption that he worked on Thoresby Hall, home of Henry Pierrepont, Earl of Kingston-upon-Hull and later Marquess of Dorchester, who was related to the Chatsworth Cavendishes through Elizabeth Hardwick's second husband, William Cavendish. However, this assumption has recently been revised, and Peter Smith suggests that although there is no doubt of Talman's dominance as an architect of the country houses of the later seventeenth century, and his involvement in over thirty, he came to Chatsworth after an initial record of developing plainer houses.<sup>29</sup> The 4th Earl, contrastingly, came to the rethinking from an education by Hobbes and an immersion in Italian culture. That Peter Smith describes Talman as "eclectic" may suggest that we should see the duke's hand as the main shaper of Chatsworth. However, rather than debate the honours in the shaping of Chatsworth, we can see a significant relationship of patronage and collaboration partly recorded in the changing practices and plans and partly visible only in the creation of a structure that speaks an English, and arguably Protestant, baroque. At the same time, we must recognize the local power of the pleasure gardens remodelled very significantly in a three-way collaboration between George London, Talman, and the earl. So, while we can speculate that the 4th Earl set out to return the Devonshire Cavendishes to national political importance and remodelled the south wing of Chatsworth in the service of that, in the event, the roles were in part reversed, with the rewards of one significant political year facilitating his buildings. However, that this is the case may suggest not that the 4th Earl had, in fact, no political ambitions but that he was expressing a politics of building that was allied also with the innovative retreats of the Civil War. Funded by monarchical reward and marked by increasingly close involvement with its daily management, the 1st Duke's Chatsworth arguably expresses an integrative concept of service with national politics.

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<sup>28</sup> Hosford, "Cavendish, William."

<sup>29</sup> Peter Smith, "Talman, William (bap. 1650, d. 1719), Architect and Collector," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

The Kip and Knyff engraving of Chatsworth offers one ideological summary of how the Devonshire Cavendishes shaped the landscape of local and national politics through aesthetics, connections, and place. Between the Kip and Knyff engraving and the souvenir bowl with which we opened, a long and complex story unfolds, with the house at time of writing still in the hands of the Devonshires and hard at work building aristocratic power and pleasure in the Peak. However, we also opened with a different perspective on Chatsworth offered by Thomas Hobbes, and it is, after all, perhaps Thomas Hobbes who is the most significant figure in this story. As tutor and secretary, Hobbes binds together three generations of Devonshire Williams, and for all his powerful associations elsewhere, he spent much of his life sharing space with the people discussed here. While it is not possible to directly quantify his shaping influence, as Noel Malcolm tells us, Hobbes's letters track his intellectual connections when he is apart from them, but the Welbeck and Chatsworth Cavendishes were very often in London, and the absence of letters may speak of closeness as much as the surviving manuscripts.<sup>30</sup> To Hobbes's overlapping connections with Charles Cavendish of Welbeck, Marin Mersenne, Robert Hooke, and others we must add the fact that he was for much of his life with the Devonshire Cavendishes.

For Hobbes's favourite, William Cavendish, the "disadvantageous inconueniences" of aristocratic country life meant being out of the swim of politics. Ill with palsy, in his later years Hobbes described to a friend his life at Chatsworth and Hardwick as causing a "want of learned conversation," which was "a very great inconvenience."<sup>31</sup> The Devonshire Chatsworths were hardly an intellectual centre, yet they kept Hobbes's letters and kept him long into his old age. At the same time, it is Hobbes who illuminates the resemblances and distinctions between the two branches of Bess of Hardwick's family, the Devonshire and the Newcastle lines; if the Devonshires supplied him with a livelihood and he tutored their sons, then the Newcastles seem also to have been strongly connected to him in the world of arts, sciences, and thought that they claimed and shared the European connections that came through these interests. These features differentiate them, in the main, from the Devonshire branch and perhaps exemplify the world that Hobbes missed at Chatsworth.

Neither the Devonshires nor the Newcastles seem to have responded as did Hobbes to the implications of the Derbyshire landscape and to Chatsworth as situated in a wider culture of work and hardship. He describes Chatsworth (in fact, the earlier Chatsworth, though his poem was translated as the new one came into view) as the first wonder of the Peak:

On th' English Alps, where Darbies Peak doth rise,  
High up in Hills, that Emulate the Skies,  
And largely Waters all the Vales below,

<sup>30</sup> Noel Malcolm, "General Introduction," *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 1:xxii.

<sup>31</sup> John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. A. Clark, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1:338, quoted in Malcolm, "General Introduction," xxx.

With Rivers that still plentifully Flow,  
 Doth Chatsworth by swift Derwins Channel stand,  
 Fam'd for it's Pile, and Lord, for both are grand.

However, he knows that lead is “the dark Prince of wealth” that defines the labour of those around the country house who, “if poverty compel,” dig “To rob th’ Exchecquer, of the Prince of Hell,” and often in doing so are crushed by collapsing mines. According to the poem, those on the tour actually witnessed the aftermath of a mining accident. Two men have died and “Before our feet, a Corps digg’d up we see,” while:

T’other lies buried in the earth, but still  
 Hopes an extraction when ’tis Heavens will.  
 Upon the earth that from the mine was thrown,  
 A lazy people drawn from e’ry Town,  
 To see the mournful spectacle came down.  
 Two women weeping in the croud we spi’d;  
 One for the loss of joyes that she had tri’d,  
 T’other for want of hopes are now denied.<sup>32</sup>

For all that the tone of the translation is almost comic, Hobbes is deeply aware of the world beyond the Chatsworth gardens.

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32 Hobbes, *De mirabilibus pecci*, 24.

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## Chapter 22

# THE FUNERAL MONUMENTS OF THE CAVENDISH FAMILY

Eva Lauenstein

IN *THE LIFE of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince William Cavendish* (1667), Margaret Lucas Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle reflects on the losses incurred by her husband during the Civil War through the ruinous material landscape of the Cavendish dynasty:

Nor is it possible for him to repair all the ruines of the Estate that is left him, in so short a time, they being so great, and his losses so considerable, that I cannot without grief and trouble remember them; for before the Wars my Lord had as great an Estate as any subject in the Kingdom, descended upon him most by Women, viz. by his Grandmother of his Father's side, his own Mother, and his first Wife.<sup>1</sup>

Margaret formulates the “grief” and “trouble” created by war through place, and she tabulates loss through a dilapidated built environment: the “ruines of the Estate.” The role of landholdings and the buildings that inhabit them is crucial in fashioning Cavendish family identity. Simultaneously, she understands the consolidation of family power through place to be facilitated by women. Through William’s “Grandmother” Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (Bess of Hardwick), “his own Mother” Katherine, Baroness Ogle, and his “first Wife” Elizabeth Basset Howard the family attained their status in the landscapes of Derbyshire. Taking the lead from Margaret’s statements about the role of place and gender in her characterization of the Cavendish line, what follows will explore how women’s construction of mortuary space contributed to narratives of Cavendish influence. By looking beyond the monument’s usefulness in asserting male “Lineage, achievements and moral virtues,” we will encounter some well-known tombs alongside those that have hitherto been less well studied.<sup>2</sup> The following will place commemorative architecture in the context of renewed recent interest in the role of cultural and religious space by such scholars as Alexandra Walsham, Will Coster, and Andrew Spicer.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, it will assess how tombs may have been employed in the construction of wider collective “imagined communities” of seventeenth-century

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1 Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince William Cavendish, Duke, Marquess and Earl of Newcastle* (London, 1667), 93.

2 Graham Parry, “Cavendish Memorials,” *The Seventeenth Century* 9 (1994): 275–87 at 275.

3 Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Will Coster and Andrew Spicer, ed., *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

England.<sup>4</sup> Drawing on the elegies and epitaphs that accompanied the building of a selection of Cavendish monuments, the tomb's perceived emphasis on male legacy-building will be further destabilized. By exploring how writers such as Ben Jonson and William Sampson use the tomb within textual forms of remembrance, this chapter investigates the symbolic value of tombs as objects that avowed female participation in the building of the Cavendish dynasty. Thus it also draws on findings by Paul Stock and Patricia Phillippy that stress the interrelationships between object and text: "how spaces are built using physical materials, as well as in rhetorical and cultural terms."<sup>5</sup> Doing so allows us to view tombs as interventions into a shared religious, social, and political topography that expressed women's function as authors and architects of domestic and national concord.

Peter Sherlock writes that the early modern tomb created "family fictions" that "naturalised and legitimised the exercise of power by a male patriarch over his household and manor."<sup>6</sup> However, as objects placed in public and semipublic spaces, monuments were instrumental in shaping fictions of wider communal unity in the landscapes where they were situated. Much like the castles, country houses, and estates built by the Cavendishes, their tombs repurposed locations of public significance into markers of their power in a wider shared environment. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the tomb of Bess of Hardwick, the family's founding matriarch ([Figure 22.1](#)). Designed by Robert Smythson between 1601 and 1603, her wall monument occupies the south aisle of the Church of All Saints in Derby. The central focus of the tomb is the alabaster effigy of Bess, framed on either side by black columns and surmounted by a shallow coffered arch.<sup>7</sup> The two columns support an entablature on which the visual language of heraldry stands above all else to proclaim the deceased's place in a shared family identity. The complex central escutcheon brings together the arms of Bess with the marshalled arms of the Talbot family. Thus her tomb appears to associate Bess primarily with her last marriage to George Talbot, 6th Earl of Shrewsbury. Yet, towering over this central achievement and acting as supporters to the escutcheon are two Cavendish stags.<sup>8</sup> Visually, the tomb spins a narrative of consolidation, but one

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<sup>4</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006; first published by Verso 1983), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Stock, "History and the Uses of Space," in *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History*, ed. Paul Stock (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1–18, 2; Patricia Phillippy, "'Monumental Circles' and Material Culture in Early Modern England," *Early Modern Women* 4 (2009): 139–47 at 141.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 19.

<sup>7</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *Derbyshire*, rev. Elizabeth Williamson (London: Penguin, 2000; first published by Penguin, 1953), 170. The inscription was only added sixty-nine years after the completion of the monument. Susan E. James, *The Feminine Dynamic in English Art, 1485–1603: Women as Consumers, Patrons and Painters* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 14.

<sup>8</sup> This was Bess's chosen form of heraldry as Dowager Countess of Shrewsbury and can also be found at Hardwick Hall. See Santina M. Levey, *Embroideries at Hardwick Hall: A Catalogue* (London: National Trust, 2007), 32.



Figure 22.1. Robert Smythson. Tomb of Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (Bess of Hardwick). Ca. 1601, alabaster. Church of All Saints (Derby Cathedral), Derby. Eva Lauenstein.

which discloses the favour Bess bestowed on her Cavendish offspring. The funeral monument reformulates the nuanced web of family ties, the checks and balances of power created by Bess between Hardwick, Barley (Barlow), Cavendish, St. Loe, and Talbot through marriage as a fashioned account of the triumph of Cavendish family authority.

While Bess's tomb displays a stylized image of family unity that declares the favour she conferred on her Cavendish sons, it was also an intervention into the public space of "the greatest" of "fiue Churches in the Towne" of Derby.<sup>9</sup> As stressed by Nigel Llewellyn, funerary monuments, by their very nature, "were embedded in a rich visual culture within buildings which were the focus of social life."<sup>10</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that Bess's will discloses that her tomb sits at the apex of a complex intervention into the civic and devotional fabric of Derby:

my Bodie I commit ... to be buried in All Hallowes churche at Derbye in the place of the same churche where with is appoynted and Determynd that my Tombe and monument shalbe erected and builde ... her sonne Willm Lord Cavendishe to bestowe one hundred poundes or some thinge that the profit therof might be bestowed as occasion should require for repaying her Almshouse at Derbye for euer.<sup>11</sup>

Bess's will shows that the creation of her "family fiction" was intimately linked to the production of public services and space; her monument was part of a commemorative landscape that included the maintenance of Derby's alms house "for euer." The alms house was part of the architectural network of the parish church. It was located on a portion of land "buttinge uppon the river of Darwente towardses the east" and incorporated "toft, steads, & garden plotts," as well as a portion of what is now the churchyard of All Saints, effectively encasing the church within its landholdings.<sup>12</sup> This proximity was important because the eight poor men and four poor women of the institution were to "performe theire praiers & other duties" in the "south queere or chancell" where "her La<sup>p</sup>" is to "erecte and place her said Toumbe."<sup>13</sup> Repairing to the site of Bess's interment "at or near six o'clock, both in the forenoon and afternoon," the poor would, "with open and audible voice," recite their prayers overseen by the imposing monument.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the

<sup>9</sup> William Camden, *The Abridgment of Camden's Britania With the Maps of the Seuerall Shires of England and Wales* (London, 1626), sig. H1v.

<sup>10</sup> Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.

<sup>11</sup> The Will of Bess of Hardwick, PROB 11/11, Public Record Office, The National Archives, Kew, fols. 188r, 192v.

<sup>12</sup> H. E. Currey, "Supplemental Notes on the Almshouse of Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury," *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* 16 (1894): 1–13 at 5–6. The proximity of the almshouse and the church is illustrated in a map of the town of Derby in John Speed, *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* (London, 1614 [i.e., 1616], n.p. [titled "Derbieshire described, 1610"]).

<sup>13</sup> Currey, "Supplemental Notes," 5.

<sup>14</sup> "The Orders and Statutes made and appointed by the Right Honourable Elizabeth Countess of Shrewsbury, the 5th day of October, in the 41st year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth,"

warden of the alms house retained the key to the entrance of this portion of the church so that the poor could regularly “cleanse, dust, and sweep over the said Monument, and the place about it.”<sup>15</sup> Thus the tomb functioned akin to other objects of church furnishing that, as stressed by Jennifer Maria DeSilva, mediated “between the building and the people who visited sacred space” and functioned as “markers for pious behavior.”<sup>16</sup> The tomb of Bess of Hardwick was a tool in the construction of local devotional practice. As the poor men and women maintained the fabric of tomb, choir, and chancel and shaped the communal devotional calendar of the church through their regular prayer and participation in services, Cavendish family intervention in Derby created, and sought to maintain, a harmonious shared devotional identity through its display of family cohesion.

Like the tomb of Bess of Hardwick, the monument commemorating her son Sir Charles Cavendish and his wife Katherine, Baroness Ogle narrates collective harmony by staging familial unity (Figure 22.2). Katherine employed the family architect John Smythson and the poet Ben Jonson for the construction of Sir Charles’s tomb, which inaugurated the Cavendish chapel at St. Mary and St. Laurence Church in Bolsover. The tomb creates a visual hierarchy that places Sir Charles, the family patriarch, at the top of the composition. The deep coffered arch, contained on either side by clusters of pillars, frames the alabaster effigy of the deceased. In a devoted position of wifely subservience, Katherine occupies his side at a slightly lower position. Their children, represented as small kneeling relief figures on the tomb chest, sit in reverence at the foot of their father’s and mother’s remains. This visual display of the harmonious patriarchal household is further strengthened through Jonson’s epitaph on the entablature above the arch. Taking the form of the paternal voice of Sir Charles, it proclaims:

Sonnes, seeke not me among these polish’d stones:  
these only hide part of my flesh and bones:

...

I made my lyfe my monument, & yours:  
to w<sup>ch</sup> there’s no materiall y<sup>t</sup> endures;  
nor yet inscription like it write but that;  
And reach your nephwes it to æmulate:  
it will be matter lowd inoughe to tell  
not when I die’d but how I livd farewell.<sup>17</sup>

Addressing his “Sonnes” and their “nephwes,” Sir Charles’s voice emphasizes how the family order narrated by the tomb creates a continuous thread between past and future generations. Yet the monument’s inward-looking dynamic draws attention to the dynasty’s conspicuous stability, and thus outwardly and “loudly testifies to the family’s

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in *A Collection of Fragments Illustrative of the History and Antiquities of Derby*, ed. Robert Simpson, 2 vols. (Derby: G. Wilkins and Sons, 1826), 1:489–503, 496.

**15** “Orders and Statutes,” 496.

**16** Jennifer Maria DeSilva, “Introduction: ‘Piously Made’: Sacred Space and the Transformation of Behavior,” in *The Sacralization of Space and Behavior in the Early Modern World: Studies and Sources*, ed. Jennifer Maria DeSilva (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 1–32, 3.

**17** Reproduced in London, British Library, MS Harley 4955, The Newcastle Manuscript, fol. 54v.



Figure 22.2. John Smythson. Tomb of Sir Charles Cavendish and Katherine, Baroness Ogle. Ca. 1618, alabaster: Church of St. Mary and St. Laurence, Bolsover. Eva Lauenstein.

(recently acquired) prominence” in the landscapes of Derbyshire.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, as posited by Sara L. French, the architecture of elite domestic space regularly extended its reach into more widely accessible public and semipublic environments in an effort to state the “patron’s courtly and social ambitions.”<sup>19</sup> The “family fiction” created through Charles’s monument and the chapel participated in the creation of a narrative of Cavendish influence through the manipulation of a shared topography.

The management of collectively experienced space sought to narrate Cavendish power as an element in the creation of harmonious English landscapes. This is revealed by the account of the travel companion of Ben Jonson on his foot voyage to Scotland (1618). Contemporaneous with the tomb’s construction, the account illustrates its function in shaping Cavendish identity through the monument’s intervention into a natural and shared environment. During their stay at the Cavendish estate at Welbeck:

Sir William Candish carried my gossip [Ben Jonson] to see Bolsover ... to meet one Smithson, an excellent architect, who was to consult with Mr Jonson about the erection of a tomb for Sir William’s father, for which my gossip was to make an epitaph.<sup>20</sup>

These provisions for a new Cavendish burial place and tomb were timely, since the recent death of Sir Charles precipitated his son William Cavendish’s need to affirm his place as the rightful successor to his father’s newfound status. Newcastle consciously did so by fashioning his father into a representation of Cavendish valour, intellect, and authority. As the company was entertained at Welbeck, Newcastle related tales of the late family patriarch as the company made use of the estate’s “pleasures and commodities.”<sup>21</sup> In the course of his narrating the bloody encounter of Charles and a group of armed men on June 18, 1599, for example, the company were shown “the spoils Sir Charles had brought away from Sir John Stanhope.”<sup>22</sup> This story refers to a final Cavendish victory in a long-running feud with the Stanhopes.<sup>23</sup> Place and the creation of a “family fiction” attest to the victory of the Cavendishes in a dispute over their inheritance, lands, and titles through the appropriation of material spoils and their display at the heart of William Cavendish’s network of estates. This declaration of power by Newcastle through object and place was extended into the environments beyond the walls of the private residences. As the company embarked on excursions into the landholdings surrounding Bolsover and

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**18** Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 27.

**19** Sara L. French, “Re-Placing Gender in Elizabethan Gardens,” in *Mapping Gendered Routes and Spaces in the Early Modern World*, ed. Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (London: Routledge, 2016), 157–76, 157.

**20** James Loxley, Anna Groundwater, and Julie Sanders, ed., *Ben Jonson’s Walk to Scotland: An Annotated Edition of the “Foot Voyage,”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 57.

**21** Loxley, Groundwater, and Sanders, *Ben Jonson’s Walk to Scotland*, 51.

**22** Loxley, Groundwater, and Sanders, *Ben Jonson’s Walk to Scotland*, 51.

**23** W. T. MacCaffrey, “Talbot and Stanhope: An Episode in Elizabethan Politics,” *Historical Research* 33 (1960): 73–85 at 74.

Welbeck, dominion was narrated through the landscape's surrender to Sir Charles's heir. Thus the "huge grown stags" of Welbeck estate did not fly from the approaching company but "made towards us as if to entertain us."<sup>24</sup> Likewise, the horses of Newcastle's stable showed such "readiness and steadiness" that it appeared that rider and beast "were both one piece."<sup>25</sup> The tomb formed an extension of this seemingly innate and natural rulership. Like the gardener who cultivates and controls flora through horticulture, the builder of the monument alters and conditions the natural spaces of the estates.

The construction of a narrative of family cohesion through the Cavendish chapel and the tomb of Sir Charles was part of a critical moment of transition in family structure. As the chapel expressed the harmonious and seemingly inviolable hierarchy of the dynasty through its patriarchy, it participated in a wider articulation of the family's legitimacy through their successful intervention into a shared environment. As with the scenery of Bolsover and Welbeck ostensibly bending to the will of the new head of the family, the construction of the Cavendish chapel physically marks this triumph over a conquered topography.

While the tomb of Sir Charles participated in carving out new territories of Cavendish influence through a show of familial harmony, the monument of William Cavendish, 2nd Earl of Devonshire and his wife Christian Bruce Cavendish reasserted the family's ties to the civic landscape of Derby (Figure 22.3). Furthermore, as an ancestral tomb that marked the place of the remains of their son, the Royalist army officer Charles Cavendish, the monument's expression of a stable family line participates in contemporary narratives about national cohesion in the aftermath of civil war. The freestanding monument was approximately twelve feet high and took the form of a temple, supported by four pilasters forming angled corners.<sup>26</sup> Under the domed roof, full-length marble figures of William and Christian stood upright in anticipation of the Last Judgement. The corners of the monument were ornamented with busts of their four children: William, 3rd Earl of Devonshire; Charles, lieutenant general in the Civil War; Henry, who died in infancy; and Anne, wife of Robert Rich, 3rd Earl of Warwick.<sup>27</sup> Through the figures of William and Christian, shrouded and emerging from the grave on the day of their resurrection, the tomb was an expression of Christian hope in salvation. The tomb extended this hope to the coming generation through their participation in the scene's periphery. Emphasizing reconciliation in another life, the monument demonstrates the enduring ties that link family members both living and dead.

Christian's will proclaims the function of the tomb as a place of familial reunion through her wishes concerning her own, and her son Charles's, burial:

My Bodie I commite to the Earth as aforesaid, Willing and desiring that the same together with that of my deare Sonne Charles Cavendish ... (which at present is deposited in the

<sup>24</sup> Loxley, Groundwater, and Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 55.

<sup>25</sup> Loxley, Groundwater, and Sanders, *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland*, 57.

<sup>26</sup> Pevsner, *Derbyshire*, 170. The monument is no longer extant.

<sup>27</sup> "Churches and Chapels," in *The History and Gazetteer of the County of Derby*, ed. Thomas Noble, vol. 2, pt. 1 (Derby: Mozley, 1833), 462–504, 465.

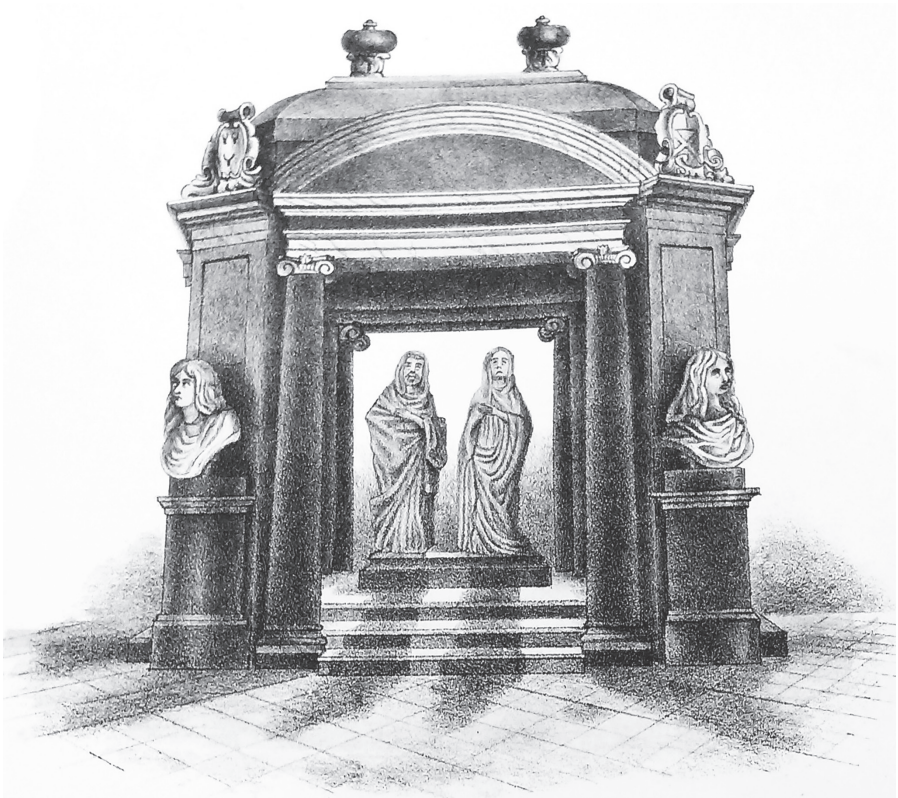


Figure 22.3. Engraving of the tomb of William Cavendish, 2nd Earl of Devonshire and his wife Christian Bruce Cavendish after George Bailey (monument no longer extant). George Bailey, *Monument to William Second Earl of Devonshire & Christian his wife*. From John Charles Cox, *The Chronicles of the Collegiate Church or Free Chapel of All Saints, Derby ... Illustrated by George Bailey*. Derby: Bemrose & Sons, 1881. Plate VIII. © British Library. Photograph: Eva Lauenstein.

Church of Newarke, hee being slayne not farer from that place in his Majesties Service) may ... be carried by the way of Newarke aforesaid be thence removed, and both together interred at the same tyme in the Vault of St Alhallowes Chancell in the Towne of Derby next to the Corps of my deare Lord and husband the late Earle of Devonshire.<sup>28</sup>

Arranging for Charles's exhumation from Newark, where he fell in battle in "his Majesties Service," Christian employs the reconciliation of the material bodies of the family within All Saints to express the enduring power of the family in the landscape of Derbyshire.

**28** The Will of Christian Countess of Devonshire, Dowager, PROB 11/348/99, Public Record Office, The National Archives, Kew, fols. 73v–74r.

At the same time, the relocation of Charles's body to his ancestral burial place functioned as a powerful public ritual that employed familial reunion as a signifier for the mending of national ruptures created through the Civil War. This is expressed in the funeral sermon by William Nailour, read at Charles's reburial:

In this Church brave *Cavendish* fell, and what is more then that, in this Churches quarrel. *Abner* troubled *Israel*, though he fell in it; for he made an head, and drew his Sword against a King of Gods choosing: but *Cavendish* sided with such a King, and fought in defence of him and the Church against a generation of men, who cursed all them bitterly that came not in to the help of the Lord against the Mighty, this was the language of their *Demagogues*, thus it pleased them to Christian Rebellion.<sup>29</sup>

Employing biblical allegory, Nailour juxtaposes the military lieutenant general Charles with Abner, the Old Testament commander. Unlike Abner, who "troubled Israel" through his support of the wrongful ruler Ish-bosheth, Charles sided with rightful rule, Charles II. Charles's position in the Civil War places him in a teleological battle in which he defends "the Church against a generation of men," "Demagogues," that stir not only political but "Christian Rebellion" against a "King of Gods choosing." Simultaneously, Nailour affirms the role of place through his allegory, implicating Derby in the narrative of the Kingdom's return to national unity under one godly appointed ruler. As Charles is contrasted with Abner and the heir to the English throne likened to David, the place of the Lieutenant General's interment becomes Hebron, the city in which kingship of all Israel was eventually conferred on David. Nailour fashions the tomb's display of Cavendish family integrity into an account of the reunion of a fractured British Kingdom. Furthermore, he employs Charles's burial to intimate the dynasty's participation in the negotiation of eventual peace and unity in the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland. As Derby becomes the place where the new David unifies the new Israel and Judah, Charles becomes a public symbol of a fashioned, national, and linear cosmology that saw factionalism turned into union.

The monument created by Margaret Cavendish in her play *Bell in Campo*, probably composed during her exile at the Rubenshuis in Antwerp, similarly negotiates civil war discord by employing the tomb's value as a place of familial harmony. The mausoleum complex built by the war widow Madam Jantil discloses the significance of the monument in declaring social status and belonging during a time when Margaret was unable to shape the landscapes she called home. Margaret employs the written word in lieu of physical building materials to convey dominion and ownership through the tomb.

Like the reburial of lieutenant general Charles in his father's monument, Jantil's act of building discloses the value of family unity in devising narratives of national cohesion. After her husband's death in battle, Jantil hires "the best and curioust Carvers or Cutters of Stones" to build a freestanding monument occupying the landscapes of her

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<sup>29</sup> William Nailour, *A Commemoration Sermon Preached at Darby, Feb. 18, 1674, for the Honourable Colonel Charles Cavendish, Slain in the Service of King Charles the First, before Gainsborough in the Year 1643* (London, 1675), 22.

and her husband's estates.<sup>30</sup> Enclosed by a "Wall of Brick of a reasonable height" and a "grove of Trees," the tomb of Seigneur Valeroso is the central feature of the construction, supported by "four Marble Pillars" and surmounted by "an Arched Marble Cover."<sup>31</sup> Two "Statues, one for *Mercury*, and another for *Pallas*" couch the head of the effigy, and the figures of Mars and Hymen clasp Valeroso's hands.<sup>32</sup> Jantil orchestrates the figurative grief and mourning of the classical figures, as she chooses to enclose herself in her husband's monument. Like the tomb of Sir Charles, Jantil's monument expresses family coherence through the power of the head of the household. As Jantil takes her place at the foot of the monument in prayer, the classical gods, like the children of the early modern family tomb, communicate the deceased's status through their subservient positions at the hands of the male patriarch. Additionally, Jantil's enclosure removes her from a marriage economy affected by the destabilizing effects of civil strife. When a parade of young gallants hope to marry into wealth and status, Jantil's seclusion becomes representative of the endurance of her family's established and ancient status. The young courter Compagnion comments on this when he uneasily reflects on Jantil's inaccessibility. The "noblest, youngest, richest, and fairest Widow is gone," not because she is "promised or married," but because she is "incloistered, and that is worse than marriage."<sup>33</sup> The mausoleum allows Jantil to fashion herself into a highly visible symbol of the continuing power of a pre-war order.

While Margaret employs the tomb fictionally as an antidote to the threat that civil war explicitly poses to the integrity of the wealthy landed gentry, she likewise seeks to show how the monument could impose wider social coherence. Thus, like Bess's tomb in Derby, Jantil's mausoleum was not only a place for exhibiting lineage but an instrument in shaping collective environments. Jantil's will transforms the private and inward-looking burial space of a harmonious patriarchal family into an outward-facing and public place of ascetic contemplation intended to heal the divides of a war-torn society:

*Item, I give a thousand pounds a year to maintain ten religious persons to live in this place or House by this Tomb.*

*Item, I give three thousand pounds to enlarge the House, and three thousand pounds more to build a Chapell by my Husbands Tomb.*

*Item, Two hundred pounds a year I give for the use and repair of the House and Chapell.*<sup>34</sup>

Beyond ensuring the maintenance of her husband's tomb, Jantil's will focuses on the future potential of the funeral complex as a "*Chapell*" and, through the extension of the living quarters, as the perpetual home of "*ten religious persons*." The mausoleum is transformed into a religious house that intrudes into the civic landscape of the fictional

<sup>30</sup> Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, "Bell in Campo," in *Playes Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious and Excellent Princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London, 1662), 579–633, pt. 1, 4.21, 599.

<sup>31</sup> Cavendish, "Bell in Campo", pt. 1, 4.21, 600.

<sup>32</sup> Cavendish, "Bell in Campo", pt. 1, 4.21, 599.

<sup>33</sup> Cavendish, "Bell in Campo", pt. 2, 3.9, 618.

<sup>34</sup> Cavendish, "Bell in Campo", pt. 2, 4.19, 628.

kingdom, enacting order and harmony into a fractured society. That Margaret understood the ascetic community of *Bell in Campo* to function in such a way is elucidated by a tract entitled "A Monastical Life" in her miscellany, *The Worlds Olio* (1655). Here, she outlines the public benefits of religious communal living. Above all, it is "Good example" that the religious community provides. Asceticism promotes a "habit of sobriety" that facilitates political order as the "Church busies the people, and keeps their mindes in peace, so that these monastical men, which are the Church, is the nurse to quiet the people."<sup>35</sup> To Cavendish, such religious order facilitates political control. Coenobitic living "is beneficial to the State, for it Amuses the Common people and busies their mindes, ... to keep out murmur and discontent, which is got by idlenesse, which is the cause of rebellion."<sup>36</sup> As the "religious persons" of Jantil's monument enact a devotional calendar, they actively provide "recreation" and "pastime" that draw the community together and away from political revolt.

As has been shown, the Cavendish family employed the funeral monument to impose collective harmony in the landscapes of their urban and rural seats of power. They engaged the patriarchal family structure as a representation of orderly society. From Sir Charles's tomb that proclaimed Cavendish dominion over a shared natural landscape to lieutenant general Charles's interment that was meant to be viewed as an illustration of the resolution of civil war, the tombs of Cavendish men expressed a societal ideal of order through patrilineality. Yet, as the monument of Bess intimates, the Cavendish ascent to power was facilitated by women. Furthermore, as alluded to by Margaret in *The Life*, it was the advantageous marriages to female heirs that provided the financial and social means to build on the foundations laid by Bess. Thus, while the tombs provide imagery of a robust patriarchal family structure, a knowing audience was aware of the significant part the Cavendish women played in the continued success of the family line. Despite its focus on male lineage, the tomb was a vehicle for the expression of such female participation. This reading of the Cavendish monuments, however, is anchored in a language of commemoration provided through textual forms of remembrance. The elegies written in dedication of Bess, Katherine, Christian, and Margaret relate how their tombs acted as sites for the expression of the female role in the perpetuation of family coherence and stability. In the commemorative verse compiled for all four women, writers used the phoenix and her nest to intimate the significant role of women in the fashioning of Cavendish family identity.

Thomas Dekker's collection of prayers entitled *Foure Birds of Noahs Arke* (1609) recounts how the phoenix and her nest were intimately bound into an *ars moriendi* culture of the early seventeenth century. It also reveals the significance of gender in the construction of space in which the drama of death and rebirth was enacted. To Dekker, the phoenix is "a figure of Christ" and thus representative of the blessings conferred through

<sup>35</sup> Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *The Worlds Olio Written by the Right Honorable, the Lady Margaret Newcastle* (London, 1655), 29–30.

<sup>36</sup> Cavendish, *Worlds Olio*, 30.

the Passion and Resurrection. The phoenix's sacrifice and rebirth are enabled through the act of constructing a nest:

*When the Phoenix knoweth shee must die, shee buildeth a nest of al the sweetest spices, and there looking stedfastly on the Sunne: shee beateth her wings in his hottest beames, and betweene thē kindleth a fire amongst those sweet spices, & so burneth her selfe to death. ... Out of those dead ashes of the Phoenix, doeth a new Phoenix arise.*<sup>37</sup>

Building a "*nest of al the sweetest spices*," the phoenix facilitates her sacrifice and her eventual return in the form of her offspring. Thus, despite the phoenix's association with Jesus, her nest, a "place in which a person ... lives or finds rest," relies on a gendered language of motherly nurture.<sup>38</sup> Not only is Dekker's phoenix female, but the abode she builds represents the believer's travel from life to afterlife as a return to the body of the mother: from the "wombes of our mothers" to the "womb of the earth."<sup>39</sup> While the phoenix was an image of Christ, her creation of the place of rebirth was an act of female and maternal care.

Like the nest, the tomb was a place in which birth, death, and eventual resurrection converged. Several writers exploited this relationship to stress the critical role of women in the creation of family lineage. William Sampson describes Bess's tomb as the central "spycie nest" of the phoenix that gave rise to the Cavendish dynasty.<sup>40</sup> Ben Jonson's epitaph dedicated to Katherine Ogle frames her tomb as the nest of the phoenix, the place where the "warne ... spice" of Katherine's "good name" is collected for the benefit of her "Children, and Grand=children."<sup>41</sup> Christian's elegy dismisses the "Vulgar Spice and Gums" of the ink of commendatory verse to emphasize the tomb as the true location of her fragrant virtue.<sup>42</sup> Clergyman Clement Ellis formulates Margaret's literary corpus as the nest of the phoenix that "can never dye."<sup>43</sup> Characterized as the nurturing phoenix that sacrifices her life for the next generation, Cavendish women were portrayed as instrumental in the creation and perpetuation of family lineage through their monuments. As the primary actors behind the erection of all the aforementioned tombs, the textual monuments of Bess, Katherine, Christian, and Margaret served to cue a contemporary audience to their significant roles as the builders and maintainers of their family.

All texts use female sacrifice as a leading sign for the family's lasting integrity. Thus Bess's display of her power and influence through the monument is redefined

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Dekker, *Foure Birds of Noahs Arke* (London, 1609), sigs. 15v–16r.

<sup>38</sup> "nest, n.," *OED Online*.

<sup>39</sup> Dekker, *Foure Birds*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> William Sampson, *Virtus post funera viuit or, Honour Tryumphing Over Death. Being True Epitomes of Honourable, Noble, Learned, and Hospitable Personages* (London, 1636), 5.

<sup>41</sup> MS Harley 4955, fol. 55r.

<sup>42</sup> *An Elegy on the Truly Honourable, and Most Virtuous, Charitable, and Pious Lady, Countesse of Devonshire, who Lately Departed this Life, Being a Hundred and Odd Years of Age, whose Corps Now Lies in Deserved State in Holbourn* (London, 1675), n.p.

<sup>43</sup> *A Collection of Letters and Poems: Written by Several persons of Honour and Learning, Upon Divers Important Subjects, to the Late Duke and Dutchess of Newcastle* (London, 1678), 175.

by Sampson as the act of a caring matriarch who ensures the afterlife of her sons and daughters by building a "nest."<sup>44</sup> While the gathering of the rarest spices communicates the amalgamation of power by the Cavendishes, Bess, as the phoenix, becomes the figure who brings the family together in life through birth and in death through interment. Sampson's portrayal of Bess serves to remind the reader of her function as the founder of a powerful (male) line and de-emphasizes her other motives for her shrewd management of her finances, estates, and marriage alliances. His verse draws attention to how Bess's monument marked the successful acquisition of the south aisle of All Saints from the Corporation of Derby and the foundation of the family's future private crypt.<sup>45</sup> Her tomb becomes the nest that illustrates the birth of a dynasty, the return of its members in death to be laid to rest, and the continual rebirth of the line through its constituent members. Employing the phoenix and her nest, Sampson recasts Bess's consolidation of power, wealth, and status as an act of matriarchal nurture.

Jonson's elegy acknowledges that the intended audience of commemorative text and tomb understood that Katherine Ogle played a significant role in legacy-building despite her effigy's ostensibly subservient position on the monument in Bolsover. Casting Katherine's tomb as the place from where her virtue emanates like the fragrance of the phoenix's nest, the place of her husband's interment is, for a moment, transformed into the space that allows future generations to draw on his wife for a worthy image for imitation. Additionally, casting Katherine as the phoenix and her tomb as her nest serves to underscore Ogle's vital role in the construction of Cavendish authority. Katherine was instrumental in buttressing family wealth and status by acquiring the title Baroness Ogle in her own right after the death of her father Cuthbert without male issue. Thanks to her doing so, her subsequent male descendants would carry one of the most established and ancient titles of the English ruling class. Eternalizing publicly the transmission of an old title, Katherine's place of burial served lastingly to illustrate the fusion of an emerging Cavendish dynasty with England's established landed gentry. Such an act of conciliation by a woman was ideally expressed through the gendered language of the phoenix. Jonson's verse allows the reader to view the fiercely patrilineal imagery of Sir Charles's tomb as an illustration of idealized female and maternal sacrifice. By framing Ogle's legacy-building through the tomb as the phoenix's nest-building, Jonson rearticulates Katherine's management of the family's image as a natural act of wifely duty and motherly care. That Ogle participated in such a reading of her part in the family's self-fashioning is readily expressed by an additional epitaph on the Bolsover monument, probably penned by Katherine. Collecting the titles and corporeal bodies of her family, Ogle declares that the tomb she commissioned would serve to "gather," "in their time," all the members of her family in one place, in the collective hope of "the happy hower of resvrrrection."

<sup>44</sup> Sampson, *Virtus post funera viuit*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Lawrence Butler and Richard Morris, "Derby Cathedral: The Cavendish Vault," *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* 114 (1994): 14–28 at 14.

Christian's elegy relies on this established language for speaking about female participation in family identity-building. Furthermore, the use of a language associated with the phoenix illustrates her role as a representation of national reconciliation alongside her son, Charles. As the anonymous author of *An Elegy on the ... Countesse of Devonshire* (1675) describes Christian as a "fair Temple, and her heart a shrine," he seeks to dismiss written words of praise in favour of her remains and their place of burial, the true location of the "Spice" of the deceased's virtue. He encourages the reader to prioritize good deeds over praise and facts over fiction; the materiality of body and tomb becomes representative of the author's wish to present the tangible evidence of Christian's qualities. Drawing on a language of idealized womanly nurture by evoking the "Spice" of the phoenix's nest, he reminds his reader of Christian's responsibility in overseeing the wealth and status of her "Relations Dear."<sup>46</sup> Christian became the "*de facto* head of her family" through her husband's premature death.<sup>47</sup> Known for her astute handling of her finances, she brought stability and order to the estate of the future 3rd Earl of Devonshire. The author makes clear, however, that her "Marble Tomb" also conveys her dedication to church and country as her virtues intimate her "Strictly Religious" nature and her "firm loyalty."<sup>48</sup> These lines appear to relate Christian's efforts for the Royalist cause during the Civil War and Interregnum. Her residence at Roehampton, for example, became a centre for a Royalist political conspiracy that sought to return the exiled Charles II from abroad.<sup>49</sup> The description of her place of burial evoked the nest of the phoenix and serves to highlight her role in the maintenance of Cavendish family status during a time of crisis. Simultaneously, such language supports that employed by Nailour, who fashioned her, her husband's, and her son's place of interment into a representation of Royalist efforts in bringing about national conciliation under Charles II.

Margaret, unlike her predecessors, felt that her capacity as a female custodian and creator of places was compromised. The defining role that exile played in her writing makes this evident. But, as it did for Bess, Katherine, and Christian, place became the vehicle through which Margaret created "family fictions." Instead of doing so using the physical monument, she chose to do so with her writing. Nowhere is this more strikingly illustrated than in *The Life*, where the process of charting the destruction of Cavendish estates indirectly serves to confirm the family's continuing influence through landscape:

1. *Clipston*-Park and Woods cut down to the value of 20000 l.
2. *Kirkby*-Woods, for which my Lord was formerly proffer'd 10000 l.

<sup>46</sup> *An Elegy*, n.p.

<sup>47</sup> Victor Stater, "Cavendish, Christian, Countess of Devonshire (1595–1675)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>48</sup> *An Elegy*, n.p.

<sup>49</sup> Roy Hattersley, *The Devonshires: The Story of a Family and Nation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2013), 132, 146; Thomas Pomfret, *The Life of the Right Honourable and Religious Lady Christian Late Countess Dowager of Devonshire* (London, 1685), 59.

3. Woods cut down in *Derbyshire* 8000 l.
4. *Red-logd-Wood, Rome-wood* and others near *Welbeck* 4000 l.
5. Woods cut down in *Stafford-shire* 1000 l.
6. Woods cut down in *York-shire* 1000 l.
7. Woods cut down in *Northumberland* 1500 l.

The *Total* 45000 l.<sup>50</sup>

Margaret recounts in several lists the extent of destruction to the Cavendish landholdings, ensuring that their rightful ownership is remembered for posterity. By doing this she places the act of writing alongside her husband's active participation in the Civil War. While Newcastle supported the cause of his sovereign through "War and Fighting," Margaret instead participated through "Contemplating and Writing."<sup>51</sup>

Despite choosing writing over monumental commemoration, Margaret believed tombs and texts to have an important and mutually supportive relationship. On the one hand, she argues in *The Worlds Olio* that "stately Monuments" construct the public image and fame of "Learned Authors."<sup>52</sup> On the other, she uses funerary art to describe literary works she believed to be better able to fulfill the former's promise of weathering "Time, Accidents, and the Rage of Wars" in the *Sociable Letters* (1664).<sup>53</sup> However, both worked in tandem to create the public image of "a Kingdome in a Flourishing Condition." Monuments and books, Margaret writes, are therefore important tools for those with social and political power. The "Royal Ruler" should invest in the production of both because, alongside "Crowns, Scepters, and Thrones," they are objects that forcefully demonstrate his ability to "hold Power, and keep up Authority, making Obedience, Fear, and Subjection."<sup>54</sup> That Margaret believed that literature and mortuary culture also ensured the status of a country's elite is demonstrated by her and her husband's funeral monument in Westminster Abbey. The marble tomb is located in the north transept and consists of a large tomb chest surmounted by the recumbent effigies of William, wearing the Order of the Garter, and Margaret, holding an open book and ink horn. Seven clasped volumes decorate the base of the tomb's south end. Tucked into a shelf and neatly tied with ribbon, the monumental volumes are visually reminiscent of the large folio presentation volumes of Margaret's works she distributed to university libraries, from Leyden to Cambridge.<sup>55</sup> By taking up space on tombs and in libraries, Margaret's books become physical objects that stake out the authority of her family, not unlike the tombs of her

<sup>50</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, 102.

<sup>51</sup> Cavendish, *Life*, sig. B1r.

<sup>52</sup> Cavendish, *Worlds Olio*, 207.

<sup>53</sup> Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *CCXI Sociable Letters* (London, 1664), 227.

<sup>54</sup> Cavendish, *Worlds Olio*, 207.

<sup>55</sup> On Cavendish's presentation copies, see Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry and Culture 1640–1680* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 76–77, and James Fitzmaurice, "Margaret Cavendish on Her Own Writing: Evidence from Revision and Handmade Correction," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 85 (1991): 297–307.



Figure 22.4. Grinling Gibbons. Tomb of William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Newcastle and Margaret Lucas Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (detail). Before 1676, marble. Westminster Abbey, London. © Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

female kin. In life, Margaret used text in lieu of the “stately Monument” to support her family’s claims to land, status, and power. In death, funerary architecture works to physically insert her writing into the symbolic heart of social and political power (Figure 22.4).

Ellis’s commendatory verse echoes the iconography of her monument. In it, her literature becomes the monument that ensures the survival of the Cavendishes in the memory of future generations. Instead of the physical tomb, her literary canon becomes the phoenix’s nest where her fame and her family’s past are continually reborn. To Ellis, her “Tombe, where she doth lie” is also her writing “Closet” and, by extension, “our great Library.”<sup>56</sup> As the monument is recast as the collection of her works,

<sup>56</sup> *A Collection of Letters and Poems*, 175.

Margaret's "big words" become the "silent Ashes" that "restore / Us such a *Phoenix*" who will perpetually find "new Forme" in the generations of readers to come.<sup>57</sup> In this way, the Cavendish family claim to lands, recounted in *The Life*, outlives Margaret and Newcastle, ensuring stability and continuity like the monuments of their predecessors. Employing the language associated with the phoenix's nest, the place of internment allows Ellis to communicate how Margaret's literary corpus functioned as a concrete and lasting sign of her family's status, not unlike the monuments commissioned by Bess, Katherine, and Christian.

In the preface to *Virtus post funera viuit* (1636), William Sampson characterizes Newcastle and his ancestors as "*the Sanctuary to whose high Altar of goodnes, I alwaies flie too for redresse in all extreames.*"<sup>58</sup> As has been shown through several tombs of eminent members of the family, the commemorative space was indeed such a place of "Sanctuary," where family narratives were transformed into wider collective fictions of shared harmony and order. From the significance of Bess's monument that formed the foundation of a charitable web of institutions, to the fictional Madam Jantil and her act of building to counteract civil war disorder, the tomb was a tool for inscribing landholdings with narratives of peace, order, and prosperity through the presentation of strong, enduring, and inviolable patrilineality. Yet, as seen in the commemorative texts that accompanied the building and writing of monuments, contemporary writers sought ways to express the critical function played by women in fashioning such patriarchal narratives of familial and national harmony. As writers such as Ben Jonson, William Sampson, and Clement Ellis used the phoenix's nest to frame the place of burial of Cavendish women, they sought to disclose their critical function in the foundation, maintenance, and future of the dynasty.

The interaction of text and place, and the female and the male, defines the framework of Sampson's text. The title of his book of commemorative verse honouring the Cavendish family is also the motto of the civic heraldry of Nottingham. Like Bess's tomb, it displays the reciprocal relationship between individual commemoration and collective identity as the memory of the Cavendish line becomes intertwined with local identity markers. At the same time, *virtus post funera vivit* (virtue outlives death) was the motto appended to the phoenix in at least one popular early modern emblem book.<sup>59</sup> A contemporary audience was probably much more readily aware of the significant function of the maternal act of conciliation (expressed through the phoenix) in the ascent of the Cavendish family to power. As collective and domestic identities merge through the material tomb, textual commemoration highlighted female participation in narratives of family unity, and thereby proclaimed women's roles in the construction of fictions of public, societal unity.

<sup>57</sup> *A Collection of Letters and Poems*, 176.

<sup>58</sup> Sampson, *Virtus post funera viuit*, sig. A2v.

<sup>59</sup> Jean Jacques Boissard, *Emblematum liber. Emblemes latins* (Metz, 1588), 47.

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