A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660–1789

SUSAN STAVES

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A LITERARY HISTORY OF WOMEN'S WRITING IN BRITAIN, 1660–1789

Drawing on three decades of feminist scholarship bent on rediscovering lost and abandoned women writers, Susan Staves provides a comprehensive history of women's writing in Britain from the Restoration to the French Revolution. This major new work of criticism also offers fresh insights about women's writing in all literary forms, not only fiction, but also poetry, drama, memoir, autobiography, biography, history, essay, translation, and the familiar letter. Focusing on the texts women created, rather than the lives they led, Staves illuminates the central role women's diverse accomplishments in the art of writing played in the literary history of the period. Authors celebrated in their own time and now neglected, and those more recently revalued and studied, are given equal attention. The book's organization by chronology and its attention to history challenge the way we periodize literary history and insist that we must understand the significance of women's texts in their historical context. Each chapter includes a list of key works written in the period covered, as well as a narrative and critical assessment of the works. This magisterial work includes a comprehensive bibliography and list of modern editions of the authors discussed.

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To the students of Brandeis University, undergraduate and graduate, who read these books with me

Contents

Acknowledgments

This book is deeply indebted to the work of other feminist literary critics and scholars who have engaged with texts and authors long virtually ignored or, when noticed, condescended to. I have tried to offer novice readers some guides to this now large body of work, but, as readers more familiar with the subject will understand, given the broad scope of my literary history, my direct references to this secondary literature in my text and in the select bibliography can only mention some of the highlights most important or most relevant to my history. I am grateful for the critical insights and scholarship of those I cite, but also for the contributions to my understanding of the field of many others from whose work I have profited less directly.

Ellen Messer-Davidow and Anthony Winner first suggested that I should write a literary history of women's writing in this period. Their intriguing and elaborately theorized proposal for a collaborative new feminist literary history of British women's writing in all periods eventually proved to be a more complicated project than was practicable, but I appreciate their having engaged me in the challenges they outlined. When this large-scale project was abandoned, Gary Kelly encouraged me, nevertheless, to continue with my part of the history.

Narrative literary histories like this do not lend themselves to being presented in sections as the usual conference papers or journal articles, so I have not presented portions of this volume in the way I would have done for another kind of book. I am, therefore, all the more grateful to Dena Goodman, Simon Dickie, Lincoln Faller, and the Eighteenth-Century Group at the University of Michigan for inviting me to precirculate one chapter to them and for the lively and helpful responses of the members of that group. The Orlando Project's Women and Literary History Conference provided significant discussions of the problems of women's literary history in several countries and periods. I was glad to have been invited to participate and to give a talk entitled "Terminus a Quo, Terminus ad

Quem: Chronological Boundaries in a Literary History," subsequently published in *Women and Literary History: "For There She Was,"* edited by two of the conference organizers, Katherine Binhammer and Jeanne Wood. Some material from that essay appears in this introduction. I am grateful also to the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies and to the British Society for Eighteenth Century Studies for invitations to give two plenary lectures. Both offered welcome occasions to consider the methodological issues confronting the feminist literary historian and to participate in useful discussions with colleagues.

Closer to home, as my dedication suggests, I am grateful to the students of Brandeis University who, beginning in 1978, were willing to enroll in my course on "The Woman of Letters, 1660–1800" and to read these texts by women writers with me. Early versions of this course necessarily used texts not then in print. Thus students were compelled to read reproductions of texts I had made on a typewriter and, on occasion, more heroically, to read whole novels on microfilm. Our early experiences of confronting what I came to think of as "naked texts" – that is, texts without any surrounding critical commentary or scholarly apparatus – challenged us to develop our own readings and vividly illustrated how different the experience of reading an uncanonical text could be from the experience of reading a text that has become canonical. While I rejoice that many of hitherto obscure texts of these women writers have now become more canonical, and while I recognize that this literary history is part of the process of their canonization, I hope that we can all also from time to time imagine how we might read our books as naked texts.

Like many teachers of rediscovered books by women writers, I have benefited from responses to them by undergraduates for whom these books by women were the only eighteenth-century books they had yet encountered. The students' readings and assumptions, especially when contrasted with those of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics and readers, again and again illuminated how contested the concept of literary "realism" can be. I have also benefited from opportunities to work with Brandeis graduate students who became interested in these women writers. In the 1980s Cynthia Lowenthal courageously ignored the advice of others that writing a dissertation on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu would be professional suicide. Despite the warnings, she wrote a dissertation which became the first literary critical book on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and she has flourished in the profession. Most recently, the field has been so transformed that another Brandeis doctoral student, Elizabeth

Ellington, could write an excellent feminist dissertation about methodological issues in recent "life and works" books on individual Restoration and Eighteenth-Century women writers – books, of course, in my bibliography for this literary history. It has been a privilege to share the enthusiasms and insights of these graduate dissertation writers, including also Ann Russell Zimmerman, Deborah Kaplan, Edith Larson, Claudia Thomas, Kathleen Grathwol, Pamela Lloyd, Marla Harris, Bea Britton Loprete, Leslee Thorne-Murphy, Cynthia Ricciardi, and Lori Davis-Perry.

I did my graduate work at the University of Virginia, which Thomas Jefferson thought of as an "academical village," but, since 1967 I have had the good fortune to live near Boston/Cambridge, which is an "academical city." For many decades, we have enjoyed an Eighteenth-Century Club, in the more recent decades metamorphosed into the Harvard Humanities Eighteenth-Century Seminar. Bringing together faculty and graduate students – and the occasional non-academic – interested in eighteenth-century studies, the club has offered a friendly and stimulating venue for presenting work-in-progress. I am particularly grateful to Ruth Perry (a founder of the Club), to Charles Knight and Arthur Weitzman (among its most faithful and long-term participants), to Lennard Davis and Beth Kowaleski-Wallace (who served at different times as my co-chairs), and to Lynn Festa, who has co-chaired the seminar with me for the last four years. I am also indebted to a still less formal club, one we call the "Bluestockings," a reading group in which I have had the chance to discuss some of the primary texts included in this history and to present a draft chapter for comment. The current "Bluestockings" are Lynn Festa, Susan Lanser, Mandy Nash Kudarauskis, and Ruth Perry. We all mourn the death of a former member, Jan Thaddeus, whose literary intelligence and broad knowledge of eighteenth-century history and literature added so much to our earlier conversations.

Finally, I welcome this chance to acknowledge important contributions to my happiness and well-being during the writing of this book from a few important friends who – although learned – are not scholars of the eighteenth century: Mary Campbell, Arlan Fuller, Paul Morrison, and Marshall Shatz.

Introduction

THE SUBJECT

David Perkins's *Is Literary History Possible?* has been a *vade mecum* for me as I have been writing this book. Perkins explores post-modern challenges to existing conceptions of literature and history that suggest literary history has become impossible. His focus is on the kind of literary history that I have written in this volume: the single author narrative literary history of a national literature like Hippolyte Taine's *History of English Literature* (1863) or Francesco de Sanctis's *History of Italian Literature* (1870–71). Perkins also attends to histories of a particular period within a national literature, devoting a chapter to books and articles that attempt to explain the causes of English Romanticism, to state its important characteristics, and to establish its canon. Examples Perkins does not consider of literary histories closer to my project would include Bonamay Dobrée's *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century* (1959) and John Butt's *English Literature: The Mid-Eighteenth Century, 1740–1789* (1979), both volumes in the Oxford History of English Literature series.

Paradoxically, Perkins concludes that such literary history is both impossible to write with intellectual conviction and necessary to read. Among the reasons Perkins and others offer for the impossibility of literary history are that we no longer know what literature is, that designations of literary types like "genres, periods, schools, and movements" now look "baseless and arbitrary," and that the past itself is not representable.[1] Yet, as he also argues, students still need introductions to bodies of literature and much of the literature of the past is neither adequately intelligible nor enjoyable without the mediation of literary history.

The category literature has seemed increasingly problematic as consensus about which works ought to be in our literary canon or whether there ought to be a literary canon has broken down. Literary history necessarily

exists in a hermeneutic circle with literature. Thus, as canons have broken down, literary history increasingly has an amorphous and shifting subject. Perkins is concerned with general literary history rather than with the history of women's writing or feminist literary history. Over the past few decades, however, feminist critiques of existing canons and feminist scholarship recovering and arguing for the merits of previously uncanonical texts by women have been the most powerful forces transforming what I will call the operative canon, that is, the set of texts being published, commented upon by people trained in literary studies, and taught in departments of literature. Feminist criticism has been ambivalent about whether its goal should be to place works written by women in the literary canon or to extirpate the idea of literary canon. Given that literature has become such a moving target, it is no wonder that Perkins finds literary history impossible.

My position is that we can identify works of literature and that we can write histories of them. Admittedly, the sorts of works considered literary may be somewhat different in different historical periods, but I think a literary history can aim to recognize both the ideas of the literary in the period it treats and the ideas of the literary in the period in which it is written. My literary history in this book includes a wide range of genres with good claims to be considered literature: poetry, drama, essay, biography, memoir, translation, familiar letter, history, travel narrative, and novel. To some readers, some of these forms may seem not a part of literature. Yet Butt in *English Literature: The Mid-Eighteenth Century* quite properly paid attention to essay, biography, memoir, familiar letter, history, and travel narrative, recognizing that contemporaries considered them significant literary genres, indeed, that writers of the period were especially interested in cultivating these nonfictional prose forms. Twenty-first-century readers may notice that these forms are now also of great interest to nonspecialist general readers, as any recent issue of *The Times Literary Supplement* will demonstrate.

Because literary forms other than the novel were important in the Restoration and eighteenth century and because I think that much of women's best writing was in forms other than the novel, the reader may be surprised to find that the novel – apparently at the center of the modern feminist canon – is not at the center of my account. Much of women's most intellectually vigorous writing was in nonfiction prose, not in the novel. Indeed, too often what modern critics have supposed were omnipresent constraints on women writers in this period were merely the conventions of the domestic novel. I agree with Clare Brant's recent

argument that feminist criticism has been too uncritical of "the orthodoxies of literary history" that direct attention too exclusively to poems, plays, and, especially, novels – although I have already noted that these "orthodoxies" did not constrain good literary historians of eighteenth-century writing like Butt.[2]

Feminists concerned with women writers often add additional feminist reasons for the impossibility of writing literary history to the reasons Perkins offers. Practically, they point to the ferment in the field and argue that, minimally, it is too early to attempt synthesis. Theoretically, many resist both the necessity of selection and the evaluative criticism required by a literary history. Sharon Harris, in a strenuous and substantial introduction to her anthology, *American Women Writers to 1800* (1996), thoughtfully articulates these skeptical positions. Deeply suspicious of the category literature, Harris includes not only doggerel magazine verse, but also business letters, dying declarations, and petitions (some of which I doubt were written by women). She declares: "I believe it is far too early – if ever necessary – to establish a canon of early American women writers; the discipline of early American studies in general is currently engaged in what might be called a critical flux (a very healthy condition, I would argue) and deserves much more research and development before such considerations come under debate."[3]

Like many feminists, Harris is legitimately suspicious of aesthetic standards developed in an hermeneutic circle with a predominantly male canon. She wants to be maximally open to the possibility of alternative aesthetics that might emerge from reflection on women's writing. Consequently, she is excited by the possibilities of examining nontraditional genres where aesthetic standards have not been established and thus do not as readily condition our responses. These, she points out, "can at times bring a reader to the quite exciting position of having to find an alternative discourse as a means of explaining – to herself and others – what she values in these texts." Unlike some who merely point to a future when such an alternative aesthetic might be articulated, Harris proposes that what previously had been devalued as "discontinuity" in early women's journals, seen as "nonliterary," ought rightly to be valued as "associativeness born of interruptibility." She redescribes this kind of writing substituting positive terms for negative ones like "discontinuous" and "semi-literate":

> The best of these writers does not want to tie down her thoughts to a linear pattern . . . she allows her mind to rove through multiple associations

and – importantly – when these texts are written to be shared with another, she assumes that her reader will be willing and able to engage in these same fast and fluent mental shifts, grasping the complexity and infiniteness of the ideas engaged and the contingencies of meaning which her style conveys.[4]

I agree with Harris and many other feminist critics that earlier constructions of the canon of Restoration and eighteenth-century literature have wrongly excluded significant and meritorious work by women, but I do not agree with those who think that feminists must jettison the idea of literature or the idea of literary merit. I agree that new aesthetic values can be found in some previously devalued women's writing, but I do not agree with those who contend that we cannot make aesthetic evaluations of literary works that have any use or objectivity. Aesthetic or literary merit is an important principle of selection in my literary history.

It cannot be a sin against feminism to say that some women wrote well and others wrote badly, that some were intelligent, reflective, and original, others dull, unreflective, and formulaic. It has been my experience that many who advance the skeptical position that judgment of literary merit is impossible with respect to works that are objects of their academic study, nevertheless feel able outside their area of scholarly expertise to pronounce on the aesthetic merits of plays or movies they see or books they read. Indeed, they are often satisfied consumers or even writers of evaluative criticism in modern reviews. I do not see why a person like me who has spent the better part of forty years immersed in Restoration and eighteenth-century British literature and history should not be capable of some useful discrimination between a good eighteenth-century poem and a bad one. Several essays in a recent issue of *New Literary History* helpfully defend what one writer describes as the "quasi-objectivity of aesthetic truth." This writer, Allen Wood, a Stanford philosopher, defends a proposition of Hume's with which I agree: "no sensible person can take seriously the thesis that all painting or poetry, for instance, is of equal aesthetic merit."[5]

One important claim some seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women writers made was that they were capable of making aesthetic judgments. In a fine essay in the new Cambridge *History of Women's Writing in France*, Faith Beasley observes that the neoclassical French women of the salons challenged existing academic standards of taste and advanced a more worldly sensibility, to be acquired in the hetereosocial salons, as a sufficient, even preferable standard of taste.[6] Many feminist theorists have complained that there was a suspicious coincidence between the discovery of women writers and the proclamation of the death of the

author; they elected to keep the idea of the author alive. Similarly, it seems to me that it would be a shame to abandon the idea of aesthetic merit just at the moment when we have a real opportunity to demonstrate both women artists' capacity to produce it and women critics' capacity to discern it. We can debate degrees or kinds of aesthetic merit without abandoning the idea that aesthetic merit exists. Some feminist abjuration of evaluative criticism derives from the militant anti-elitism of some feminisms. It may also arise from a feminist "ethic of care" that values nurturance and support rather than criticism.[7] Yet, sadly, I wonder whether this abjuration of evaluative criticism is not also a product of a lingering womanly reluctance to claim any authority, no matter how useful, well-earned, or justified.

In my view, all writing by women can validly be studied by one scholarly discipline or another – by social history, for example – but it does not follow that all writing by women is the proper object of literary study. In this book, for example, I treat some women's letters. Often these letters were written by women who were self-consciously writing in what they understood to be the literary genre of the familiar letter; they explicitly reflect on the literary merits of earlier writers of familiar letters. Occasionally, the writers were less self-consciously engaged in what they understood to be literary performances, but display an unusual artfulness with language, character, scene, and the relational dynamics peculiar to the familiar letter that I consider makes them literary. The vast majority of women's letters, however, serving more purely instrumental purposes, do not seem to be appropriately part of the subject matter of literature. Thus, although the letters of Martha Daniell Logan to John Bartram that Sharon Harris prints in her anthology are fascinating from the perspective of horticultural history, I do not consider them in my literary history. Similarly, much of the occasional political writing usefully discussed by Paula McDowell in *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace, 1678–1730* (1998) also lies outside the scope of my history. Like male writers, women writers of this period often produced inept or clichéd poems, or insipid and badly written novels. While sometimes misogynistic, contemporary reviewers' complaints about bad writing were often enough legitimate. My aim in this book is not to consider everything written by women, but rather to emphasize those literary works that were most original, most intelligent, best written, and most significant.

Recent historians of national literatures have been more bothered by the question of what literature is than by the question of what the nation was.

Despite much current scholarly interest in the construction of national identities and national cultures, this work has not yet had much impact on national literary histories. Presumably because America and Britain became separate countries after the War of American Independence, colonial American literature has conventionally been treated as part of American literary history and not as part of British literary history. However, because I believe that a national literary history ought to reflect the actual historical composition of the nation in the period it describes, my literary history considers women writing everywhere in Britain and the British colonies, including North America, so long as those colonies were part of the British Empire. It makes no more sense to exclude American colonial writers from British literary history than it would to exclude Irish writers, who are conventionally included. Thus, the American writers are present in my first six chapters, treating 1660 to 1776, then disappear in the seventh chapter at the point of the War of American Independence. Some of the American writers were self-consciously British patriots; even an oppositional writer like Abigail Adams was very aware of occupying a place within the British imperial system. Including the American writers helps underline the fact that British literature of this period was an imperial literature. It also reminds us that strains of Puritanism, religious dissent, anti-monarchalism, and republicanism that seem in some accounts virtually to disappear from English culture after the Restoration continued to develop offshore. The political radicalism of Catharine Macaulay in England in the 1770s may seem less sudden and surprising when we find Macaulay and the Adamses forming a united front in the 1770s.

My literary history is Janus-faced, one face turned toward the Restoration and eighteenth century, the other toward the twenty-first century. From one perspective, I aim to offer a picture of the literary work of Restoration and eighteenth-century women writers in which they and their contemporaries might recognize themselves and their accomplishments. Therefore, I attend to writers and works celebrated in their own time, even if they have not been of great interest to more recent criticism and may not seem of obvious interest to most twenty-first century readers. Thus, Elizabeth Rowe, whose Christian piety has not appealed much to modern tastes, but who was a critically celebrated and popular writer in her own time, and an inspiration to other women writers, has an important place in my history. So does Elizabeth Carter, who is even easier than Rowe to overlook from a modern perspective, in part because her major work was a translation from the Greek, *All the Works of Epictetus*, translation being a very visible part of the eighteenth-century literary

system, yet less so of ours. Margaret Ezell in *Writing Women's Literary History* was right to complain that many earlier narratives of feminist literary history too relentlessly insisted on a development from an early feminine writing to a later, better, feminist writing, and ignored or too harshly criticized early women writers who did not attack patriarchy, denying the real diversity of women's writing.[8]

Perkins rightly insists that one function of literary history is "to set the past at a distance, to make its otherness felt."[9] Literary history can serve a salutary function in resisting a common impulse of humanist criticism, including feminist humanist criticism, to read all texts of the past as heralding and supporting our modern convictions. Some feminist critics, demonstrating more hermeneutical brilliance than historical imagination, have found subversion of patriarchy lurking beneath the surface of texts of apparently staggering conservatism or even misogyny. Here I have tried to allow these past texts to retain their otherness, so that the reader may experience what Perkins calls "the shock to values, the effort of imagination, the crisis for understanding and sympathy" of an encounter with the past.[10] Because this history considers Restoration and eighteenth-century women's quarrels with one another, it also resists the idea that they spoke with one voice.

The other Janus face of my literary history necessarily looks to our present time, reflecting an emerging canon of women's texts that have spoken most compellingly to modern readers, especially modern feminist critics and readers. The modern canon has especially valued the transgressive writers like Aphra Behn and Delarivière Manley, whose willingness to treat female sexuality and to attack male oppression of women made them appear to be our most useable foremothers. The dominant genre of this modern canon has been the novel, and undergraduates now regularly read Behn's *Oroonoko*, Manley's *Rivella*, Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote*, Frances Sheridan's *Sidney Bidulph*, and Frances Burney's *Evelina*. Three important twentieth-century literary histories of women's writing in the Restoration and eighteenth century all made the novel their central focus: B. G. MacCarthy's pioneering and feisty *The Female Pen: Women Writers and Novelists, 1621–1818* (1946–47), Jane Spencer's fine *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (1986), and Janet Todd's deservedly influential *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660–1800* (1989).

There are real tensions between these two Janus faces of my history, and the reader will have to judge how well I have managed them. The face turned toward the Restoration and eighteenth century sees women's

nonfiction prose, religious writing, and translation as having been more significant than they are in the twenty-first century operative canon (although there are signs that the canon is shifting). The face turned toward our modern canon shares the preoccupation of feminist criticism with constructions of heroinism, with stories of how women came to write of their own experience, and with questions of how women's writing gained cultural authority. As a feminist who has elected to write a history of women's writing, I am drawn toward emphasizing texts that foreground women's experience and texts that seem to represent progressive kinds of gender consciousness. Practically, considering texts that foreground women's experience helps lend some coherence to my own narrative. More theoretically, William Warner was probably correct to say that the question that "motivates virtually all post-Enlightenment feminist inquiry" – including mine – is "how does the female subject who would be free ... resist or negotiate some compromise with the power of ... patriarchy ... in order to win authority, in view of some possible future liberation?"[11] Such presentist concerns in feminist and other "minority" literary histories convince some that they are too ideologically driven and too narrow to lay claim to historical objectivity or truthfulness. Perkins, indeed, associates "minority" literary history with Nietzsche's antiquarian history, a mode so driven by desire to support feelings of community identity that it lacks objectivity and insists on celebrating "even mediocre achievements" of its minority with inappropriate "enthusiasm."[12] I do think, as I have indicated, that modern feminist criticism sometimes errs by overpraising mediocre works, supporting praise with inventive but implausible readings.

There is an important tension between my desire to foreground progressive kinds of gender consciousness, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, my desire to represent the full range of women writers' accomplishments, including many that are not about gender. Like Rita Felski, I am wary of reinscribing an essentialism of which feminists have rightly complained.[13] Thus, with some risk to the coherence of my narrative, I have also emphasized achievements of these writers as diverse as Anne Finch's intervention in the pastoral tradition and Macaulay's advocacy of freedom of the press. Using my historical imagination and what Perkins calls the law of sympathy I have also tried to enter as well as I could into even the more alien concerns of these early texts – like the conundrums Calvinism and Neoplatonism posed for Rowe – to understand what they aimed to accomplish when they were written.

Without abandoning evaluative criticism, I have tried to articulate sympathetically the merits and claims to attention of individual texts. In particular, considering some women writers who championed "virtue" rather than sexual liberation, I argue that they made virtue a more philosophically serious and interesting concept than modern readers might suspect and that the women writers of what I call "the party of virtue" more powerfully rebutted certain misogynistic assumptions than the transgressive women writers did. In cases where I have less admiration for particular texts than other intelligent modern critics do, I have departed from the usual authoritative stance of literary history to indicate briefly what these other views are and to offer bibliographical citations that will enable the reader to pursue those alternative approaches.

METHOD OF ORGANIZATION

Typically, literary histories that treat multiple genres use genre as a key organizing principle. Butt in *English Literature: The Mid-Eighteenth Century* relies almost entirely on genre, offering separate chapters on drama; history; travel literature, memoirs, and biography; essays; and letters, dialogues, and speeches. Fiction gets two chapters, one for the "Four major novelists" and one for "Other prose fiction." Poetry gets three chapters: one for poetry 1740–60, one for poetry 1760–89, and one for Scottish poetry. Unlike most users of this conventional genre structure, Butt makes an intelligent effort to justify his choice, arguing, "this was the last age in which writers were seriously affected by the doctrines associated with the traditional literary 'kinds.'"[14] A central theme of his history is the way "new 'kinds' derive from old by different processes, imitative or parodic, to which the biological term 'mutation,' may be applied."[15]

I have departed from this usual preference for genre as an organizing principle, choosing instead to organize this book chronologically. I have divided 1660–1789 into seven shorter periods, and begun each chapter with a brief account of significant events of that period and some remarks on its general characteristics. Except for two very minor bits of fudging, I have strictly confined myself in each chapter to considering only works originating in the years covered by that chapter. This has the salutary effect of forcing me to advance only generalizations that such evidence can support. It also advances the argument that women writers were much more engaged with the nondomestic events and ideas of their time than one might suppose from the evidence of the domestic novel.

A. E. Housman, the great classical scholar and poet of *A Shropshire Lad*, in 1915 memorably reviewed the latest volume of the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, one covering *The Period of the French Revolution*. He complained that the volume was insufficiently historical:

> History need not adhere to chronology and such anachronisms as the inclusion of Peacock in this volume and the postponement of Scott till the next are shifts of expediency which have no historical importance. But the order of date should be kept when nothing is gained by inverting it. Nothing is gained, nay much is lost, by an inversion which places Wordsworth on p. 93, Crabbe on p. 140, and Blake and Burns on still later pages; for this is an inversion not simply of chronological but of historical sequence. Historically considered, Wordsworth is the pivot of the epoch . . . No poet later born . . . entirely escaped his influence . . . But Burns was dead when the *Lyrical Ballads* were published, and Crabbe might have been dead too for all the good or harm they did him.[16]

Housman's advice to adhere to the order of date has seemed to me useful. Not only does it help to place women writers in the historical moments from which their works originated and to emphasize women's engagement with contemporary events and ideas, it makes it easier to discern women writers taking sides on pressing contemporary issues and responding to one another. An enormous amount of the secondary literature on these women writers has been biographical, often finding purely personal causes for apparent shifts in the direction of a particular writer's work. Famously – or perhaps now infamously – Eliza Haywood was supposed to have been driven from the writing of scandal chronicles to the writing of inoffensive novels because she was humiliated by Alexander Pope's satire on her in *The Dunciad*.[17] In this book, I treat Haywood's early work and her later work in separate chapters, suggesting ways in which it was representative of more general trends. Moreover, certain events within the literary system have consequences that help explain phenomena that affect more than one writer. For example, George Colman's managing of the Haymarket Theatre from 1777 to 1788 as a serious rival to Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and the unusual willingness of both Colman and Thomas Harris, manager of Covent Garden, to produce new comedies (rather than tested repertory plays) contributed to the successes of both Hannah Cowley and Elizabeth Inchbald.

One question that has to be settled before an internal chronology can be periodized is the question of what kind of dates are to be primarily considered: dates of authors' births and deaths, dates of composition of works or dates when works were performed or published. In this book I emphasize texts rather than authors' lives, and consequently use dates of

texts rather than biographical dates. Other kinds of dates may also be relevant – for instance, the date of the introduction of actresses or the dates of various Licensing Acts – but they are more sporadically, less systematically so.

The question remains of whether to use dates of composition or dates of publication. In some literary histories, this would be a minor issue, since the two dates would rarely differ by more than a few years. In dealing with Restoration and eighteenth-century women writers, however, it is a major issue. Memoirs, letters, and journals are important forms in this period, and much of women's best and least self-censored writing was in these forms. Frequently, this life writing was not published until long after the author's death, often not until the early nineteenth century, and in some cases, not until the twentieth. Lucy Hutchinson's *Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, for instance, could not have been published in the Restoration when she wrote it because she expressed the point of view of the parliamentary party that had lost the Civil War. It was not published until 1806. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Embassy Letters*, written between 1716 and 1718, were not published until shortly after her death in 1763. The bluestocking correspondence of Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Carter, and Catharine Talbot was not published until Carter's nephew, the Reverend Montagu Pennington, published some of Carter's letters in his *Memoirs* of her life in 1807, followed by four volumes of *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Talbot* in 1809, then three volumes of Carter/Montagu letters in 1817. Abigail Adams's brilliant letters to her husband John while he was away at the Continental Congress between 1774 and 1776 could have been used in treason prosecutions against either of them; they were not published until 1840.

The problem of choosing between a chronology of dates of publication and one of dates of composition for this history of women's writing is, therefore, a difficult one. In general, in this period, writing that had impact and influence was published writing – or, in the case of drama, produced writing. In so far as literary history is significantly and legitimately concerned with contemporary impact and influence, to prefer dates of publication over dates of composition makes sense. Nevertheless, it is true that, even in the later eighteenth century, some writers were, at least in limited circles, known to be talented writers on the evidence of manuscript circulation.[18] The later historian, Catharine Macaulay, knew the manuscript of Hutchinson's *Life* and tried to have it published in the second half of the eighteenth century, but failed. The contemporary reputations of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Elizabeth Carter, and Elizabeth Montagu

depended in part on a limited circulation of their manuscript poems and letters. Given that so much good writing was not published until so long after composition, I have preferred to make my chronology one of dates of composition. (Of course, particularly in the case of volumes of poems, we are unsure of precise dates of composition of individual poems and may be forced to rely on the date of publication as a rough indicator of latest possible date of composition.) This choice of a chronology of date of composition has the additional advantage of allowing me to treat in the same chapter texts published many years apart but produced under and responding to the same historical circumstances, for instance, in chapter one, on 1660–89, Margaret Cavendish's *Life of the Duke of Newcastle* (1667) and Hutchinson's *Life of Colonel Hutchinson* (1806).

TEXTS

Much important recent work on the literary history of this period has explored the history of the book trade, the forms of literary patronage, reception history, and the economic and cultural position of authors. For example, Cheryl Turner, in *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (1992), offered a catalogue of women's fiction, explored how much income women novelists were able to make, considered their relationships with their publishers, and described modes of readers' access to women's fiction. Turner's work has now been supplemented by further data in the impressive bibliographies compiled by James Raven and his collaborators, most recently, *The English Novel, 1770–1829. A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles* (2000). Robert Hume and Judith Milhous have compiled and analyzed data on "Playwrights' Remuneration in Eighteenth-Century London" (1999). Catherine Gallagher in *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (1994) looked at the careers of five women novelists and their textual self-representations to argue that the "the apparent negativity in the rhetoric of these women writers – their emphasis on disembodiment, dispossession, and debt – points not to disabling self-doubts but to an important source of their creativity, a fertile emptiness at the heart of eighteenth-century authorship."[19] Dustin Griffin in *Literary Patronage in England, 1650–1800* (1996) showed that patronage, even in traditional forms, continued to have some importance in writers' careers well after the appearance of commercial booksellers and their apparent hegemony in the literary marketplace.

This work on literary history has been useful to me; however, in this book, I have chosen to use this sort of literary history as background and to foreground texts written by women. To focus attention on these texts, every chapter begins with a list of the principal texts to be considered. The kind of literary history I write here is a subspecies of the history of art, a history in which what ultimately matters is the achievement of works of art: songs and symphonies for music history, paintings and pagodas for art history, poems and plays for literary history. In a literary history of women's writing, it is not enough to chronicle and to sympathize with women's sufferings under patriarchy; women writers must be judged by what they accomplished in their writing. To a significant extent, histories of an art describe and characterize the works that are their subjects. In some such histories, readers can be assumed to be familiar with the works and sheer description is less important than I believe it to be in my history, where, in part because this canon is so mobile and emerging, a good number of the works I consider are likely to be unfamiliar, even to specialists in the field. Given the unfamiliarity of some of these works, I have also quoted from them more liberally than is usual in literary histories, in part so that the reader might have some direct experience of their styles.

Perkins observes that one of traditional literary history's problems with narrative is that passages of analysis of particular texts slow down and interrupt its narratives. Whereas in a social history documents have importance as sources and evidence, in an history of an art form, works have an independent value as aesthetic objects. Thus, "they must be described in and for themselves."[20] The literary historian wants to describe the work, to give it an appropriate explanatory context, to suggest why it deserves the reader's appreciation, and what significance it has in the history of literature. There is, as Perkins points out, an inevitable tension between, on the one hand, the need to consider the work for its own sake and to offer literary criticism of it, and, on the other hand, the need to advance the larger narrative lines of the literary history. To go too far in the first direction of treating individual works for their own sakes risks hopelessly fragmenting the narrative, even swamping any possible narrative line.

Yet to neglect to treat works for their own sakes, however much it might enable a narrative line to proceed uninterrupted, has, I think, worse perils. A literary history without appreciative literary criticism, especially one like this that considers many texts not established in the literary canon, will fail to answer the question of why its texts matter, why they

deserve to be the subjects of a literary history. Both Spencer's *Rise of the Woman Novelist* and Todd's *Sign of Angellica* succeed in part because of the quality of the literary criticism they offer. Similarly, a literary history that moves very quickly from one text to another, barely pausing for consideration of any of them, risks becoming a deadening list. At best, it may only be intelligible to the few readers who already have most of the works with which it deals fully present in their minds. I have, therefore, chosen to risk erring on the side of injuring the narrative line by the interruption of passages considering particular texts.

I have generally used the form of the text that appeared in its first edition. That is not the convention of most literary history, which typically deals with more established canonical authors and uses modern scholarly editions. For Restoration and eighteenth-century women writers, there are often no scholarly editions, and when these are available, they have often been prepared according to widely divergent principles. A few offer non-modernized texts, many offer partially modernized texts, and some have been aggressively modernized. The alternatives, when available, are likely to include modern reprints of late or collected editions, modernized editions, or editions prepared for classroom use. One reason I have here preferred to use first editions is that the first edition best supports my intent to capture chronological periods. The first-edition text normally best displays the author's intention and meaning closest to the date of composition and it shows us what the text was at the moment of its initial reception. For example, in Hannah Cowley's comedy *Which is the Man?* (1782), produced shortly after the British loss of the War of American Independence, a character declares that "intrepid spirit, nice honour, generosity, and understanding" are the crucial characteristics of a soldier. He goes on to say, in the first edition, "It is these which will make the British soldier once again the first character in Europe – It is such soldiers who must make England once again invincible, and her glittering arms triumphant in every quarter of the globe." Later editions, including the one used for the modern reprint of Cowley's plays, drop the awareness of defeat, printing "It is these which make the British soldier the first character in Europe – It is such soldiers who make England invincible, and her glittering arms triumphant in every quarter of the globe." Paratextual material – including dedications, prefaces, commendatory verse, prologues and epilogues to plays – especially valuable to the literary historian, is often altered or dropped entirely from subsequent editions, including some scholarly editions.

Moreover, most authors in this period, certainly most women authors, expected their printers to make needed corrections in manuscript copy

and to impose a correct contemporary style on the text. Conventions of grammar, style, and spelling change significantly between 1660 and 1789. To cite texts from a combination of modern scholarly editions when available, first editions when they were the only edition available, late corrected editions, and modernized editions would be to introduce adventitious elements that made the styles of writers contemporary with each other appear more different from one another than they were. Some writers, like Behn, who have become familiar to many readers in modernized editions might seem more accessible in this form, but that accessibility is an artifact of editing that, in the context of this literary history, makes a spurious difference between such writers and their immediate contemporaries. To cite from first-edition texts gives the highest available level of confidence that what I claim was in a printed text as of a particular date actually was in it. This has perhaps been of special importance in considering poetry and what was characteristic of the poets. Since we have often come to know poets through collected works or, still more often, anthologies, the dates of individual poems, the sequence of publication of poems, and the range of kinds of poems the poet attempted often escape us. In this book, I have usually considered the first editions of volumes of poems, devoting some attention to the poetic personae the volume offers. Not surprisingly, I have been struck by the skewing effects of modern principles of anthologizing. To read these collections in their entirety reminds one that poems of feminist protest, fond as we are of them now, are rare compared to translations, occasional poems of compliment, and religious poems.

There are, of course, some disadvantages to citing texts in their first editions. Many of these women were not well served by their original printers and some of the texts contain significant numbers of errors, obvious and otherwise. I have addressed this disadvantage by emending errors in passages quoted, as though I were making a modern scholarly, nonnormalized critical edition of the passage. Any such emendations are indicated in the note on the passage. As I noted in discussing my choice of a chronological method of organization, some of my texts were not published until long after they were written; some, like the letters of Carter, in early nineteenth-century editions were probably heavily edited and even probably expurgated. Many of these manuscripts have disappeared. Ideally, consistent with my general method here, I would like to have consulted surviving manuscripts for those texts that were not published until long after their composition. However, in a book ranging as widely as this one does, that seemed an impracticable counsel of

perfection, so I have settled for the best available printed edition in these cases.

More practically, readers may find my citations from first editions less convenient than citations from more available modern editions. I have had the very considerable advantage and pleasure of being able to read most of these texts in the form of the physical book first editions, mainly at the Houghton Library, and am convinced that the evidence of the physical book is valuable for the literary historian. The splendid magnificence of the large quarto first edition of Carter's *All the Works of Epictetus* dramatically contrasts with the awkward typography and cheap paper of the first edition of Mary Rowlandson's *True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, reminding us of the cultural centrality of the former and the provincial marginality of the latter. The elegant printing of the five volumes of Burney's *Cecilia* shows that more had been invested in this book that in the typical novel of the day. Readers with less direct access to first editions, happily, are likely to have access to Wing microfilm of works between 1660 and 1700 and to a variety of online resources, including those of the Brown Women Writers' Project and the Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Some may also be able to use the microfilm in the Eighteenth Century series, which now offers a staggering range of titles, including almost every first edition I have had occasion to seek for in it. Moreover, convenient as our modern printed editions often are, ever since printed editions of these women writers began to appear in the 1970s, feminist teachers and readers have constantly lamented the speed with which they have subsequently gone out of print. We do need more nonmodernized scholarly editions of these texts and I have profited from those that are available. The reader will find a list of recommended modern editions on pp. 491–95.

PLOT

What, though, is the narrative line of this book? Perkins wryly suggests that there are essentially only three standard plots for literary histories: "rise, decline, and rise and decline."[21] The rise plot has understandably been the most popular. In national literary histories, it often becomes the rise of a particular people to the full expression of their national essence. This was the original plot of nineteenth-century German literary history and it continues to be an obsession in American literary history. In eighteenth-century studies, Ian Watt gave the rise plot an exceptionally influential presentation in *The Rise of the English Novel* (1957). Jane

Spencer's *Rise of the Woman Novelist* uses a similar plot, albeit one with an important qualification.

Significantly for the purposes of my book, since I consider both the novel and drama, the usual plot of histories of the drama from 1660 to 1789 is a decline plot, the opposite of the standard rise plot for the novel. Beginning with the brilliance and wit of Restoration comedy, the eighteenth-century drama succumbs to turgid tragedy and maudlin sentiment. Not only is this a general plot for drama history in this period, it is also the plot of the most recent literary history of women dramatists in this period, Margarite Rubik's *Early Women Dramatists, 1500–1800* (1998).

Focusing not so much on texts as on cultural ideas about women writers and women writers' ideas about themselves as writers, Norma Clarke has most recently narrated what she sees as *The Rise and Fall of the Woman of Letters* (2004) between 1660 and 1800. Clarke finds the Restoration and early eighteenth century more hospitable to women writers than the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. She argues that even though the number of women writers increased, "prescriptive models of femininity hardened" and the definition of "serious authorship rapidly narrowed to exclude all but the male of the species."[22]

In so far as a literary history selects a particular *terminus ad quem* as the climactic state of affairs to be explained – and, usually, also celebrated – it will organize the narrative teleologically to explain how that point got reached. Perkins finds such teleological narrative organization disturbing in part because it seems to him reductive and in part because emplotment "activates archetypal emotions," setting up partisan enthusiasm for one genre versus another or one literary generation versus another in a way Perkins thinks is "uncritical."[23] Certainly admirers of eighteenth-century literature have often objected to the ways in which partisans of romanticism have characterized eighteenth-century literature in their literary histories.

I agree with Perkins that narrative is the logical form for literary history and that the chronological boundaries selected will profoundly shape particular narratives. But I think he worries excessively about reductionism and partisanship. Narrative of rise, decline, or rise and decline need not be simplistic, either in general history or in literary history. Consider, for example, George Sherburn and Donald Bond's volume covering 1660–1789 in *A Literary History of England*, edited by Albert C. Baugh.[24] Sherburn and Bond elected a plot of rise and fall, the rise of classicism and its disintegration. They clearly prefer classicism to sentimentalism, so the volume has an elegiac rather than a celebratory tone. Yet their rise and fall

plot affords a very useful organizing principle and a nicely dramatic sense of the significant, without, I think, being unduly constraining. It also works well with their continuous attention to literary criticism being written during their period, a relatively unusual but suitably historical feature of their work, and one that I have imitated.

Inevitably, a major line of my plot is a change from the Restoration, when a woman playwright or a woman poet seemed a striking anomaly, to the late eighteenth century, when writing had become a more available career for literate women and when women were fairly widely accepted as writers in certain genres. Significant events in this plot line include the performances in 1662/3 of Katherine Philips's *Pompey*, the first play by a woman performed on the British public stage, as well as Behn's subsequent and greater success in having fifteen of her plays produced on the London public stage. In 1660, the overwhelming majority of Englishmen and Englishwomen believed that women lacked the intellectual and artistic capacities to become writers. Because this belief inhibited literary ambition in women, the early feminist arguments of Mary Astell and Judith Drake about women's intellectual capacities – and their practical advice about how women might educate themselves – were crucial contributions helping to embolden later women writers. Astell's move making it a Protestant woman's religious duty to cultivate her mind, to think critically about her culture, and perhaps subsequently to publish her conclusions contributed to emboldening first some writers who immediately followed her and then the later bluestockings, all the way to Hannah More.

Chapter one, "Public women, 1660–1689," opens at the Restoration of Charles II to the English throne after the Civil War and interregnum and closes at the end of Stuart rule and the death of Behn, the most important and conspicuously public woman writer of the Restoration. Behn adapted a courtly, secular, libertine poetic and dramatic tradition to her own purposes, positioning herself in a predominantly male London literary culture. Because women writers were still so anomalous, we want to understand what prompted the few women who did emerge as writers to do so. One important motive that prompted both royalists like Cavendish and supporters of Parliament like Hutchinson to write was the desire to record what they believed to be crucial historical truths about the tumultuous revolution and counterrevolution through which they and their husbands had lived. As had been the case during the Interregnum, Protestant religious conviction led even more women to write prayers, devotions, meditations, religious poetry, and, sometimes, narratives of

persecution or pamphlets of religious controversy. At the colonial margins of British culture, men were eager to promote the publication of the work of the American Anne Bradstreet, who ardently denounced cavalier debauchery and irreligion, as evidence of the high level of piety and civilization the Puritan colonists had achieved in New England. This desire on the part of competing cultural groups to produce a public woman representative of their position continued to be a significant dynamic encouraging the publication of women's work.

Chapter two, "Partisans of virtue and religion, 1689–1702," covers the reign of William and Mary, whose assertively Protestant court encouraged religious, philosophical, and social reform movements attacking libertinism. The most systematic of the new feminist philosophers, Astell, refuted the idea that women were by nature intellectually inferior to men, rejected the established misogynistic ideas that silence was a woman's rhetoric, and argued that an enlightened understanding was the best basis for virtuous conduct. As Astell, Damaris Cudworth Masham, and Catharine Trotter all appreciated, the rejection of scholasticism and the appeals to reason in the new philosophies of René Descartes, Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, and John Locke minimized the disadvantages from which women had suffered because of their lack of access to advanced formal education. Astell's model, yoking together women's demand for better education, women's duty to develop themselves spiritually and intellectually, and women's obligation to participate in the reform of society, had great ideological strength. It could reassure women of the legitimacy of their aspirations despite the scorn that continued to be directed at those aspirations and it established alliances between women and churches that allowed women to appropriate some institutional resources to their own causes. In the theatre, Trotter offered a reformed tragedy and Mary Pix contributed to a newly moral and sentimental comedy. In poetry, Rowe was an important part of a movement that challenged French neoclassical orthodoxy by arguing for the superiority of biblical poetry and increasing the aesthetic appreciation of biblical poetry.

Chapter three, "Politics, gallantry, and ladies in the reign of Queen Anne, 1702–1714," covers the reign of Queen Anne, a period when the rise of Whig and Tory political parties and their importance as new patrons of writing made it seem, briefly, as though women as well as men might become political writers. Delarivière Manley's scandal chronicles, written for the Tories, made an important intervention in the development of realist fiction by representing in recognizable ways unidealized contemporary characters and their actions. However, as the playwright Susanna

Centlivre, a Whig partisan, observed, it soon enough became clear that since the most valuable reward of political writing, political office, was not available to women, women might be better advised to shift their attention to other forms. Queen Anne's championing of the party of virtue further emboldened Astell and her admirer, Lady Mary Chudleigh, whose poetry and prose also embrace the study of the new science as a way to enhance humankind's appreciation of the creation and the Creator.

At a time when the sharp politicization of writing also prompted the development of a counter discourse of at least ostensibly nonpolitical belles lettres, polite male gallantry seemed to celebrate the accomplishments of women writers: *Miscellanies* typical of the period offered poems and letters of men and women in single volumes, including male compliments to women. However, as Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, and other women poets noticed, the conventions of male gallantry made it impossible for women so complimented to have any real knowledge of what their male colleagues thought of their work. Gallantry itself, viewed by most women writers with suspicion, became an important subject.

In Chapter four, "Battle joined, 1715–1737," we come to the early Hanoverian years when the monarch and the court lose cultural centrality to the more raucous and democratic worlds of party politics and the commercial marketplace. The triumph of satire over panegyric in this period encouraged women writers like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Elizabeth Thomas, and Mary Davys to develop their own critiques of masculine authority and to ridicule forms of masculinity and prestigious individual men. Such satire made masculine authority less awe-inspiring, less terrifying, and prepared women to challenge it. More soberly, Rowe campaigned against libertinism in widely read and admired poetry and prose; in her epic *Joseph* she used biblical history to develop a narrative of heroic chastity. Rowe also further developed the seventeenth-century tradition of meditative poetry, adapting it in ways that made it valued by religious readers. The chapter ends in 1737, simultaneously the date of the death of Rowe and the date of the Licensing Act, in which the government recognized the power of satire by giving the Lord Chamberlain the power of preproduction censorship over plays.

As the burgeoning commercial market created new opportunities for women writers like Eliza Haywood, elite male writers worried about women's increasingly significant challenges to the male monopoly on literary representation and market share. Haywood's success in publishing a large number of novels and in following in the tradition of Behn and Manley that grounded the authority of the woman writer in her superior

knowledge of love contributed both to normalizing the idea of the woman writer and to reinforcing a troubling association between the woman writer and transgressive sexuality. Because the new empirical philosophy valued individual experience as a source of knowledge and because the commercial market valued novelty, women claiming to represent their own experience and middling-class provincial writers representing developing cities and towns had new opportunities. Thus, Mary Chandler, a Bath milliner, succeeded with wry poems alluding to her spinsterhood and her life in trade and with a major loco-descriptive poem on Bath celebrating the contemporary town with journalistic detail and an enthusiasm that promoted tourism.

Chapter five, "Women as members of the literary family, 1737–1756," considers a time when developing sentimental culture was celebrating the properly hierarchical family as the source of highest human pleasure and the basis for right social order. A good number of women writers found acceptance by playing the roles of daughter, sister, or wife to literary men. So long as they confined themselves to less prestigious literary forms and to opinions considered appropriate for women, earlier male hostility modulated to ostensibly friendly correction and assistance and they could hope for a measure of acceptance. Sarah Fielding, assisted by her brother Henry and by Samuel Richardson, and Charlotte Lennox, playing the role of daughter to Samuel Johnson, were able to establish significant and respectable literary careers. Such relations with male mentors and patrons, however, often entailed tension and conflict, as Sarah Fielding's often bitter exploration of the horrors of dependence and the psychodynamics of relationships of domination and subordination reveals.

As the gendered division of literary labor became more pronounced, women increasingly claimed special authority on women, on children, and on matters domestic. Thus, we find Haywood turning to writing conduct books, *The Wife* and *The Husband*, Fielding writing *The Governess* for children, and Hannah Glasse becoming celebrated as the author of a cookbook. For the mid eighteenth century, servants were also part of the family. Mary Leapor claimed some cultural authority based on her occupational experience as a servant and her willingness to represent household labor in poetry that asserted its value.

Developing earlier ideas from classical Platonism and Cambridge Neoplatonism, the philosophers Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson, and David Hume offered new, more secular, ideas about a "moral sense." A new philosophical insistence that feeling has a key role in morality and moral discourse was a foundation of the emphasis

on feeling in the literature of sensibility. In *Felicia to Charlotte*, a novel of ideas announcing its indebtedness to Shaftesbury, Mary Collyer reimagines the amatory novel as the novel of sensibility. Collyer rejected the novel of intrigue for epistolary fiction valuing psychology over plot and offered dramatic demonstrations of filial piety and family feeling as crucial marks of human worth. Like Collyer, Lennox also constructed a new woman's fiction against the amatory novel, and, in *The Female Quixote*, also against the scandal chronicle, importantly intervening in the contemporary debate about what kinds of narratives deserve to be stigmatized as trifling and false and what kinds ought to be celebrated as true histories.

While domestic writers celebrated the possibilities of happiness in the family, Con Phillips, Lady Frances Vane, Laetitia Pilkington, and Charlotte Charke continued a more defiant tradition of women's writing. Fusing autobiography with the scandal chronicle Manley had made infamous, these memoirists, women who had lost their reputations for chastity and respectability, challenged the emerging ideology of the sentimental family as ensuring love and protection for women. Daughter of Colley Cibber, Charke tells a tale of a father's plans for his daughter's imitating his own theatrical success gone horribly wrong. Pilkington narrates the advantages she gained by becoming a surrogate daughter, first to Jonathan Swift and later to the elderly Cibber.

For groups subordinated by gender or class, the cultivation of sentiment potentially offered more democratic ideas of human worth against which the privileged might be judged and found wanting. Yet uncritical celebration of tenderness and "natural" feeling in the family threatened to become a disabling orthodoxy, replacing more strenuous older religious and ethical conceptions of duty with less thoughtful, more psychologically ensnaring reverence for pity and "natural" affection.

Chapter six, "Bluestockings and sentimental writers," takes us from the beginning of the Seven Years War in 1756 to the beginning of the War of American Independence in 1776. As the great historical events of the Civil War had prompted some women to record their experiences of them, so now English women at home showed their patriotic engagement in national struggles and debates; many found the model of imperial Rome an exciting and appealing paradigm for what Britain was becoming. In contrast, Abigail Adams, writing in colonial Massachusetts, was inspired by the model of republican Rome and determined to sacrifice her private comforts to what she understood to be the stringent demands of public good. History, revivified by enlightenment experiments in philosophical

history, and energized by public debates over constitutional questions and comparisons of empires, became a dominant literary mode. Macaulay's ambitious *History of England*, concentrating on the seventeenth century, reflected her original research and linked the seventeenth-century conflicts over the constitution and civil liberties to her advocacy of freedom of speech and freedom of the press in the political contests of the 1760s and 1770s.

The bluestocking writers – including Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Carter, Hester Chapone, Hannah More, and Sarah Scott – continued Astell's campaign to insist that women were capable of serious intellectual work. They encouraged women to read serious books, to engage in strenuous intellectual and moral reflection, and to give of their time and money to charity. Like Astell too they maintained that women's cultivation of their reason was the best guarantor of women's virtue. Elizabeth Montagu, the so-called "Queen of the Blues," established an important salon where men and women, English people and foreigners, aristocrats and talented people of the gentry and middling classes, all gathered for conversation that was designed to promote, even create, refined sociability and knowledge. Her salons, and similar ones presided over by Elizabeth Vesey and Hester Thrale, were quasi-public spaces that allowed the *salonnière* to display her own intelligence and literary acumen and to become the patroness of less economically privileged women writers. The letters between Montagu and Carter, one of the women writers she benefited, show the writers overcoming some barriers of wealth and class and using the familiar letter as a discursive space to create a mutually reinforcing female community. Montagu's *Essay on the Writing and Genius of Shakespear* demonstrated the impact of historicist thinking on literary criticism and represented Montagu's bid for female literary critical authority. Carter's translation from the Greek of *All the Works of Epictetus* made English people feel that they had finally produced a female scholar to rival the famous French Anne Dacier. Her success with a challenging classical philosophical text struck many as surprising evidence of female intellectual capacity.

The bluestockings were not much interested in novels, but by this time the total number of novels and the number produced by women writers were both increasing significantly. Between 1756 and 1776 identifiable women writers published about eighty-seven novels. Most of these were sentimental domestic novels, pledged to advance sentimental versions of the cause of virtue, often influenced by Richardson. Both in sentimental fiction and in sentimental comedy, writers attempted to edify their

audiences with articulations of the moral maxims contemporaries described as "delicate sentiments" and to engage and to please them with spectacles of virtue in distress. In the optimistic and most characteristic versions of the sentimental plot, female virtue has a power to reform erring men. In bleaker versions of the plot, like Sheridan's *Sidney Bidulph*, often focusing on marriage rather than courtship, a virtuous woman demonstrates both her capacity for suffering and a remarkable capacity for complex moral reflection, yet her virtue has very limited power to affect the world. The conventions of these sentimental novels generally confine respectable women within narrow domestic spheres and strict conventions of conduct, but these conventions are to a significant extent an artifact of the novel rather than realistic representations of women's experience, as is evident from women's writing in other forms.

Chapter seven, "Romance and comedy, 1777–1789," begins with the imperial crisis of the War of American Independence and ends just before the beginning of the French Revolution, a common marker for the beginning of Romanticism. After 1776, American women writers are no longer part of British literary history. British defeat in the War of American Independence intensified concerns over the remaining parts of empire, including the West Indies and India. Women writers engaged in debates over slavery and over whether imported wealth from India was a sign of refined civilization or a sign of dangerous luxury and corruption marking imperial decline. Heightened interest in the representation of place, in part a result of exposure to abundant news of foreign wars and colonial issues, prompted elaborate representations of place across genres and repeated efforts to articulate what was distinctive about British places.

As modern historiography turned to investigate the Middle Ages, scholars and critics complicated the idea that romance was a mode of the ideal and the imaginary. Romance, it now appeared, contained important truths about the history of modern European nations, and romance as a mode was not so firmly tied to "early" civilizations as enlightenment proponents of stadial theories of progress had maintained. Paradoxically, in this period romance permits invocations of history against the emergent authority of literary realism, even in a utopian romance like Lady Mary Walker's *Munster Village*. Profiting from the new historical scholarship, Clara Reeve in *The Progress of Romance* intervened in the developing history of prose fiction to argue against the idea that romance is merely a superstitious or primitive mode that ought properly to be replaced by realism. Experiments with historical romance, including Reeve's *Champion of Virtue*, set in the time of the Crusades, were harbingers of Radcliffe's gothic

romance and Sir Walter Scott's historical romance. Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline: The Orphan of the Castle* used romance to continue the project of redefining heroinism, transforming older versions of female heroinism from seventeenth-century French romance and the popular romance of Behn and Manley. Her Emmeline is a modern girl, chaste, sentimental, devoted to the aesthetics of rural landscape, and most remarkable for her charitableness. Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* transforms something as apparently unexotic as the rural Suffolk landscape of her own childhood into an idealized pastoral romance, now seen by the melancholy adult poet as hopelessly distant. Smith's *Sonnets* helps explain how earlier romance and sensibility are transformed into what we now recognize as the "romantic."

While both the underlying philosophy of sentimentalism and its literary conventions continued to compel considerable allegiance, writers also attacked what they considered sentimentalism's fallacies and sentimentalism's clichés. Comic conventions, which sanction irreverence, provided welcome opportunities to puncture the more tired and deadening assumptions of sentiment, including its assumptions about female docility, modesty, and delicacy. Building on Centlivre's accomplishments, Hannah Cowley reveled in topicality and in energetic, colorful dialogue remote from the frequently dull abstractions of sentimentality. She used her dramatist's talent for creating sympathy for contradictory positions to reveal how contested and contradictory the new paradigms of femininity were. Elizabeth Inchbald mixed a reformist sentimental comedy, one that took advantage of late eighteenth-century expressive acting styles, with a lower kind of laughing, even satiric, comedy. Cowley and Inchbald were sufficiently unafraid of vulgarity that they were willing to write farce as well as main-piece comedy and to include farcical elements in their main pieces. In fiction, Frances Burney's comic genius provided readers with a Dickensian plenitude of comic characters. For all the timidity Burney recorded in her journals, her ambitious novel *Cecilia* offered an omniscient narrator whose shrewd analysis of the foibles of her society reminds us that comedy depends upon a writer's willingness to judge as well as to laugh. In a different way, Hester Thrale Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the Life of Samuel Johnson* demonstrated the importance of the anti-authoritarian stance of comedy for the woman writer. Thrale Piozzi made Johnson into a complex comic character who strikingly evinces the human capacity for irrationality and self-delusion.

By 1789 women writers had become a normal, albeit minority, part of literary production. Between 1777 and 1789, for example, thirty-two plays by women were produced on the public stages and about 224 novels by

women were published. More women – including Burney, Cowley, Inchbald, and Smith – now had substantial and celebrated literary careers lasting decades. While some women writers continued to come from the aristocracy and the gentry, increasingly women from the middling ranks, especially those from families of knowledge workers like teachers and booksellers, established themselves as writers. More women also took on the literary authority entailed in editing, anthologizing, reviewing, and writing literary biography and literary criticism. At the same time, most women writers still experienced considerable anxiety that their literary ambitions might somehow unsex them and engaged in self-censorship that constricted or weakened their work. Some took on the task of policing other women to keep them within the narrowed constraints of proper contemporary feminine domesticity. Our story of the rise of the woman writer is, therefore, bittersweet.

CHAPTER 1

Public women: the Restoration to the death of Aphra Behn, 1660–1689

TEXTS

(place of publication is London, unless otherwise indicated; dates and places of performance are given for plays).

1662 Katharine Evans. *This is the Short Relation of some of the Cruel Suffering (For Truth's Sake) of Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, in the Inquisition in the Isle of Malta*

1662/3 Katherine Philips. *Pompey, a Tragœdy* (Dublin, performed; 1663 printed Dublin and London)

1666 Margaret Fell Fox. *Women's Speaking Justified, proved and allowed of by the Scripture*

1666 Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle. *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy + The Description of a New Blazing World*

1667 Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle. *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince William Cavendishe, Duke, Marquess, and Earl of Newcastle*

1664–71 (written) (published 1806). Lucy Hutchinson, *The Life of Colonel Hutchinson*

1667 Katherine Philips. *Poems. By the Most deservedly Admired Mrs. Katherine Philips, The Matchless Orinda . . .*

1677 Aphra Behn. *The Rover: or, the Banish't Cavaliers* (Dorset Garden)

1678 (Boston). [Anne Bradstreet], *Several Poems: Compiled with great Variety of Wit and Learning*

1682 (Boston) Mary Rowlandson. *The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, Together, With the faithfulness of his Promises Displayed; Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*; *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, A Minister's Wife in New England* (London)

1684 Aphra Behn. *Poems upon Several Occasions: With a Voyage to the Island of Love*

1687 Aphra Behn. *The Emperor of the Moon. A Farce* (Dorset Garden)

1688 Aphra Behn. *The Fair Jilt: or, the History of Prince Tarquin and Miranda*

1688 Aphra Behn. *Oronooko, or, the Royal Slave. A True History*

INTRODUCTION

Englishwomen alive to witness the Restoration of King Charles II to the throne in 1660 knew that they lived in remarkable times. Charles's father, Charles I, had lost a civil war, suffered imprisonment, and then been tried and executed in 1649 by the interregnum Parliament for treason against the people. Men and women nevertheless loyal to the Crown found it difficult to live under the government of the parliamentary "usurpers." Some suffered punishment for engaging in conspiracy against the new government, some had their property confiscated and sequestered, some went into exile on the continent. Then, in 1660, when the revolution failed and a counterrevolution succeeded in restoring a king to the English throne, it was the turn of those who had supported Parliament to experience repression and – sometimes – imprisonment and exile.

Women who lived through these dramatic reversals found it much less possible than usual to rely on custom to order their conduct or to direct their obedience to authority. During the interregnum, those royalists loyal to the House of Stuart despite Parliament's revolution found themselves in some degree of opposition to government, no matter how conservative they were inclined to be. Some royalist women negotiated with parliamentary committees of sequestration in hopes of regaining part of their families' confiscated estates. One such royalist woman, Margaret Cavendish, in London during the interregnum to negotiate with a committee of sequestration, observed women preachers; she disapproved of them, yet the phenomena of women preaching and publishing during the interregnum helped to suggest possibilities even for royalist women like Cavendish. Ironically, the fact of dissenting women's public voices helped to legitimate royalist women's developing public voices to rebut and denounce parliamentary or dissenting women and to proclaim their own loyalty to monarchy.

A few royalist women joined the royalist underground during the interregnum, working as subversive spies. One, Lady Anne Halkett, wrote a memoir of her adventures. The highlight of her secret career was aiding in the 1648 royalist rescue of James, the Duke of York, from captivity. She procures a dress of "mixt mohaire" with scarlet "under petticoate" for him

to wear as a disguise. Lady Anne gets the appropriate measurements, orders the garment from her own tailor (who is compliant but puzzled by the measurements since "hee had never seene any woman of so low a stature have so big a waist"), produces the garment, then waits at a safe house to dress the Duke before he sets sail at Gravesend.[1]

Women from families discontented with the monarchy were still more apt to live dislocated lives. Even before the Civil War broke out in 1642, some Puritan families had already immigrated to America. Women from these families, notably Anne Bradstreet and Mary Rowlandson, became significant British colonial writers whose works were read in America and in England. In England, after the Restoration of Charles II, some women who had been loyal to Parliament's rebellion against the King continued to defend the "good old cause"; some chose active opposition or subversion. Lucy Hutchinson's enduring narrative of her husband's support of Parliament and his imprisonment after the Restoration could not be published during her lifetime, although it survived and made its way into print in 1806 after the intense political passions of the late seventeenth century had finally cooled.

QUAKER WOMEN, RELIGIOUS WOMEN

Both during the interregnum and after the Restoration, Quaker women were especially eager to publish pamphlets proclaiming their versions of the gospel, their visions, their advice about the right ordering of the world, and the histories of their preaching and persecution. The Quakers were prominent among the several Protestant sects that had listened to women preachers and prophets during the Civil War.[2] Shortly after the Restoration, Margaret Fell, a Quaker leader, met personally with Charles II; she published her appeal to the King and Parliament, insisting on the Quakers' peaceableness, defending their refusal to take oaths or pay tithes, and asking for an end to legal penalties against members of the sect.[3] Almost 40 percent of all the first editions of books and pamphlets published by women between 1660 and 1690 were religious writings by Quaker women.[4] Some Quaker women published narratives of their missionary work not only in England, but also in America, the Caribbean, Europe, and beyond. In 1664, in prison, Fell published her pamphlet, *Women's Speaking Justified*, rebutting the conventional interpretations of biblical texts like 1 Corinthians 14: 34, "Let your women keep silence in the church." She argued that men and women inspired by Christ were equally entitled, indeed, equally obliged, to proclaim the truths of the

spirit. After her marriage to George Fox in 1669, she continued to publish and to do important work in the movement. From 1671, Fell Fox organized separate women's meetings at which women worshipped and spoke, collected money, administered charity, disciplined members, and judged the suitability of marriages. This Quaker tradition of empowering women as speakers and activists for righteousness and justice explains the dramatic overrepresentation of Quaker women – including Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, and Sarah and Angelina Grimké – as leaders of the nineteenth-century abolitionist and women's suffrage campaigns.

Although many of the Quaker (or Anabaptist) women's pamphlets – like those of their male coreligionists – are not likely to appeal to the general reader today, some of Margaret Fell's arguments for women's entitlement to speak on religious matters are repeated by later Church of England women and become grounds of entitlement for women to speak and write within Protestant Christianity. Occasionally the narratives of the female Quakers descend sufficiently from abstract prophecy and hermeneutical casuistry to offer vivid glimpses of the inspired and extraordinarily adventurous lives they led.

Among the most remarkable of these Quaker narratives is *This is the Short Relation of some of the Cruel Sufferings (For Truth's Sake) of Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, in the Inquisition in the Isle of Malta* (1662). Evans and Cheevers had set out to proclaim the gospel to the inhabitants of Alexandria, Egypt, when they were delayed, imprisoned, and threatened with death in the cells of the Catholic Inquisition in Malta. Evans recounts their suffering, fasting, and the visions that sustain her resistance. She also makes clear the grounds upon which she is able to ignore the authority of the learned clerics who try to persuade both women that they are too ignorant and too foolish to decide doctrinal matters for themselves. She rejects the inquisitors' construction of their bringing heretical books and papers with them as a crime by using a defense that resembles Milton's argument in *Areopagitica* (1644): "We said, if there were any thing in them that was not true, they might write against it."[5] The inquisitors in Malta, like other learned men of the day confronted with arguments from the unlettered, retort that "*they did scorn to write to fools and asses that did not know true Latine*." Hearing the voice of the Lord say to her, "Lift up your Voice like the noise of a Trumpet, *and sound forth my Truth like the shout of a King*," Evans is convinced that the Lord has authorized her speaking and writing and represents herself as continuing to debate with the inquisitors.[6] (These gentlemen seem to have little stomach for executing two foreign women, and eventually let

them go.) One of the inquisitors attempts to rebuke Evans by asking her why she does not work. She retorts boldly, "I said unto him, What Work dost thou do? he said he did write. I told him, I will write too, if he would bring me a Pen, Ink, and Paper; and I would write truth."[7] Much of the writing of late seventeenth-century women was prompted, not by aesthetic ambition, but by this impulse to write what they believed to be truths, most urgently, to record the truths of their own experiences and what they believed to be truths that men in positions of authority would not put in their records of the times.

While most of the women who wrote on religious, philosophical, or moral subjects in the late seventeenth century did not describe the extreme experiences of Evans and Cheevers, they drew similar inspiration from scripture and religion. Even if they were not Quakers who had visions and "inner light," they had strong Protestant religious feelings and personal religious convictions that sustained them against skeptics and scoffers. The increased availability of printed books of Psalms, prayers, devotional manuals, biblical commentary, and sermons encouraged lay people to develop their own religious lives, more independent of clergy, and provided models for pious women's imitation. Lady Anne Halkett, for instance, composed thousands of manuscript pages of religious meditations and biblical commentary for her own use.[8]

After the Restoration, upper-class Anglican women also began to take more prominent roles in religion, a number of them becoming celebrated for their piety, learning, and charity. Lady Dorothy Packington was famous for her learning and for establishing her home as a center for learned royalist clergy, including Bishop John Fell, Bishop John Pearson, and Richard Allestree.[9] Susannah Hopton anonymously published her *Daily Devotions, Consisting of Thanksgivings, Confessions, and Prayers . . .* In 1682 the *Meditations and Prayers* the Countess of Northumberland used for her personal devotion and her household worship were also published. Such Anglican women typically had close relationships with learned clergymen, who encouraged and assisted their study, recommended their conduct as models for imitation, and, sometimes, arranged for publication of their works and published biographical accounts of them, as George Hickes, the famous non-juring Bishop and Anglo-Saxon scholar did of Hopton.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of earnest Protestant Christianity throughout the Restoration and the eighteenth century as a motive for women writers deciding that they were required to reflect on their thoughts and experiences, take individual responsibility for the state of

their souls and the moral conduct of their lives, and, not infrequently, provide written accounts of their thoughts and deeds for audiences ranging from their own families to the entire world.

CIVIL WAR BIOGRAPHIES: CAVENDISH'S *LIFE OF WILLIAM CAVENDISHE*

Understanding how remarkable these revolutionary times were and wanting to record the events and deeds they had witnessed emboldened women to write in the years immediately following 1660. Royalists looked to the newly restored King with hope that he would do justice and bring about better, less troubled and divisive days. But if justice were to be done, either by the King or by posterity, the truth about people's conduct during the interregnum must be clearly put in the written record. Women who urgently wanted to record and to justify the conduct of their husbands, and, to a lesser extent, themselves, during the Civil War and in the confusing years that followed produced a remarkable group of biographies and memoirs: Lady Halkett, Alice Thornton, Lady Ann Fanshawe, Brilliana Harley, Margaret Cavendish, and Lucy Hutchinson.[10] None of these books has the magisterial sweep or the polished literary style of the Earl of Clarendon's royalist *History of the Rebellion* (1702–4), but each of them makes a unique contribution to reporting the experiences of individuals during a defining period of English history.

The only one of these books published during the Restoration was *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince, William Cavendishe, Duke, Marquess and Earl of Newcastle* (1667), by his wife, Margaret, the Duchess of Newcastle. The life of the Duke was a subject of considerable historical significance. Not only was he a great magnate of the north of England, but in 1642, as an Earl, he responded promptly to Charles I's request that he secure the town and port of Newcastle for the royalists; he then become general of the King's northern armies. He raised significant numbers of troops for the King, paying many of them himself, and contributed large sums of money to the royalist war effort. Almost as promptly as Newcastle responded to the King's commission, Parliament impeached him for treason. He had some military success in the north, for a time impeding the efforts of the Scots army to join with the English parliamentary forces against the King and preserving the city of York for the King. Catastrophe struck at the battle of Marston Moor in July 1644. Led by Prince Rupert and Newcastle, 18,000 royalist troops were defeated by 27,000 parliamentary and Scots troops; Prince Rupert's cavalry was for

the first time defeated by Cromwell's "Ironsides" and Parliament gained control of the north. Newcastle fought valiantly, personally leading troops on the field. Then, however, acting in a way that made his virtues debatable, he notified Prince Rupert that he intended personally to escape by taking a ship to Hamburg and did so. He spent the next sixteen years in exile on the continent with his wife, returning to England in 1660 with Charles II.

During the interregnum, Cavendish had already established herself as the first Englishwoman to publish extensively. The Newcastles paid printers to produce large folio volumes: *Poems and Fancies* (1653); *Philosophical Fancies* (1653), revised and expanded as *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655); *The World's Olio* (1655); and *Nature's Pictures Drawn by Fancy's Pencil to the Life* (1656). After the Restoration, Cavendish continued her brisk pace of publication, revising some of her earlier works, adding more speculations about natural philosophy, two collections of plays (1662, 1668), *Orations* (1662), and *Sociable Letters* (1666). Evidence suggests that the Duke adored his wife and encouraged her efforts at self-education and expression. Her volumes are prefaced by his commendatory poems praising her genius in extravagant terms. Indeed, not only was he her most ardent contemporary admirer, he may have been virtually her only sincere one.

Even the proud Duchess of Newcastle – who made hubris a virtue – had to recognize that she did not possess the ordinary qualifications of an historian who proposed to address a great period of national history. In all her works she is exquisitely self-conscious about the issue of her authority to write on the subjects she has proposed. One of her ways of dealing with this problem is to attack the kinds of knowledge and qualifications conventionally supposed relevant; this becomes an important tactic for many women writers whose qualifications, conventionally considered, appear dubious. In a preface to her biography of the Duke, she notes that she is "ignorant of the Rules of writing Histories" and reports that she had begged the Duke for "some Elegant and learned Historian to assist" her lest she produce a "defective" history. The Duke, however, refuses, implicitly authorizing her independent production of the book by replying, "That Truth could not be defective."[11] Attacking the kind of large-scale political history that she was not competent to write, she deprecates "tedious Moral Discourses, with long Observations upon the several sorts of Governement that have been," praises a more personal history, which she labels "Heroical," and proclaims *Caesar's Commentaries* her model.[12]

Cavendish makes a further argument about her entitlement to this subject matter that, with variations, might have been made by all the

women writers of these Civil War memoirs: "Nor is it inconsistent with my being a Woman, to write of Wars, that was neither between the *Medes* and *Persians*, *Greeks* and *Trojans*, *Christians* and *Turks*; but among my own Countrymen, whose Customs and Inclinations, and most of the Persons that held any considerable Place in the Armies, was well known to me . . ." Moreover, she points out, her husband acted "a chief part in that fatal Tragedy," attempting to defend "his most Gracious Soveraign from the fury of his Rebellious Subjects."[13] None of the royalist women writers, including Cavendish, shows comprehension of the political issues that precipitated and sustained the war. For each of them, the side of their husband is the side of virtue, the opposition, frequently called the "Malignants," the embodiment of viciousness.

Cavendish's *Life* of her husband has, nevertheless, been valued by many generations of readers. C. H. Firth, in his Victorian edition, declared, "The special interest of the book lies . . . in the picture of the exiled royalist . . . never losing confidence in the ultimate triumph of the right . . . in the portrait drawn of a great English nobleman of the seventeenth century; his manners and his habits, his domestic policy . . . all are recorded and set down with the loving fidelity of a Boswell."[14] Cavendish offers a *Life* in four parts: first, the Duke's military service until his defeat at Marston Moor; second, a narrative of his time in exile; third, the post-Restoration struggle to repair his estate; fourth, the sayings of the Duke, most offered in the form of maxim-like utterances. In her account of the Duke's military exploits, Cavendish labors under two handicaps: womanly unfamiliarity with warfare and the fact that she was not even acquainted with the Duke until his later exile. To supply these deficiencies, she tells us, the Duke permitted her to use the assistance of John Rolleston, his secretary, an eye-witness of his master's deeds during the war. Despite Cavendish's frequent attacks on romance in other works, her narrative in this *Life* represents the Duke as the idealized hero of a romance, a great man of absolute virtue who may suffer misfortunes but who never commits a wrong or bad act. His military defeats she ascribes to bad underlings: "it is remarkable, that in all actions and undertakings where My Lord was in Person himself, he was always Victorious, and prospered in the execution of his designs; but whatsoever was lost or succeeded ill, happen'd in his absence, and was caused either by the Treachery, or Negligence and Carelessness of his Officers."[15] (It does not seem to occur to her that generals who have treacherous, negligent, and careless officers cannot be very good generals.)

Much of the charm of the *Life* is produced by realistically plausible details that make her picture of this seventeenth-century nobleman fuse with the image of the romance hero: brave, loyal, chivalric, and tender. When Newcastle's troops capture the wife of a parliamentary general and bring her to him, he treats her chivalrously "with all civility and respect," sending her to Kingston-upon-Hull in his own coach.[16] Cavendish stresses her husband's capacity to evoke devotion in lesser beings, human and animal. We are told how his special regiment of foot, the "White-coats," valiant, stout, and faithful, "ever ready to die at my Lord's feet," got their name: "My Lord being resolved to give them new Liveries, and there being not red Cloth enough to be had, took up so much of white as would serve to cloath them, desiring withal, their patience until he had got it dyed; but they impatient of stay, requested my Lord, that he would be pleased to let them have it un-dyed as it was, promising they themselves would dye it in the Enemies Blood; Which request my Lord granted them, and from that time they were called White-Coats."[17] In an age when noblemen fought on horseback, noblemen naturally enough took an interest in horses and riding, but this nobleman's relations with horses were exceptional. He made a special study of dressage and published a treatise on it that was translated into French. Describing her husband's relations with his favorite horses, Cavendish reports: "And certainly I have observed, and, do verily believe, that some of them also had a particular Love to my Lord; for they seemed to rejoice whensoever he came into the Stables, by their trampling action, and the noise they made . . . and when he rid them himself, they seemed to take much pleasure and pride in it."[18]

During his exile, Newcastle's aristocratic *sprezzatura* conjures credit and money from all sorts of people, even from the sober burgers of Antwerp. He has only £90 when he decamps for Hamburg and Parliament naturally sequesters his estates. Nevertheless, he and Margaret live for sixteen years in a style which seems to them degradation, but which permits him to collect expensive horses and to entertain visiting notables.

Cavendish defends the Duke's absconding after Marston Moor, aware that others had severely criticized this action. Clarendon, for instance, while crediting Newcastle with personal courage in many battles and a genuine love of monarchy, thought he attended insufficiently to the work of generalship and was shocked at his conduct after Marston Moor, especially since he still had "absolute commission over the northern counties and very many considerable places in them still remaining under his obedience." In Clarendon's view, the conduct of Prince Rupert and

Newcastle after Marston Moor contributed significantly to making that battle, unnecessarily, a "fatal blow" to royalist hopes.[19] Declining to engage such critiques directly, Cavendish defends her husband's choice: "and having nothing left in his power to do his Majesty any further service in that kind; for he had neither Ammunition, nor Money to raise more Forces, to keep either *York*, or any other Towns, that were yet in His Majesties Devotion, well knowing that those which were left could not hold out long, and being also loath to have aspersions cast upon him, that he did sell them to the Enemy, in Case he could not keep them; he took a Resolution, and that justly and honourably, to forsake the Kingdom . . ."[20]

CIVIL WAR BIOGRAPHIES: HUTCHINSON'S *LIFE OF COLONEL HUTCHINSON*

The Restoration of the King in 1660, greeted with joy by royalists like Cavendish, represented catastrophic defeat for loyal supporters of the interregnum Parliament's attack on courtly corruption in the name of the liberty of the people. Death warrants were issued against the fifty-nine men who had acted as Charles I's judges and signed his death warrant. Captured regicides were judged guilty of high treason, drawn and quartered, and their body parts were displayed in public places. As for the regicides who were already dead, including Oliver Cromwell and Henry Ireton, their bodies were disinterred and the heads were cut off to be exhibited at Westminster Hall, where they remained for at least twenty-four years.[21] John Bunyan, who had served humbly in the Parliamentary army as a young man, refused to cease his unlicensed preaching after the Restoration; like other recalcitrant dissenters, male and female, he was jailed under the provisions of the Clarendon code, in his case for twelve years. Milton, Latin Secretary of State to Cromwell, was lucky to escape with his life.

Because of its attack on traditional hierarchy and custom and because of its emphasis on the need for every believer to study scripture and take responsibility for the welfare of his or her own soul, Puritan and dissenting culture had special consequences for women. The Bible was the one great book women were encouraged to read and to study closely; it was a literary as well as a spiritual resource that helped to compensate for their exclusion from the formal study of Greek and Roman classics that constituted privileged men's literary education. Although beleaguered during the Restoration, Puritan and dissenting culture was not extinguished. Among the more radical dissenting sects, including the Quakers,

women continued to preach and to prophesy. Margaret Fell was jailed twice, once from 1664 to 1668, and again from April 1670 to April 1671, for offences that included holding unlicensed religious meetings and speaking at those meetings. One bit of "evidence" frequently adduced to demonstrate the insanity of dissent was its willingness to listen to women preachers.

This dissenting culture is memorably evident in Lucy Hutchinson's *Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, her husband. Colonel John Hutchinson was an officer in Parliament's army, commander of the town and Castle of Nottingham, and one of the signers of Charles I's death warrant. Lucy Hutchinson's *Life* has consistently been valued for its detailed account of important events in the Civil War as well as for its striking portrait of a dedicated religious independent. James Sutherland remarked that her biography gives "memorable glimpses of what the war meant to the common man, who seldom appears in the pages of the histories."[22] Like the Duchess of Newcastle, Hutchinson is concerned to record the sacrifices her husband made for his country (if not for his King), but she does so less obsessively and clamorously. Unlike any of the royalist women, Hutchinson gives insight into the grievances that led to armed rebellion. She complains of Roman Catholic favorites at court, of "the treasure of the kingdom being wasted by court caterpillars," of the ship money tax, and of the King's proroguing his uncooperative Parliament.[23] She shares her husband's conviction of the righteousness of Parliament's cause and his grief at its defeat. For Hutchinson, the Restoration means the end of the reign of "that glorious Parliament . . . not so fatal to itself as to the three nations [England, Wales, Ireland], whose sunne of liberty then sett, and all their glorie gave place to the fowlest mists that ever overspread a miserable people."[24]

The Bible provides Hutchinson with models through which she attempts to make sense of seventeenth-century history, especially of the excruciating problem of God's apparently having allowed the revolution of his saints to be defeated. She is amazed and disgusted at the fickleness of so many people who, apparently loyal to Parliament, then in 1660 turn out into the streets to welcome back the King, "as eager for their owne destruction as the Izraelites of old were for their Quailes."[25] She thus tries to understand the apostasy of the English by recalling the dark days when Moses led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt into the wilderness, only to hear them complain and become nostalgic for the food they ate in slavery. Although God has provided them with miraculous manna for their journey, they lust after flesh; God therefore promises them flesh

"until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord . . . and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?" (Numbers 11: 20). God rains down quails, then, "while the flesh was yet between their teeth, a great plague."

The *Life* existed for so long as a manuscript because of political considerations, not because Hutchinson preferred manuscript to print. Given Hutchinson's opposition to the King and her husband's politics, as well as the extreme candor of her stringent evaluation of living people, she almost certainly did not write her *Life* for immediate publication. The revival of Licensing Acts in the Restoration inhibited the publication of anti-monarchical writing, and, in any case, the contents of this manuscript could have been prosecuted as seditious libel or possibly even used as evidence in a treason prosecution. The manuscript is addressed to her children to give them what she believes is a true picture of the deeds and virtues of their father (who died in prison in 1664) and to correct what she regards as the lies of received royalist historiography. The book seems to have been written between 1664 and 1671; it was not published until 1806. Yet her narrative shows the eagerness of this dissenting culture for a print record and its conviction that truth requires to be published and has power in the world. When Colonel Hutchinson is imprisoned in the Tower, apparently on suspicion of being privy to the Yorkshire plot, and harshly treated by the jailer, both he and his wife threaten to expose the jailor's cruelties and injustices by printing a narrative of them. The Colonel actually did print such a narrative.

The importance of print, of reading, and of study for Puritan men and women is illustrated by Hutchinson's account of how she developed doubts about the scriptural basis for infant baptism, or "pedobaptism." She notes that some papers on the subject, seized by the Presbyterians from an independent meeting, came into her husband's possession. Pregnant, she studies them urgently, finds the arguments against the custom convincing, and asks her husband to respond to her doubts. Conscientious and studious himself, despite the worries of his military responsibilities in the midst of a war, John reads upon the subject and develops his own doubts: "Then he bought and read all the eminent treatises on both sides, which came thick from the presses at that time . . ." Eager not unnecessarily to give offence, John then invites representative clergy to dinner, states his doubts, and asks for their rebuttals. When their statements do not convince him, husband and wife decide not to baptize their new infant; for their trouble, they are called "fanatick and anabaptists and often glanced at in the publick sermons."[26]

Hutchinson's narrative of her husband's life is more realistic and less influenced by romance than the narratives of royalist women, yet the Colonel emerges as the kind of male hero who later appears in women's novels. She recounts the domestic side of her hero's character, a side neglected in most biographies of political and military men. She does not allow this more importance than "the greater transactions of his life," but she attends to it carefully in the formal character she gives of him and in a set of small episodes that are uncannily proleptic of topoi in later women's fiction.[27] Among the Colonel's virtues are chastity and respect for women: "he despis'd nothing of the female sex but their follies and vanities: wise and vertuous weomen he lov'd, and delighted in all pure, holy, and unblamable conversation with them, but so as never to excite scandall or temptation."[28] She gives relatively short shrift to their early romance (courtships "are to be forgotten as the vanities of youth"), but does tell the reader that what first aroused John's interest in her were "a fewe Latine books . . . upon an odde by-shelfe" in a Richmond house where he was staying.[29] He is told that they belong to the absent Lucy and that she is "reserved and studious" – which the ladies "esteem'd no advantage" – but his heart is "enflamed" at the thought of the studious stranger. As a father, he gladly acts as tutor for his children and spares no expense "for the education of both his sons and daughters in languages, sciences, musick, dancing . . ."[30] Just as they are about to be married, Lucy gets smallpox, an event that caused crises in many actual romances of the period and in many later novels. Yet John "was nothing troubled at it," but married her as soon "as she was able to quit the chamber, when the priest and all that saw her were affrighted to look on her . . ."[31] Once they are married, "So liberall was he to her, and of so generous a temper, that he hated the mention of sever'd purses, his estate being so much at her dispose that he would never receive an account of anie thing she expended. So constant was he in his love that when she ceast to be young and lovely, he began to shew most fondnesse . . ."[32] N. H. Keeble has pointed out that Hutchinson represents her husband as having "precisely those accomplishments upon which the royalists prided themselves, which, indeed, they supposed distinguished their civility from the vulgarity of all rebels and such schismatics." He adds that Hutchinson herself appears "no more the ungovernably brash Puritan hussy of a royalist caricature than John Hutchinson the oafish artisan."[33]

Hutchinson's *Life* extends beyond the personal to consider public events of the war, including battles, administrative challenges to the interregnum government, and political struggles among the parliamentary

factions. She shows what it was like to endure street-to-street fighting in a town and gives memorable images like that of a Cavalier winter retreat from Nottingham, leaving a trail of blood "which froze as it fell upon the snow."[34] Sometimes her account of the internecine bickering among the citizens of Nottingham and the machinations of her husband's local "enemies" while he is governing the Castle can be tedious, yet it demonstrates the pettiness and stiff-necked stubbornness that weakened the parliamentary side. Unlike Cavendish, who offers first-person narrative, Hutchinson uses third-person, referring to her husband as "the Collonell" or "the Governor" and to herself as "Mrs. Hutchinson" or "his wife"; she thus claims the objectivity of historical narrative. As the authoritative historian, writing from a republican perspective, she condemns the follies of Charles I, the ambitions of Cromwell, and the ludicrousness of Cromwell's Barebones Parliament. She combines a narrative based on her own experience with supplementary materials. For example, she acknowledges Thomas May's *History of the Parliament of England* (1647), an account sympathetic to the parliamentary side, although in some respects she criticizes May. Her faith in the ultimate righteousness of the cause does not flag, but she allows herself to be surprised by the complexity of historical events. For instance, describing a battle for Nottingham, she comments: "no one can believe but those that saw that day what a strange ebbe and flow of courage and cowardize there was in both parties that day."[35]

Hutchinson's accounts of Charles I's capture and execution and their consequences for the regicides are moving. After the King escaped from the army's custody and fled to the Isle of Wight, Colonel Hutchinson was part of a parliamentary commission sent to negotiate with him. Yet he could not agree with a proposed treaty, debated all night in Parliament, being convinced "that the King, after having been exasperated and vanquisht and captiv'd, would be restor'd to that power which was unconsistent with the liberty of the people, who for all their blood and treasure and misery would reape no fruite but a confirmation of bondage . . ."[36] The then-sitting members of Parliament nevertheless ratify the treaty, Hutchinson enters his protest in the House book, the army purges forty-one members, and then the treaty is rejected. Realizing the fragility of the revolution and the vulnerability of all the actors in this national crisis, the Colonel is reluctant to serve as one of the judges in Parliament's trial of the King for "leavying warre against the Parliament and people of England, for betreying the publick trust reposed in him, and for being an implacable enemie to the Commonwealth."[37] Yet, Hutchinson writes, her

husband and the other appointed judges saw in the King "a disposition so bent to the ruine of all that had oppos'd him, and of all the righteous and just things they had contended for, that it was upon the conscience of many of them that if they did not execute justice upon him, God would require at their hands all the blood and desolation which should ensue by their suffering him to escape when God had brought him into their hands . . ." Praying intently over his decision, Colonel Hutchinson agrees to sign the King's death warrant.

Colonel Hutchinson's signing the death warrant made him a likely target of royalist revenge at the Restoration; his wife's effort to use her rhetorical skills to avert his fate constitutes one of the most complex episodes in her narrative. Usually, Hutchinson reports herself entirely in sympathy with her husband's politics and decisions, going at his command to conduct small negotiations; on several occasions, she adamantly resists overtures from royalist relatives of hers to cooperate with them. However, once he is expelled from Parliament shortly after the Restoration and ordered to turn himself in, she, dreading "that he was ambitious of being a publick sacrifice . . . herein only in her whole life, resolv'd to disobey him and to emproove all the affection he had to her for his safety, and prevail'd with him to retire; for she sayd she would not live to see him a prisoner."[38] Without his knowledge, she writes a petition to the Speaker of the House of Commons in his name, a petition acknowledging that he has been guilty of a horrid crime that deserves no indulgence, pleading that he had been "seduc'd" by the subtle arts of others, and throwing himself on the mercy of the King and the new Parliament.[39] Told by a friend that the House "was that day in a most excellent temper towards her husband," without consulting him, she signs his name to the petition and submits it.[40] To her relief, Parliament responds by voting only a light punishment for him, barring him from public office for the rest of his life. She does not record the Colonel's words to her about this forgery of his signature at one of the most fateful moments of his life, but it is clear from her subsequent account of his attitudes when he is imprisoned on suspicion of participation in a plot against Charles II that he felt guilty about avoiding punishment endured by his comrades.

Hutchinson's account of her husband's imprisonment at Sandown Castle in Kent vividly describes the miserable physical conditions of the room where she visited him and his spiritual euphoria at finally being firmly relegated to the ranks of the persecuted saints. With a housewife's attentiveness to the physical details of rooms, desperately trying to care for her ill husband under adverse conditions, she observes that one door of his