

Elinor James

Printed Writings 1641–1700: Series II,
Part Three, Volume 11

**Selected and
Introduced by Paula McDowell**



The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works

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Series II

Printed Writings, 1641–1700: Part 3

Volume 11

Elinor James

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General Editors
Betty S. Travitsky and Anne Lake Prescott

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'*Eleonora Coniux Thomae James*', n.d. [c. 1711?]. Artist unknown. Reproduced by permission of the National Portrait Gallery, London. This portrait may have been painted on the occasion of Elinor James's great bequest to Sion College Library in 1711. James is displaying a copy of her pamphlet *Mrs. James's Vindication of the Church of England* (1687), and her hands are crossed on a book, possibly the Sion College Book of Benefactors 1629–1888, which records her bequest in detail. (See nos. 100 and 101, reproduced on p. 289 and pp. 291–3.)

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PREFACE

BY THE GENERAL EDITORS

Until very recently, scholars of the early modern period have assumed that there were no Judith Shakespeares in early modern England. Much of the energy of the current generation of scholars has been devoted to constructing a history of early modern England that takes into account what women actually wrote, what women actually read, and what women actually did. In so doing the masculinist representation of early modern women, both in their own time and ours, is deconstructed. The study of early modern women has thus become one of the most important—indeed perhaps the most important—means for the rewriting of early modern history.

The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works is one of the developments of this energetic reappraisal of the period. As the names on our advisory board and our list of editors testify, it has been the beneficiary of scholarship in the field, and we hope it will also be an essential part of that scholarship's continuing momentum.

The Early Modern Englishwoman is designed to make available a comprehensive and focused collection of writings in English from 1500 to 1750, both by women and for and about them. The three series of *Printed Writings* (1500–1640, 1641–1700, and 1701–1750) provide a comprehensive if not entirely complete collection of the separately published writings by women. In reprinting these writings we intend to remedy one of the major obstacles to the advancement of feminist criticism of the early modern period, namely the limited availability of the very texts upon which the field is based. The volumes in the facsimile library reproduce carefully chosen copies of these texts, incorporating significant variants (usually in appendices). Each text is preceded by a short introduction providing an overview of the life and work of a writer along with a survey of important scholarship. These works, we strongly believe, deserve a large readership—of historians, literary critics, feminist critics, and non-specialist readers.

The Early Modern Englishwoman also includes separate facsimile series of *Essential Works for the Study of Early Modern Women* and of *Manuscript Writings*. These facsimile series are complemented by *The Early Modern Englishwoman 1500–1750: Contemporary Editions*. Also under our general editorship, this series will include both old-spelling and modernized editions of works by and about women and gender in early modern England.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Lambeth	Lambeth Palace Library
GL	Guildhall Library, London
CLRO	Corporation of London Records Office
LMO	London Metropolitan Archives
PRO	London Public Records Office



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

[This volume contains more than 100 short texts, including over 90 by Elinor James, many of them unrecovered since the seventeenth century. This Herculean and stunning assemblage by Paula McDowell has led us to three departures from our usual practice, each made to assist readers in using the volume. First, we have included modern page numbers at the foot of each page. Second, we have numbered the texts in the table of contents, and each reference in this introductory note to a text included in the volume is followed by the number of that text as designated in the table of contents (**in bold font**). Finally, Wing/ESTC numbers, where they exist, have been supplied in the textual notes, rather than as a block at the head of the References. – The General Editors]

This volume makes available for the first time the complete known surviving works of the London printer-author Elinor (Banckes) James (c. 1645–1719). Uniquely in the history of early modern women, James wrote, printed, and distributed more than ninety pamphlets and broadsides addressing political, religious, and commercial concerns. Written over a period of thirty-five years, from 1681 to 1716, her works provide us with a running commentary on the major national events of a tumultuous period: she routinely printed her opinions on events such as the Revolution of 1688, the Union of England and Scotland in 1707, and the Jacobite uprisings in 1715–16. During her lifetime, England saw the succession of six different monarchs: Charles II (1660–1685), James II (1685–1688), William and Mary (1689–1702), Anne (1702–1714), and George I (1714–1727). James petitioned all of these monarchs and claimed to have obtained audiences with three. In 1689, she was ‘committed to Newgate for dispersing scandalous and reflecting papers’ condemning William III for accepting the English crown (Luttrell, I, 617). One of a very few printers who were also prolific authors (others include Samuel Richardson and Benjamin Franklin), she petitioned Parliament concerning legislation affecting the printing trades and petitioned her fellow printers concerning labour relations in London printing-houses. As a lifetime resident of the City of London (the area within the walls under the traditional jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen), and as a member of a City livery company, the Company of Stationers, she petitioned City authorities on issues such as the enforcement of bylaws or for whom to vote in City and parliamentary elections. Satirized in her own time as ‘London City-Godmother,’ she nevertheless declared with pride in her seventies, ‘I have made Application for above this forty years to Kings, Queens, and Princes’ (*November the 5th 1715* [86, 87]). Although her works are today largely unknown, Elinor James’s ninety extant texts show her to be, in number of works printed, one of early modern England’s most prolific women writers. Her broadsides and pamphlets are a valuable resource for readers of literature, of political, social, and economic history, and of the history of democracy and public life.

Elinor (Banckes) James (c. 1645–1719)

Elinor (Banckes) James was the daughter of Mary Banckes of the parish of St. Bottolph without Aldgate, London. (The name of her father is not known.) Her marriage license, dated 27 October 1662, describes her as ‘about seventeen years’, from which we can infer a birth date of approximately 1645. According to her own account, she received no formal education and taught herself to read: ‘not any body taught me to Read, but God Almighty taught my Heart, and my Heart taught me my Book’ (*June the 21th 1715* [83]). Although her husband, the twenty-five year old journeyman printer Thomas James of the parish of St. Mary Aldermanbury, had finished his apprenticeship ten months before their marriage, he did not set up his own printing business until about 1675. In several of her broadsides, Elinor James would address the issue of inadequate work for printers and the increasing likelihood that many journeymen would never run their own shops but would remain employees dependent on a wage. In 1705, the bookseller John Dunton described Thomas James as a competent printer and

well-read man, but added that he was ‘something the better known for being husband to that *She-State Politician* Mrs. Elinor James’ (*Life and Errors*, I, 252–3). What evidence we have suggests that Thomas James was a quiet man who preferred to spend his leisure time reading and making notes towards a theological project. (For his five manuscript volumes, see Lambeth, Sion E32: ARC L40.2/E32.) As the grandson of Dr. Thomas James, the first keeper of the Bodleian Library at Oxford, Thomas James Jr. had an extraordinary personal library of some three thousand books. One of these books was a tiny manuscript commonplace book that he filled with quotations and proverbs such as this advice on marital relations: ‘Ill thrives the hapless ffamily, that shows / A Cock that’s silent, and a Hen that Crows’ (Lambeth, Sion E26: ARC L40.2/E26).

In a petition to James II printed some time after 1685, Elinor James informed the king, ‘I have had many Children, and have Nurs’d them all my self, and I have had Three and Four Children Young and No Maid, and none to help me neither in Sickness or Health’. (She adds significantly: ‘and yet I have found Opportunity to come to *Whitehall*’ [*May it please Your Most Sacred Majesty*, after 6 Feb. 1685] [9].) Yet while Thomas and Elinor James had at least four children, only two daughters are known to have lived to adulthood: Jane (1670–1733) and Sarah (b. 1673). Sarah married one Robert Saunders, whose trade is unknown, whereas Jane followed in her mother’s footsteps, marrying a printer, Thomas Ilive, and succeeding him as a master printer after his death in 1733. Jane’s sons Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were also trained in the family trade, and Jacob Ilive (b. 1705) succeeded his mother as a master printer – ensuring that the family business endured for at least three generations. In 1665, Thomas and Elinor James had a son, Thomas, about whom little is known; the printer and antiquarian John Nichols confuses him with the Thomas James who was a letter-founder in Bartholemew Close (*Literary Anecdotes*, I, 305). Nichols also erroneously attributes to Elinor a daughter Elizabeth born in 1689.

Elinor James viewed herself as a printer both during and after her husband’s lifetime. In a broadside printed in c. 1715, she states: ‘I have been in the element of Printing above forty years’ (*Mrs. James’s Advice to all Printers*, n.d. [93]). Thomas James appears to have helped his ‘*She-State-Politician*’ wife get at least one of her early works into print, for her broadside *The Case between a Father and his Children* shows the imprint ‘Printed by *Tho. James* at the *Printing-press* in *Mincing-Lane*. 1682’ [4]. The majority of her papers, however, either do not have imprints or show her own name in the imprint. To some extent, a formal imprint was redundant, for she almost always signed her papers ‘Your Soul’s Well-Wisher, Elinor James’. In the few instances in which her works do show an imprint, it reads, ‘Printed for *E. James*, in *Mincing-Lane*, near *Fen-Church-Street*. 1715’ or: ‘Printed for me *Elinor James*. 1687’ (*Elinor James’s Advice to the King and Parliament* [79]; *Mrs. James’s Vindication* [14]). ‘Printed for’ usually means that someone else did the printing, and in this case we don’t know who that someone was. It may have been Elinor or Thomas James, one of their children, or an apprentice or journeyman. At any rate, James’s many broadsides addressing print-trade issues demonstrate her thorough familiarity with the business, and she almost certainly oversaw the printing of her texts even if she did not physically print them. This fact had significant consequences not only for their content but also for their material form and modes of circulation and use.

Although her earliest surviving work, *A New Answer To A Speech* [1], was printed in 1681, James herself repeatedly dates the beginning of her political activism to her early twenties (around 1666). Internal evidence in her surviving broadsides suggests that several early petitions have been lost. In *A New Answer To A Speech* [1], she mentions delivering a petition to Charles II ‘9 or 10 years ago’ (around 1672), yet this petition is not known to have survived. Later, James would describe in detail her first petitioning mission to Charles II, remembering in particular the reactions of her husband and mother when she told them that she was going to go to court to ‘tell the King of his Faults’. She states, ‘My Husband thought it wholly impossible, and said, unless I was a great Queen above him he would not hear me, and so counted it a foolish fancy; and my Mother was in such a passion that she was ready to beat me, and asked me if I intended they should all be hanged’ (*I Have been toiling* [1695?] [31]).

James had at least two confrontations with the law. On 11 December 1689 she was arrested and fined for distributing Jacobite papers. That year alone she wrote and printed at least eight broadsides condemning the Revolution of 1688, and any one of these could have led to her arrest. In *This being Your Majesty’s Birth-Day* [25], she informs William III bluntly: ‘not half the nation thought You would have accepted of the Crown, as

long as the King your Father [James II, William's father-in-law] was alive'. In *Mrs. James's Advice To The Citizens of London* [21], she compares those citizens who supported William to the Israelites worshipping a golden calf. Surviving records provide few details of James's prosecution, but they do show that she was fined thirteen shillings and four pence – a relatively small sum that was perhaps intended as a warning (CLRO, Newgate Sessions Book, SM60).

In 1702, James was again involved with the law. According to her own account and the anonymous *Account of the Proceedings against Dr. Titus Oates... for scandalizing and assaulting Mrs. Eleanor James*, n.d. [after 2 July 1702] [92], she happened to 'run into' the notorious Popish Plot perjurer Titus Oates at the Court of Requests at Westminster Hall. A divine arrested more than once for assault, Oates had been defrocked in 1685, yet by the turn of the century he was again wearing clerical garb and, indeed, receiving an annual treasury pension of 300 pounds. Like Oates a habitué of Westminster, James grew infuriated by Oates's costume, and in March 1702 she took him by the sleeve, asking why he wore the robes of the Church of England when he had previously been defrocked. Oates responded by smacking her on the head with his cane 'with that Violence as if he would split my Brains' (March 21. 1702 [47]; see also May 11. 1702 [48] and *O My Dear God* [June 1702] [50]). In April he was arrested on charges of assault and in July he was tried at the Westminster Sessions (LMA, MJ/SR no. 1987, 8 April 1702, indictment no. 30). Found guilty, he was ordered to pay a considerable fine, but this fine was later reduced to six marks (about four pounds) as he was already deeply in debt and unable to pay (*Account of the Proceedings against ... Oates* [92]).

Thomas James died in January 1710, leaving a will specifying that his widow should inherit the family printing house and tools and one third of his personal estate as was the custom of the City of London. But his will made this inheritance conditional on two harsh demands. First, his wife was not to touch his books: 'no part of my Library of Books to be taken by my said Wife or deemed unto her Third part but the same to be disposed of as is hereinafter mentioned'. Second, she must not attempt to influence his executors: 'I ... give to my said Wife all my household Goods Plate and furniture and my Printing Tools in and about my now or late dwelling house in Mincing Lane London Providing she dos not molest my Executors in the Execution of this my Will'. Thomas James specifically bequeathed his books to his gentlemen friends, 'to the intent that the same may be preserved and kept in some publick place or Library to be perused by all Gentlemen that shall resort thereunto who are to be entred and called the Jameson Society'. His will was also strict with regard to his two daughters, whom he cut off with a shilling: 'Whereas I have preferred my Daughters Jane Iliffe and Sarah Saunders in Marriage, and advanced Portions to them and for as much as they have been since very undutifull and disrespectfull to me I therefore give to them one shilling apiece' (PRO, PROB 11/515, fols. 148v–149v, proved 9 May 1710).

Yet, as Thomas James seems to have feared, Elinor James gained control of her husband's extraordinary library after all. It was Elinor, not Thomas James, who donated the three thousand books to Sion College, a theological institution and library for London clergymen. She also donated furniture, silver plate, and portraits of Charles I, Charles II, Thomas James, and herself. The striking portrait labelled '*Eleonora Conjux Thomae James*' [frontispiece] shows her with her hands crossed on a book, most likely the Sion College Book of Benefactors 1629–1888, which provides a detailed record of her bequest. (See documents nos. 100 and 101.) On display beside her is her longest pamphlet, *Mrs. James's Vindication of the Church of England* (1687) [14]. James's bequest remains one of the most important in the history of Sion College Library (recently amalgamated with Lambeth Palace Library). The fellows of the College immediately recognized it as an extraordinary gift, calling a special meeting to consider 'proper Methods for defraying ye charge of preparing a place for setting up and chaining ye sd Books' (Sion College Court Register from May 3 1631 to April 24 1716, p. 600, now GL, Ms 33445/1). As a consequence of her bequest, James became the first woman ever invited to the annual Sion College anniversary dinner. Invited three years in a row beginning in 1713, she must have been delighted and honoured, for this event put her in the company of some of the most powerful men in the Church of England, such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and the Dean of St. Pauls (Sion College Court Register from May 3 1631 to April 24 1716, pp. 622, 647, 658).

In 1712 James made another charitable bequest, but this time her gifts were not so graciously received. According to her own account, she gave furniture, plate, and other valuables to the church of St. Benet Paul's

Wharf, but the rector and churchwardens mishandled her gifts. (See *Dated Septemb. 29th 1712. To The Parish of St. Bennet's Paul's Wharfe* [70]; *The Case Of Mrs. Elenor James, Or, The High-Church Legacy*, n.d. [after Sept. 1712] [71]; and *Octob. 11th 1712 To The Parish of St. Bennet's Paul's Wharfe* [72].) James charged Thomas Cooke, the rector, with keeping some of her gifts in his home:

At the hearing of this I was very angry, and said, the Parish had nothing to do to dispose of my Plate, for I would not trust my Plate in his House, nor in any Church-wardens House, but in the Church, and Madam Cooke [the rector's wife] said, *she did not desire it, for she should be afraid she should be knock'd on the head, for having so much Plate in her House.* (*Dated Septemb. 29th 1712* [70])

As is typically the case with James, when external evidence is available, it supports rather than disproves her claims – however outlandish they may initially appear. An entry in the St. Benet Paul's Wharf Vestry Minutes for 1718 by Thomas Cooke shows that he was indeed keeping some of James's plate in his home (GL, MS 877/2: St. Benet Paul's Wharf Vestry Minutes, vol. 2: 1718–86). In addition, the Account Book of St. Benet Paul's Wharf shows that the rector and wardens of the church had worked to attract James as a donor on several occasions, wooing her with chickens and sweetmeats and small gifts of money to her grandchildren and her maid (GL, MS 878/2: St. Benet Paul's Wharf Churchwarden's Account Book, vol. 2: 1710–31, 19 and 28 May; 8 Dec. 1712). In her lively accounts of this conflict, James claims that the rector and wardens threatened to take her to court. She appears to have pre-empted this action, however, by publishing *The Case Of Mrs. Elenor James* [71], and so bringing her 'case' before the tribunal of the public. She declares: 'for the Church-wardens and Mr. Cooke for to spend the Parish Money ... to go to Law with Mrs. *James* a Widow, that has been a Champion for the Church against Popery and old and lame what a burning shame will this be' (*Dated Septemb. 29th 1712*, p. 4 [70]). Only a year after Thomas Cooke made his entry in the Vestry Minutes, however, it was a moot point, for Elinor James was buried 19 July 1719 in the parish of St. Dunstan in the East. Unlike Thomas James, she did not leave a will, for by this time she had given her moveable property away. Her remaining property was granted to her daughter Jane by an administration (PRO, PROB 6/95, f.166r).

James as a Political Petitioner

James's texts are best understood in the context of early modern petitioning. Petitions were formal requests for favours or redress of grievances addressed to courts, monarchs, ministers, and other public bodies and private individuals. In England, petitioning was a right theoretically available to the meanest subject. But petitions were supposed to be *spontaneous* expressions of grievance. If they appeared to be premeditated, they risked being perceived as factious – a threat to the ideal of society as an organic unity. Early modern petitions are thus a highly formulaic genre, for petitioners had to demonstrate deference to their superiors. James's petitions consist of a series of rhetorical building blocks: the deferential phrases and terms of address that she borrows from petitioning traditions, such as 'May it please your Royal Highness, To grant me Grace and Favour in your Sight' and 'I most humbly beseech'. In a broadside to the Commons, James assures the members that 'your Petitioner hath always been Zealous for the Good of this Nation,' and beseeches them 'not to be displeased that I am so concern'd' (*To the Honourable the Commons ... The Humble Petition of Elinor James*, n.d. [reign of James II, 1685–8] [10]). At the same time, however, while she employs traditional formulaic phrases to assure those whom she petitions of her good will, she also customizes her petitions with formulas of her *own* making. She concludes with her personal signature phrase, 'Your Humble Servant and Soul's Well-wisher, Elinor James' and repeatedly expresses her conviction that the Church of England would be 'more than a Conqueror' or that she herself would be 'more than a Conqueror' by the assistance of God. When her petitions are read as a coherent body of work, as this edition allows us to do, they are revealed as a distinctive group of texts that are at once formulaic and unique.

Traditionally, petitions were not public documents, but in the 1640s special interest groups began printing petitions and so implicitly directing their appeals to a wider public. Printed petitions typically consisted of a

single sheet headed ‘The Case of’ or ‘The Reasons for’, and it is no accident that James’s papers, when they have titles, have titles like *Mrs. James’s Reasons* [29, 84], *Mrs. James’s humble Request* [41], *Mrs. James’s Advice* [21], or *March 21. 1702. The Petition of Elianor James* [47]. Early modern petitioners often tried to gain an audience with the recipients of their papers. James’s petitions are addressed to the monarch, the Houses of Lords and Commons, and the Lord Mayor, aldermen, and citizens of London, and wherever possible, she preferred to distribute them to their prominent addressees herself. Despite having a family and a business to attend to, James evidently spent a portion of her days outside her home and workplace, waiting for an opportunity to hand over her papers to public figures. Her printed texts allude to her oral and otherwise physical activism at sites of political decision-making such as Whitehall, Westminster, Guildhall, Windsor, Oxford, and the halls of major City livery companies. She also distributed her petitions to interested onlookers, often for free – rather as a political activist might hand out flyers today.

Traditions of female petitioning were well established in England by James’s day. During the civil war period, women petitioned both individually and in groups. Leveller women presented mass petitions in support of imprisoned radical leaders, while prophet-petitioner Lady Eleanor Davies regularly visited Parliament to call members to account for their godless ways. In the 1660s and 1670s, Quaker women and other dissenters delivered papers to Charles II. Seventeenth-century petitioners often sought to authorise their activities by claiming divine inspiration, but by the turn of the century times had changed for both male and female petitioners. An increasing number of works, such as the *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (1708) of Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury, represented claims of divine inspiration as mere ‘enthusiasm’ – during the Restoration held to be politically and socially dangerous, but in Shaftesbury’s view best dealt with by means of ridicule. Although James certainly saw herself as empowered by God, she did not typically claim inspiration as a prophet. In one petition to Queen Anne, she admits that she did have a prophetic calling to come to court, yet she also explains that this was typically *not* the case: ‘I never had a Call before, but when I came, *I came of my self*’ (*March 22d 1712* [67], emphasis added).

In the early modern period, David Zaret observes, ‘receipt of pleas from petitioning subjects was a visible, time-consuming part of kingship’ (*Origins of Democratic Culture*, 82). Late Stuart royal residences were thronged with spectators hoping to catch a glimpse of the monarch or of other important persons. Visitors had to pass through a procession of rooms, each granting more and more exclusive access to the sovereign, yet there were transitional spaces in which even the humblest petitioner had fleeting opportunities to hand over papers or to speak to important persons. As we have seen, James claimed to have obtained audiences with three monarchs (Charles II, James II, and William III). She also tried unsuccessfully to present petitions directly to Queen Anne and George I. James frequently reminded her readers of her career as a petitioner of monarchs. In a petition addressed to Queen Anne shortly after she was crowned, James explains her motives for previously petitioning Anne’s uncle, father, and brother-in-law: ‘The Design of my going to King *Charles* was, to persuade him to live a holy Life, and overcome the sins of the Flesh: and my Request to King *James* was, That he should not destroy himself by promoting Popery: And to King *William*, That he should not take the Crown’ (*Octob. the 20th, 1702* [51]).

By far James’s favourite monarch, and apparently the most gracious recipient of her petitions, was Charles II. A good-natured man of ironical humour and conversation, Charles had a reputation for generosity to petitioners. Several of James’s broadsides recount her visits to Charles II, especially her first petitioning mission ‘to tell the King of his faults’. As we have seen, she recalls the disapproval of her mother and husband; she also recalls the humble clothing that she wore (‘I am sure no one would have given Five shillings for all the Cloaths on my Back’) and the magnanimous behaviour of the king both on that occasion and thereafter: ‘the continuance of his Grace and Favour, and freedom he gave me of Speech’ (*I Have been toiling*, n.d. [1695?] [31]). When Charles’s brother, the Duke of York, came to the throne in 1685, Elinor James assumed that he was already familiar with her views: ‘I never was for Popery (as your Majesty well knows)’ (*To the Kings Most Excellent Majesty* [reign of James II, 1685–8] [11]). She claims that James II, a practicing Roman Catholic, immediately laid down new conditions for her speaking: ‘he did say, that if I did not speak against the Roman Catholicks, he would love me as his Brother did, and I should have the same Power in his House, as I had in his Brothers House in his life-time, to say what I would and do what I would’ (*Dated 7th Jan. 1705/6* [61]).

Even before William III was crowned in April 1689, Elinor James criticized him for his treatment of James II. The substance of her overall message to William in 1688–89 may be surmised from her later reflection: ‘has not God done great things for me, for the first time that I came to the King was to tell him his Faults, and how kindly he did receive me... the whole Court [took] notice’ (*Feb. 11th 1710* [64]). Although she initially rejected William and Mary as lawful monarchs, she gradually came to accept them as defenders of the Church of England, conceding sadly, ‘altho’ God did give K. James his natural Right, contrary to all the Gainsayers, yet notwithstanding all that he gave his Supremacy to the Pope’ (*June the 25th, 1714* [75]). Yet her wistful acceptance of William and Mary as *de facto*, rather than *de jure* monarchs, and later her pragmatic, rather than devotional relationship to Queen Anne and George I, illuminates the changing nature of the English monarchy after 1688. James criticized William III, Anne, and George I in a way that she had never done their predecessors. Furthermore, whereas she represented Charles II and James II as if she were personally familiar with them, and suggested that even the Prince of Orange might pause to speak to a commoner on his way to dinner, she also suggested that she was never able to catch a glimpse of (let alone speak to) Queen Anne or George I. Anne’s chronic illness, along with her preference for Windsor, made her less available to petitioners than her father and uncle had been. In one petition, James addresses Anne in a harsh tone reminiscent of her early advice to William of Orange, scolding the Queen for her treatment of members of Parliament: ‘no King ever did as Your Majesty has done, to put off a Parliament so many times, to cause them to be the Scoff and Town talk of their Enemies... I don’t see how Your Majesty can make them amends’ (*March 22d 1712* [67]). When George I succeeded in 1714, James initially supported him, but one of her later papers suggests that this support may have wavered. Criticizing this foreign-born king for his frequent return journeys to the continent, his warmongering, and his lack of piety, James may ultimately have decided that she had had enough. In one petition, she borrows the Jacobite theme song, stating, ‘Pray, dear Prince, take my Advice and return home, and let us Sing, *The King enjoys his own again*’ (*Good Counsel ... To King George* [1715?] [88, 89]).

More than forty of James’s surviving petitions are addressed to the Houses of Lords and Commons. For thirty-five years, she petitioned Parliament an average of at least once a year – including five times in 1689 and six times in 1702. The essence of parliamentary petitioning was attendance in person at the doors, steps, or lobby of the Houses of Parliament, and James frequently refers to these as if they were familiar sites. A manuscript note on a copy of one of James’s broadsides in what looks like a contemporary hand describes her as ‘A Mad Woman who used to attend at the Doors of the House of Lds & Commons’ (*June the 21th 1715* [83]).

Petitions to Parliament had to be formally presented by a member. While some members felt duty-bound to present their constituents’ petitions, others felt no such obligation. Yet any member might accept a paper handed to him at the doors of the House and peruse it for his own information or amusement during debates. James herself expected her papers to be read, whether silently or aloud. At the top of one of her petitions is the prayer, ‘The Lord grant that his good Spirit may attend Your Lordships in the Reading of this Paper’ (*To the Lords Spiritual and Temporal*, 1703 [53]). One copy of one petition has a manuscript docket notation, apparently contemporary, ‘Elinor James’s Speech to ye Convention [Parliament]’ (*To the Right Honourable Convention* [1689] [22]). One wonders whether the word ‘Speech’ here is conventional or whether James actually managed to get this petition read aloud.

James’s petitions to Parliament address specific bills under debate or comment on new legislation. A typical title is *To the Honourable the House of Commons, I Am very sorry that Your Honours has been so long upon the Money Bill*, n.d. [1696] [32], which comments on the recoinage of English money ordered in 1695 and the great difficulties that this created for the poor. She petitioned in support of the Old East India Company against rival interests in papers such as *To the Honourable the House of Lords... If Your Lordships pass this Bill, You will be Instrumental to undo Hundreds of Widdows and Fatherless*, n.d. [1698] [34], and, as early as 1702, she argued against the proposed union of England and Scotland, which became law in 1707. (See *March 7. 1702* [46]; *To The Lords Spiritual and Temporal*, n.d. [1706?] [62]; and *Gentlemen of England. February 28. 1706/7* [63].) The period of her career was also a decisive one in the history of the English press, and her petitions are a rich and wholly neglected source for the views of one eighteenth-century printer concerning press legislation in this formative period. In 1695, the Licensing or Printing Act of 1662 lapsed permanently,

ending official pre-publication censorship and strict government restrictions on the number of master printers throughout England. James urged Parliament to restore government restrictions on the number of printers. In addition, more than a decade before the first so-called ‘Copyright Law’ was passed in 1710 (the Act for the Encouragement of Learning, 8 Anne c. 21), she argued in favour of such controls. She states, “making Printing a Free Trade . . . will destroy the Right and Properties of the Booksellers and others, for their Copies is their cheif [*sic*] Support, and they have as much Right to them as any Man that Builds a House and pays the Workman for Building it” (*To the Honourable House of Commons. Gentlemen, Since You have been pleased to lay such a heavy Tax upon Paper* [c. 1696–1698] [33]). In a paper addressed not to parliament but to her fellow printers, she argues for the stricter disciplining of apprentices, who were not to be paid cash for their labour: ‘for giving him money makes him a journeyman before his time’ (*Mrs. James’s Advice to all Printers* [c. 1715] [93]).

About ten surviving petitions are addressed to the ‘Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen of London’ and a few also to the ‘Citizens of London’. These papers advise City leaders on a wide range of issues, such as the training of magistrates, the flinging of ‘Cats, Dogs, and Dirt’, the regulation of fireworks and ‘base Pamphlets . . . Cry’d or Sold in this City’, and the treatment of the local poor (*September the 14th, 1714* [76]). As a self-appointed advisor to the City who also saw herself as an experienced petitioner of the crown, James also considered herself to be an appropriate negotiator between these two political entities. In one petition to City governors written nearly thirty years after Charles II’s death, she recalls asking the king to forgive the Lord Mayor and aldermen for their temporary lapse of loyalty and suggests that the king rewarded her for her efforts: ‘I am a great lover of this city, and I did undertake in King Charles the II. time for their better behaviour, for which he made me City-Godmother’ (*The humble Desire of Elinor James . . . Decemb. 15th 1712* [73]). Contemporary satires on James suggest that this self-adopted title of ‘London City Godmother’ stuck. One dissenting author assures James, ‘tho you could not (as you Gravely tell us) obtain to be the City’s, you shall have our Vote to be the Churches God-Mother’ (*An Address of Thanks . . . to Mrs. [*sic*] James, 1687* [97]). Fifteen years later, another anonymous wit published a satiric catalogue alluding to James’s unofficial status as ‘City-Godmother’: *A Catalogue of Books to be sold by Auction at the City-Godmother’s in Mincing-Lane, on the 29th of May next, being the Anniversary of the Restoration of Blessed Memory*, n.d. [1702] [99]. Demonstrating knowledge of James’s trade (the ‘Catalogue of Books’), her home address in Mincing Lane, and her support for Charles II (restored to the throne 29 May 1660), the author invents a highly politicised list of imaginary publications such as ‘The Tale of a Tub: or, The Art and Mystery of poisoning Reputations by Impeachments without Prosecution. Dedicated to the Commons’, alluding to the Treaties of Partition impeachments of 1701. James’s last petition is addressed not to City leaders, members of Parliament, or monarchs but to God on behalf of them all: *April the 19th. 1716. Mrs. James’s Petition to God, In The Behalf of the King, Lords and Commons, and Kingdom too* [90].

The Reception of James’s Texts

What evidence is there concerning the reception of James’s texts? How do we know that her works were read (or heard) at all? The aforementioned *Address of Thanks . . . to Mrs. [*sic*] James* [97] sarcastically thanks James for having ‘Edified the *Tripe-Women* and Convinc’d the *Porters*’ – implying that although James addressed her petitions to monarchs and their ministers, her chief audience was the working class ‘vulgar’ on London streets. Not surprisingly, James was accused of being crazy. As we have seen, a manuscript note on one of her broadsides describes her as ‘a Mad Woman who used to attend at the Doors of the House of Lds & Commons’ [83]. James herself urged her readers, ‘Do not let your Thoughts be evil, as if I spoke the Words of madness, for [I] cannot bear that Title’ (*The humble Desire of Elinor James . . . Decemb. 15th 1712* [73]). Yet she records a variety of responses, both negative and positive, to her physical presence at the Houses of Parliament. In c. 1689, she advises members of the Commons, ‘It was once in my thoughts to have flung you off and to have nothing more to do with you, because some of you I found was so spiteful and malicious, as if they were possessed with the Devil, pouring out threatenings, and speaking such filthy words as I never heard before’

(*My Lords and Gentlemen of the Lower House*, n.d. [after 11 Apr. 1689] [24]). More than twenty years later, however, she thanks the members for being ‘very civil all along to me by your outward Appearance’ (*Feb. 11th 1710* [64]).

In 1687, we know of four different responses to James and especially to her pamphlet *Mrs. James’s Vindication of the Church of England* (1687) [14]. The author of the satiric *An Address of Thanks ... to Mrs. [sic] James* (1687) [97] responds in detail to her arguments against James II’s April 1687 Declaration of Indulgence, comparing her to famous women warriors of gender-bending fame: ‘In this Extremity, you, Madam! are the *Pucelle de Dieu*, that *Joan of Arque*, who stept in to Retrieve our Forlorn Affairs, and bouy up our Sinking Reputation; You are the brave *Semiramis* that must Rebuild the Walls of our Babel’. James also encountered a female opponent about whom little is known: a dissenter named Elizabeth Rone, whose double-sided broadside in verse, *Elizabeth Rone’s Short Answer To Ellinor James’s Long Preamble* (1687) [98], argues in support of the Declaration of Indulgence and against ‘The Book call’d *Mistress James’s Vindication*’. The most famous person to mention James that year, however, was the poet John Dryden, who refers to her in his preface to *The Hind and the Panther* (1687). Explaining his refusal to answer a polemical challenge made by Edward Stillingfleet, then Dean of St. Paul’s, Dryden remarks: ‘because I would not take up... his ridiculous challenge, he tells the world I cannot argue; but he may as well infer that a Catholic cannot fast, because he will not take up the cudgels against Mrs. James, to confute the Protestant religion’. Dryden’s reference to James suggests that he expected his readers to know who she was; it also demonstrates his familiarity with one of her petitions to James II in which she proposes a Protestant-Catholic fasting contest, with herself to serve as the Anglican contestant. (See *May it please Your Most Sacred Majesty*, n.d. [after 6 Feb. 1685] [9].) Later that year, James responded to Dryden, but she seems to have been less bothered by his mention of her than by his recent conversion to Catholicism: ‘As for Mr. *Dryden*, though some blame him for using my Name, I do not; because he hath used it civilly. Indeed I do not know him, nor never read his Book, but I am told that he doth Abuse the *Church of England*, for which I blame him’ (*Mrs. James’s Vindication*, 13 [14]). James’s name was also mentioned in 1687 by Robert Spencer, earl of Sunderland, in a manuscript newsletter to a fellow peer. In November, James had physically disrupted a sermon at Grocers Hall where a nonconformist minister was preaching before the Lord Mayor, and apparently caused such a commotion that Sunderland found it newsworthy. Like Dryden, he assumed that his reader was already familiar with Elinor James (HMC *Downshire MSS*, vol. i, pt. I, 276: Robert Spencer, earl of Sunderland, to Sir William Trumbull, 11 Nov. 1687).

In 1689, James’s works came to the attention of the government authorities, who prosecuted her for her anti-Williamite publications, and in 1690, the Anglican divine Henry Maurice rebuked a polemical opponent by comparing him to the apparently now well-known Elinor James. Scorning James’s writing abilities even as he concurred with her views, Maurice lamented of his opponent, ‘It is a Thousand Pities so instructive and so Eloquent Papers should ever fall under such an imputation, and be ranked among the Scriblings of Elenor James, with this only advantage of having better Language; whereas the Woman Counsellor is judged to have the better meaning’ (*Remarks From The Country*, 1690, p. 1). The following year, one Theophilus Tuer noted how one of James’s papers to William III had been passed to him by a female friend: ‘I had the Originall of this in Print of Mrs. Mudd about Whitsuntide 1691’ [91]. He then carefully transcribed the broadside into his ‘Book of Letters to his Correspondents’ – suggesting that he then passed it on to a third reader. In 1705, the bookseller John Dunton referred to ‘that *She-State-Politician* Mrs. Elinor James’ without further explanation – as if he too expected his readers to know who she was. As we have seen, Dunton also described Thomas James as ‘something the better known’ for being the husband of Elinor James.

After James’s death in 1719, her legacy of works both textual and charitable disappears from the historical record for more than sixty years, until she is suddenly mentioned once more in the printer and antiquarian John Nichols’ *Biographical and Literary Anecdotes of William Bowyer* (1782) and *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* (1812–15). Reprinting a government list of printers’ political affiliations from the 1720s, Nichols briefly annotates the entry for George James, mistakenly assuming a relationship to Elinor. He then goes on to focus not on George James but on Elinor, whom he describes as ‘a very extraordinary character, a mixture of benevolence and madness’ (*Literary Anecdotes*, 1: 306). Nichols provides biographical information (often erroneous) about the James family and reprints three of Elinor’s broadsides. One of these has apparently

not survived in any other form and so would have been lost to us without his labours: *Mrs. James's Advice to all Printers in General* [c. 1715] [93]. The fact that Nichols also reprinted two texts that *have* survived in their originals, *To The Lords Spiritual and Temporal ... I Have read a Case ... relating to one Dye* [1706?] [62] and *June the 9th 1715* [81], allows us to compare his reprinted versions to the surviving originals and so get a sense of what kind of changes he may have made in reprinting the broadside that has been lost. Such a comparison shows that Nichols 'corrected' James's minimalist punctuation, idiosyncratic spelling, and typographic errors; eliminated much of her heavy capitalization of initial letters; removed her paragraph divisions; and altered typographic elements such as oversize fonts for titles. Other than these numerous but relatively technical changes, however, Nichols reprinted James's broadsides as he found them. He also respectfully recorded her charitable gifts to institutions and individuals (including her gift to William Bowyer, the printer to whom he had been apprenticed, after Bowyer's printing house was destroyed by fire) and described her portrait in some detail. In 1802–7, Nichols printed James Peller Malcolm's *Londinium Redivivum*, an antiquarian work with information about Elinor James largely borrowed from Nichols himself. Tellingly, however, whereas Nichols foregrounds James as an author, Malcolm describes her as 'a famous printer' and 'printress' and acknowledges her charitable gifts but makes virtually no mention of her ninety works (*Londinium Redivivum*, 1: 34–6; 2: 471; and 4: 283). James's status as a polemicist whose name some contemporaries expected their readers to recognize would now cease for the next two hundred years.

Today, James's pamphlets and broadsides are almost wholly unknown even by literary scholars and historians specializing in her period. As of 2004, there has not been a single scholarly article published on her works. This is partly due to the dispersal of her texts (a situation that this edition will largely remedy), but it is also partly due to the challenges of situating her texts within existing literary critical frameworks and traditions of value. James's passionate involvement with the immediate – her concern for strategic political argument in her own time, rather than enduring literary value in ours – meant that timing was far more important to her than aesthetics. (Indeed, some of her texts may never have been written down at all, but rather composed directly at the printing press with type.) Whereas feminist literary scholars have tended to focus on expressions of gendered identity in early women's writings, James only rarely addressed gender issues in print. Her petitions provide little evidence that she thought of the sex-based inequities all around her as a political matter – or indeed, that she thought of women as a coherent political group at all. (Still, the few scattered moments in her texts when she reflects on her status as a woman petitioner are telling ones. In responding to a dissenting pamphlet, for instance, James anticipates her opponent's likely objection that women should not meddle in public affairs, then suddenly questions why this objection was used against her only on selected occasions: 'I know you will say *I am a Woman, and why should I trouble my self?* Why was I not always so, when I pleaded with the Parliament about the *Right of Succession*, and with *Shafisbury*, and *Monmouth*, and at *Guild-Hall*, and elsewhere?' [*Mrs. James's Vindication*, 1687, p. 3] [14].) Because James's ninety texts address a staggeringly broad range of concerns, deciphering her references to contemporary events, issues, and persons will demand the collective efforts of scholars from many different disciplines. Only a historian of printing, for instance, is likely to recognize that James's complaint concerning apprentices 'flinging their houses into pie' is not a goodwife's complaint about domestic messiness but an *employer's* complaint about unproductive labourers. She means that these teenagers were 'pieing' their type – upsetting the 'houses' or wooden type cases in which printers stored their fonts (*Mrs. James's Advice to all Printers*, c. 1715 [93]).

James's Texts as Material Artifacts

James's output consists entirely of broadsides and short pamphlets – cheaply printed, portable, and above all, fragile. Several texts have been lost to us entirely, but fortunately, other lost originals have been preserved through contemporary manuscript transcriptions and reprintings. (See Appendix, Section A, 'Contemporary Transcriptions of Broad­sides by James Since Lost'.) The evidence of lost originals raises the possibility that James's oeuvre was at one time significantly larger than the body of texts reprinted here. While every effort has been made to locate all surviving texts and many previously unknown texts have been discovered and

reprinted in this volume, the often fortuitous nature of textual recovery suggests the likelihood that further works by James will eventually be unearthed. Indeed, it is to be hoped that this inaugural edition will prompt further discoveries stemming from recognition of James as an author worthy of our attention.

Several of James's texts survive in more than one format, issue, or edition. Where there is more than one surviving version, these are reproduced consecutively in this volume. Each variant raises questions pertaining to production, distribution, and intended use. James's earliest extant broadside, for instance, survives in three different versions: *A New Answer To A Speech*, signed 'E.J.' [1] and two others titled *Mrs. James her New Answer To A Speech* and signed variously 'E.J.' or 'Elinor James' [2, 3]. Did James first test audience reception with the anonymous version, and then, pleased with the results, re-issue the broadside identified as her own? In another example, James's pamphlet, *Mrs. James's Vindication of the Church of England* (1687) [14], was distributed with two different title pages. Whereas the earlier title page carries the imprint 'Printed for me Elinor James', the later one carries the additional note: 'I have given so many, that I can give no more, and therefore through the earnest desires of some, I have yielded to publish them, contrary to my Intentions. I wish well to the Readers, whoever they be... . Price Two Pence'. A third work, *To the Honourable House of Commons. I Can assure Your Honours, I did not think any thing of the Bankers* [1705?], was printed in two editions, one having three paragraphs with the third paragraph in italics [54], and the other a completely new typesetting with two new paragraphs added at the bottom [55]. A fourth work existing in two different states shows evidence of a proof-reader's corrections: compare *Mrs. James's humble Request to the Honourable House of Lords for Unity* [1701] [41], with its inked-out line and the absence of a date, to *June the 19th. 1701. Mrs. James's humble Request* [42], where the inked-out line has been deleted and a date added in the title. Still another text existing in two states shows the substitution of a new printer's ornament, necessitating the resetting of the entire first paragraph. (Compare the different versions of *June the 9th 1715. Mrs. James's Letter To The Jacobites and Non-jurors* [81, 82].)

Several of James's works were reprinted in different formats. Perhaps a hastily printed broadside was intended for one type of audience or use, while a pamphlet version of the same text was intended for another. James's single-sided broadside *June the 21th 1715. Mrs. James's Reasons* [83] was also printed as a six-page pamphlet [84]; her broadside *Good Counsel ... To King George* [1715?] [89] also as a four-page pamphlet [88], and her four-page pamphlet *Dated Septemb. 29th 1712* [70] as a six-page pamphlet titled *The Case Of Mrs. Elenor James, Or, The High-Church Legacy To The Parish of St. Bennet's, Paul's-Wharf* [71]. At least one of these reprintings was performed not by James or her agents but by another printer who was apparently attempting to capitalize on a scandal. James's four-page pamphlet *Dated Septemb. 29th 1712* [70], which tells of her conflict with St. Benet Paul's Wharf Church, was reprinted by 'J. Read near Fleet-street' as a six-page pamphlet titled *The Case Of Mrs. Elenor James, Or, The High-Church Legacy*, n.d. [after Sept. 1712] [71]. James Read, a successful newspaper printer, gave James's work a scandalous new headline capitalizing on her public persona as a defender of the Church of England and heightening the controversy by giving it political overtones. He substituted for the type font of the earlier pamphlet's title a wildly oversize font that could not fail to catch the eye of passers-by. More subtly, he rigorously corrected James's grammar and punctuation. Another of James's texts that may have been reprinted (and even written) by someone else is the somewhat mysterious *Good Counsel From Mrs. Eleanor James, To King George* [1715?]. While the pamphlet version of this text is so harshly critical of the monarch as to suggest that an ardent Jacobite may have published the work under James's name, the broadside version adds to the mystery, for it is printed in a type font unlike that found in any other of James's works [88, 89]. Another broadside, *May the 15th, 1705. Mrs. Elianor James's Speech to the Citizens of London, at Guildhall* [56], shows the imprint 'Printed by T. Bland, near the Royal-Exchange, 1705'. The 1705 parliamentary election was one of the most hotly-contested of the eighteenth century, and Thomas Bland appears to have judged this item, an electioneering broadside, to merit large-scale distribution by a major trade publisher, for the following day it was re-issued as *May the 16th, 1705. Mrs. James's Advice for Electing of Parliament-Men*, 'Printed for Anne Baldwin in Warwick-Lane' [57].

Facsimile editions like this one allow us to study the physical format of works alongside their ideological arguments – and so to recognize the relationship between the 'insides' and 'outsides' of texts. As the works of a prolific author who was also a printer, James's broadsides and pamphlets provide exemplary support for the

argument that ‘the material facts of literature’s making are neither contextual nor subtextual but, in a primary and inherent sense, textual’ (Sutherland 584).

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1. *A New Answer To A Speech* (n.d. [1681]) is reproduced, by permission, from the copy at the Houghton Library, Harvard University (shelfmark PEB65.J100.681n, r-v). Manuscript notations on this copy read '1d' and '6 Jan. 1681/0'. The text block of the original measures 325 × 170 mm on page one. There are three different variants of this broadside; in this one, James responds anonymously. For the Whig broadside she answers, see no. 95, reproduced on pp. 263–4. [ESTC R1518]