

General Introduction

The Other Voice

The three plays collected in this edition belong to a rich and vibrant tradition of household theatrical activity that involved early modern English women as patrons, spectators, performers, and readers, while also affording opportunities for playwriting and dramatic design that were not available in commercial theater until the late 1660s.¹ The country homes of England's nobility were the scene of many kinds of theatrical activities, from full-scale dramas produced by troupes of traveling professional players to performances of a wide range of more modest entertainments by family, friends, or members of the household staff. Household drama differed in many respects from professional drama: it was usually written for, and performed in connection with specific times of the year or local festivities; it was more topical, referring to people, places, and events that may not be discernible to an audience in a different place or at a different time; and it was frequently more experimental because it was not produced in a regulated public setting for paying spectators. The involvement of women as authors of household drama is an important aspect of its experimental nature; it is just as much a hallmark of this theatrical tradition as is the absence of women from professional playwriting before the closing of the theaters in 1642. If we are to hear the voices of early modern English women dramatists, we must turn to household theater.²

In a different sense, the voices of early modern English women dramatists resonate in the material texts in which their plays have survived, whether as manuscripts or as printed books.³ Editions such as the present volume necessarily intervene between the earliest extant texts and the contemporary reader, and it is therefore vital that we become aware not only of the interventions that editors and technologies make in the transmission of these women's plays, but also of the

1. On the extensive involvement of women in early modern English theater, see, for example, Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin, eds., *Women Players in England, 1500–1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005).

2. Two plays by women did, however, appear in print during this period and therefore necessarily circulated outside the domestic context: Mary Sidney's *Antonius* (1592; reprinted as *The tragedie of Antonie* in 1595), and Elizabeth Cary's *The tragedie of Mariam* (1613).

3. For a survey of early modern women's manuscript and printed plays, see Marta Straznicky, "Private Drama," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 247–59. On women as play readers, including readers of other women's plays, see Straznicky, "Reading through the Body: Women and Printed Drama," in *The Book of the Play: Playwrights, Stationers, and Readers in Early Modern England*, ed. Marta Straznicky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 59–79.

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meanings that are embedded in the very materiality of their texts.⁴ Accordingly, this edition of Mary Wroth's *Loves Victorie* and the Cavendish sisters' *A Pastorall* and *The concealed Fansyes*, all of which survive in handwritten copies dating from their authors' lifetimes, draws on specific manuscripts as copy texts and attempts, insofar as possible, to represent or at least describe their idiosyncrasies and inherent ambiguities. *Loves Victorie* is here edited from the autograph manuscript now at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California; *A Pastorall* and *The concealed Fansyes* are both edited from the scribal copy of the plays now in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

Household Drama in Early Modern England

Household drama had a long history in England prior to the seventeenth century and is often defined by its occasional nature.⁵ Household plays were written or performed in a specific context, were often performed by members of the household themselves, and were conceived with particular audiences in mind. According to Suzanne Westfall, household theater was also "deliberately ephemeral, multi-medial, and frequently nontextual or metatextual."⁶ For this reason, much of the information we have about household theater comes from administrative records or audience accounts; it follows too that most of this evidence documents the household theater of elites, in part because their literacy rates far exceeded those of the lower classes. Yet because of the characteristics described above, we must also acknowledge that there is much about household theater of this period that is unrecoverable.

The texts and records of household theater that have survived show a wide variety of plays and entertainments performed in households, ranging from elaborate spectacles to intimate family theatricals. Early records of household theater

4. For a history of editing plays by early modern Englishwomen, see Marion Wynne-Davies, "Editing Early Modern Women's Dramatic Writing for Performance," in *Editing Early Modern Women*, ed. Sarah C. E. Ross and Paul Salzman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 156–75.

5. The household was one of the most common venues for performance before commercial theaters were built in London in the latter half of the sixteenth century; it continued to be prominent throughout the seventeenth century. For an overview of the earlier period of household drama, see Suzanne Westfall, *Patrons and Performances: Early Tudor Household Revels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 1–49, and Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 51–75.

6. Suzanne Westfall, "'A Commodity a Christmas Gambold or a Tumbling Trick': Household Theater," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 39–58 (39). The twenty-four printed volumes of the *Records of Early English Drama (REED)* record many examples of household theatricals and touring troupes sponsored by the nobility. For a list of the published collections, see <http://reed.utoronto.ca/print-collections-2/print-collections/>, accessed May 6, 2018.

show that some household plays were performed by troupes of professional touring players such as the Earl of Pembroke's Men, the Queen's Men, or the King's Men; this tradition of touring was a common practice for the London acting companies, especially when the theaters were closed for public health or political reasons.⁷ Some elite households had their own troupes of players, and some households, especially those of courtiers, staged lavish masques and entertainments for royalty and inner court circles.⁸ Elizabeth Russell, for instance, wrote a pastoral entertainment to celebrate the arrival of Queen Elizabeth at her estate at Bisham on August 11, 1592 that featured Russell's daughters in speaking roles.⁹ Similarly, Mary Sidney Herbert, aunt of Mary Wroth, wrote a pastoral dialogue to entertain the queen on a planned visit to Wilton House in 1599. Although the visit did not occur, Sidney's dialogue was nevertheless printed and took its place within a rich tradition of Elizabethan household entertainment.¹⁰ On a less exalted scale,

7. Peter H. Greenfield, "Touring," in Cox and Kastan, *A New History of Early English Drama*, 251–68 (258–59). For a geographic analysis of touring performances in early modern England, see Mark Brayshay, "Waits, Musicians, Bearwards and Players: The Inter-Urban Road Travel and Performances of Itinerant Entertainers in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of Historical Geography* 31, no. 3 (2005): 430–58.

8. Westfall, "A Commonty," 13–49, discusses households that had their own players. See especially her discussion of the chapel gentlemen and children.

9. Elizabeth Cooke Hoby Russell, "The Bisham Entertainment for Queen Elizabeth I, August 11, 1592," in *The Writings of an English Sappho*, ed. Patricia Phillippy with translations from Greek and Latin by Jaime Goodrich (Toronto: Iter and the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2011), 147–57. Although the entertainment was printed anonymously in Oxford by Joseph Barnes in 1592, critics have argued persuasively that Russell was its author. See Alexandra F. Johnston, "'The Lady of the farme': The Context of Lady Russell's Entertainment of Elizabeth at Bisham, 1592," *Early Theatre* 5 (2002): 71–85; Peter Davidson and Jane Stevenson, "Elizabeth I's Reception at Bisham (1592): Elite Women as Writers and Devisers," in *The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah Knight (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 207–26; Elizabeth Zeman Kolkovich, "Lady Russell, Elizabeth I, and Female Political Alliances through Performance," *English Literary Renaissance* 39 (2009): 290–314. Russell also staged a wedding masque at her home in London on June 16, 1600, in honor of her daughter's marriage. On the context of the masque, the text of which does not survive, see Phillippy, *Writings of an English Sappho*, 270–73, and Davidson and Stevenson, "Elizabeth I's Reception at Bisham," 221–22. Phillippy discusses Russell's unrelated creative engagements with painting, masques, and embroidery in "Chaste Painting: Elizabeth Russell's Theatres of Memory," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 7 (2012): 33–68.

10. Mary Sidney Herbert, "A Dialogue betweene two shepheards, *Thenot* and *Piers*, in praise of *Astrea*," in *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke*, vol. 1, *Poems, Translations, and Correspondence*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 89–91. On Sidney's dialogue in the context of entertainments at Wilton House, see Marta Straznicky, "Wilton House, Theatre, and Power," in *The Intellectual Culture of the English Country House, 1500–1700*, ed. Matthew Dimmock, Andrew Hadfield, and Margaret Healy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 223. On the country house as a safe space for

plays were also written and performed by family members for one another, and women participated in this tradition as well. Lady Rachel Fane, for instance, wrote short entertainments that reimagine life at her family home, Apethorpe.¹¹

While the term “household theater” may suggest homey, amateur plays put on with more enthusiasm than skill, this was not necessarily the case. Household entertainments could, at their most elaborate, be stunning examples of environmental theater. A famous example is the Earl of Hertford’s *The Honorable Entertainment given to the Queenes Majestie in Progresse, at Elvetham in Hampshire*, staged for Queen Elizabeth in 1591. This entertainment, which took place over four days at Hertford’s estate, involved lavish banquets, woodland spectacles, and various other extravagant shows, including a mock sea battle staged in a crescent-shaped pond that was specially dug for the occasion.¹² Spectacles of this magnitude reflect not only the wealth, but also the size and complexity of an elite household, which could number as many as 250 persons and in a very real sense function as public space.¹³ Furthermore, as Julie Sanders has shown, households were not discrete entities: they intersected with other spaces, both local and national, and should therefore be considered as sites of cultural exchange, in some respects even as avant-garde, rather than simply imitative of London theatrical trends.¹⁴ For many households of this scale, theatrical displays were anything but private and amateur: they were a vehicle for promoting dynastic interests and advertising the family’s wealth and power.¹⁵

A relevant example of the sophistication and cultural complexity of household theater are two masques commissioned in the 1630s by William Cavendish, the father of Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley, to be staged at the family

women dramatists, see Marion Wynne-Davies, “‘My Seeled Chamber and Dark Parlour Room’: The English Country House and Renaissance Women Dramatists,” in *Readings in Renaissance Women’s Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance, 1594–1998*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 1998), 60–68.

11. Centre for Kentish Studies U269 F38/1–4. For an edited text of one of Fane’s entertainments, see Marion O’Connor, ed., “Rachel Fane’s May Masque at Apethorpe, 1627,” *English Literary Renaissance* 36 (2005): 90–113 (105–13). See Alison Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women’s Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 96–101, for a detailed discussion of Fane’s works in a household context.

12. See *Elvetham: 1591*, in *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, ed. Jean Wilson (Woodbridge, NJ: D. S. Brewer, 1980), 96–118.

13. Westfall, “A Commonty,” 41.

14. See Julie Sanders, “Geographies of Performance in the Early Modern Midlands,” in *Performing Environments: Site-Specificity in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Susan Bennett and Mary Polito (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 119–37.

15. Walker, *Politics of Performance*, 51–53.

homes of Bolsover Castle and Welbeck Abbey.¹⁶ The masques were written by Ben Jonson, a successful commercial playwright in London and prolific writer of masques for the royal court.¹⁷ They were commissioned specifically for the visit of King Charles I to Cavendish's estates while the court was on progress through the kingdom.¹⁸ Both masques survive in acting texts with Jonson's annotations for performance at the Cavendish estates; that he later revised and prepared the texts for print shows that they were also meant to have an audience and cultural reach beyond the occasional and site-specific performance for which they were initially written.¹⁹

Julie Sanders has argued that these and other household theatricals had a significant impact on the public theater in London, particularly on the representation of women because the household setting enabled women performers to depict a different range of female perspectives and experiences than was possible for male actors.²⁰ This is indeed a key distinction between household theater and the London stage and also holds for women's involvement as patrons, writers, and designers. Women did not perform regularly in public until the 1660s, and it was during this period, too, when the plays of professional women writers such as Aphra Behn were first produced. Long before this time, however, household

16. The masques were *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck in Nottinghamshire* (May 21, 1633) and *Love's Welcome at Bolsover* (June 30, 1634).

17. Jonson was out of favor as a writer of court masques by the 1630s, though Newcastle continued to patronize him. Lynn Hulse writes that "Newcastle patronized several literary figures including Jonson, Brome, Shirley, Flecknoe, Dryden, and Shadwell. He particularly admired Jonson, whose masques and plays were a major influence on the Duke's own writings." "The King's Entertainment by the Duke of Newcastle," *Viator* 26 (1995): 355–405 (311). Jonson celebrated Newcastle in two epigrams and is a prominent figure in a manuscript compilation prepared by John Rolleston for the earl (British Library Harley MS 4955). See note 19, below.

18. Lynn Hulse, "Cavendish, William, first duke of Newcastle upon Tyne (*bap.* 1593, *d.* 1676)," *ODNB*. Cavendish himself wrote several plays, including plays for household performance and for commercial performance in London. Hulse notes that his *Witts Triumverate, or The Philosopher* "was written for performance before the king and queen in the winter of 1635–6," although there is no record of it having been staged. Cavendish also wrote a Christmas masque for performance at Welbeck and had two plays performed by the King's Men at Blackfriars Theater (*The Varietie* [ca. 1639–41] and *The Country Captaine* [1641]).

19. The acting texts are in British Library MS. Harley 4955, a composite manuscript of verses, poems, and entertainments prepared for William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle. The manuscript is in the hand of John Rolleston, Cavendish's secretary, who also prepared the two manuscripts of the Cavendish sisters' plays. For an analysis of British Library MS. Harley 4955, see Hilton Kelliher, "Donne, Jonson, Richard Andrews and The Newcastle Manuscript," *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700* 4 (1993): 134–73. The two masques were first printed in 1640 in the collected edition of Jonson's works. For a modern edition, see *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969).

20. Sanders, "Geographies of Performance," 133.

Introduction

Life and Works

Lady Mary Sidney Wroth (1587?–1651) was born into one of the most prominent and distinguished families of the Elizabethan era. The eldest of eleven children of Robert Sidney and Barbara Gamage, she grew up at Penshurst Place, the stately country house of the Sidney family in Kent. Her father held a succession of administrative and diplomatic posts for Queen Elizabeth that frequently took him to the Continent, an absence that was much lamented by his wife and children but that fortunately generated extensive correspondence between him, his family, and his estate agent Rowland Whyte. This correspondence provides us with detailed information about Wroth’s upbringing and youth, including her education. In October 1595, when Wroth had just turned twelve, Whyte cheerfully reported to her father that “she is very forward in her learning, writing, and other exercises she is put to, as dancing and the virginals.”¹ She herself had been corresponding regularly with her father from at least the age of eight, when he wrote to Whyte that “I thank Malkin [his affectionate name for Mary] for her letter and am exceeding glad to see she writes so well: tell her from me I will give her a new gown for her letter. Kiss all the rest from me.”² The tenderness of this brief note speaks volumes about the context in which Wroth grew up: unlike the vast majority of young women of her day, she received a wide-ranging secular education and her academic gifts were a joy to her father, the person whose authority over her upbringing could just as easily have denied her these opportunities.

Wroth’s father, himself a poet and author of four large volumes of journals, was a member of the Sidney family, whose cultural activities provided Wroth with the models and influences vital to her own development as a writer.³ Robert’s older brother was the legendary Philip Sidney, famed courtier and author of

1. Rowland Whyte, *The Letters (1595–1608) of Rowland Whyte*, ed. Michael G. Brennan, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Margaret P. Hannay (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2013), 67, cited by Margaret P. Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 43. I draw on Hannay’s magisterial biography for many of the details in my account of Wroth’s life. The biography has significant new information that corrects a number of misconceptions about Wroth’s relationship with her husband, her position at court following his death, and the impact of her having had two illegitimate children with her cousin, William Herbert. Hannay summarizes these and other findings in “Sleuthing in the Archives: The Life of Lady Mary Wroth,” in *Re-Reading Mary Wroth*, ed. Katherine R. Larson and Naomi J. Miller with Andrew Strycharski (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 19–33. See also Mary Ellen Lamb, “Wroth [née Sidney], Lady Mary (1587?–1651/1653),” *ODNB*.

2. Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, 43.

3. On Robert Sidney’s writings, see Germaine Warkentin, “Robert Sidney’s ‘Darcke Offerings’: The Making of a Late Tudor Manuscript *Canzoniere*,” *Spenser Studies* 12 (1998): 37–73, and Robert

several foundational works of English literature (*Astrophel and Stella*, *The Defence of Poetry*, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*). Their sister, Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, was also a celebrated literary figure and revered as a model of female learning.⁴ In collaboration with her brother Philip she translated the Psalms; she edited and published his works after his death in 1586; and, in the 1590s, she translated from the French Robert Garnier's play, *Antonius: A Tragedie*, as well as Philippe de Mornay's philosophical treatise, *A Discourse of Life and Death*. The latter two works were published together in 1592 under Mary Sidney Herbert's name, and the play was reprinted alone in 1595 with a new title, *The Tragedie of Antonie*. Wroth's aunt was also a distinguished patron of writers, artists, scientists, and other intellectuals; she created a highly respected academic salon at Wilton House, the ancestral estate of the Herbert family in Wiltshire. Philip Sidney famously said he wrote the *Arcadia* at Wilton, under his sister's influence, and Queen Elizabeth was expected there on progress in 1599. That visit never occurred, but Mary Sidney Herbert composed a delightfully wry entertainment for the occasion that displays her mastery of pastoral rhetoric.⁵ In her youth, Mary Wroth was frequently at Wilton or at the Herberts' London home, Baynards Castle (where she had been born). Judging by the prominence in her oeuvre of the major genres in which her aunt and uncle wrote (prose romance, sonnets and lyrics, and pastoral drama), it seems very likely, as Margaret Hannay has argued, that Mary Sidney Herbert was a support and inspiration for Wroth in her creative work.⁶

Equally important for Wroth's development as a writer was the time she spent at court or in contact with court culture, from her late teens through her late twenties, a period that coincides with her marriage to Robert Wroth (1604–1614). When King James came to the throne in 1603, Robert Sidney was appointed Lord Chamberlain to James's consort Queen Anne, which put him in charge of managing her household, including organizing the spectacular masques and dances for which her court was famous. During this time, Wroth normally spent the winter season in London. In the Christmas season of 1604–5, Wroth danced at

Shephard, "The Political Commonplace Books of Sir Robert Sidney," *Sidney Journal* 21, no. 1 (2003): 1–30.

4. For biographical information on Mary Sidney, see Margaret P. Hannay, "Herbert [née Sidney], Mary, countess of Pembroke (1561–1621)," *ODNB*.

5. On this and other theatrical events at Wilton, see Marta Straznicky, "Wilton House, Theatre, and Power," in *The Intellectual Culture of the English Country House, 1500–1700*, ed. Matthew Dimmock, Andrew Hadfield, and Margaret Healy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 217–31.

6. See Margaret P. Hannay, "'Your Vertuous and Learned Aunt': The Countess of Pembroke as a Mentor to Mary Wroth," in *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England*, ed. Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 16–34. For biographical information on Philip Sidney, see H. R. Woudhuysen, "Sidney, Sir Philip (1554–1586)," *ODNB*.

court in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*; as the daughter of the Queen's Lord Chamberlain, she most likely also saw at least some of that season's professionally performed plays, which included Shakespeare's *Othello*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Henry V*, and *Love's Labour's Lost*.⁷ In 1609, she was a member of the audience for Jonson's *The Masque of Beauty*, his sequel to *The Masque of Blackness*. There are many courtly festivities and entertainments involving women represented in her works, so it is plausible that Wroth participated in other performances at the courts of King James and Queen Anne.⁸ Certainly her writings resonate with the pastoral, romantic, and mythological discourses found in Jacobean court entertainments.

Throughout the years when she was at court, Wroth was known not only as a Sidney, but also as the wife of Sir Robert Wroth, the king's forester whose responsibilities included guiding the king's hunting excursions and hosting him and the court at Loughton Hall, the couple's magnificent country house near the royal hunting parks in Essex.⁹ They were married at Penshurst on September 27, 1604 and were widely praised as a couple for their gracious hospitality. Although few specifics are known of their married life, they were typical of a couple in royal service in that they moved seasonally from household to household and frequently lived apart.

It was during the early years of her marriage that Wroth began to write poetry, and she circulated enough of it among family and friends to earn the praise of Ben Jonson, one of the family's many *protégés*, long before her prose romance *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* was printed in 1621.¹⁰ Jonson had probably tutored Wroth's younger brother Will at Penshurst around 1611, so it is conceivable they knew one another personally.¹¹ Jonson wrote two epigrams to Wroth and dedicated his play *The Alchemist* to her in 1612 (this is the only printed play in the period dedicated to a woman). Although the epigrams were not published until 1616, numerous other tributes to Wroth indicate that she was circulating her

7. Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, 123.

8. Queen Anne established a tradition of female masquing at the Stuart court to which Wroth would certainly have been exposed; see Clare McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage: Anna of Denmark and Female Masquing in the Stuart Court (1590–1619)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

9. On Loughton Hall, see Susie West, "Finding Wroth's Loughton Hall," *Sidney Journal* 34, no. 1 (2016): 15–31.

10. On the relationship between Jonson and Wroth, see Michael G. Brennan, "Creating Female Authorship in the Early Seventeenth Century: Ben Jonson and Lady Mary Wroth," in *Women's Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550–1800*, ed. George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 73–93.

11. Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, 152.

poetry as early as 1611 and becoming known as an accomplished writer.¹² There is no indication that Wroth's husband in any way objected to or interfered with her writing; indeed, his will refers to her as his "dear and very loving wife" and explicitly bequeaths to her "all her books and furniture of her study and closet," suggesting he was aware of the importance of these belongings and testifying, as Margaret Hannay points out, to "a real affection between husband and wife."¹³

Wroth's husband died in March 1614, only a month after the birth of their first child, James. This was a momentous period in her life. As a widow, Wroth lost much of her income, and with the tragic death of her son only two years later, in July 1616, she also lost her claim to the Wroth properties. We know that King James and later King Charles protected her from her creditors, and although she accrued large debts from the rebuilding of Loughton Hall, she appears to have continued living there in considerable luxury.¹⁴ The period after 1614 is very likely the time when Wroth gained the freedom and opportunity to devote herself to her writing; her only firmly dated work, the vast prose romance *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, was printed in 1621.¹⁵ Appended to *Urania* is a series of sonnets and songs purportedly written by the main character, Pamphilia, to her beloved Amphilanthus. These same poems and several others are also found in an autograph manuscript, now at the Folger Shakespeare Library, that was written before the printed edition.¹⁶ Interestingly, the paper used in this manuscript

12. Brennan, "Creating Female Authorship," 79–80. For Jonson's epigrams "CIII. To Mary, Lady Wroth," and "CV. To Mary, Lady Wroth," see *Ben Jonson: The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 71–73. The dedication to *The Alchemist* is addressed "To the Lady, most Deserving Her Name, and Blood: Mary, Lady Wroth"; see Jonson, *The Alchemist*, ed. Alvin B. Kernan (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 19.

13. Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, 171, 172.

14. Hannay, "Sleuthing in the Archives," 29.

15. *The Countesse of Mountomeries Urania* (London: J. Marriott and J. Grismand, 1621). The romance has been edited by Josephine A. Roberts, *The First Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995). All references to the printed *Urania* are to this edition.

16. Folger Shakespeare Library V.a.104. On the relationship between the manuscript and printed versions of Wroth's poems, see Wroth, *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, ed. Josephine A. Roberts (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 62; and Ilona Bell, "The Autograph Manuscript of Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*," in Larson and Miller with Strycharski, *Re-Reading Mary Wroth*, 171–81. The ordering of the poems in the Folger manuscript is analyzed by Gavin Alexander, "Constant Works: A Framework for Reading Mary Wroth," *Sidney Newsletter & Journal* 14, no. 2 (Winter 1996–1997): 5–32; Heather Dubrow, "And Thus Leave Off": Reevaluating Mary Wroth's Folger Manuscript, V.a.104," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 22, no. 2 (2003): 273–91; and Margaret P. Hannay, "The 'Ending End' of Lady Mary Wroth's Manuscript of Poems," *Sidney Journal* 31, no. 1 (2013): 1–22. For an edition of the two versions of the poems, see Ilona Bell and Steven W. May, eds., "*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*" in *Manuscript and Print* (Toronto: Iter; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2017).

is identical to that in the Penshurst copy of *Loves Victorie*, helping to date that version of the play to the same period.¹⁷ Wroth also wrote a sequel to *Urania* amounting to over 500 pages in two manuscript volumes. The use of different inks and pens indicates that she worked on this text over an extended period,¹⁸ and because the narrative refers to events in Wroth's life from around 1620 and after, it is likely that the second part of *Urania* was written later than the first.¹⁹ Wroth's creative output thus appears to have been concentrated in the decade or so following the death of her husband.

During this decade, too, an intimate relationship developed between Wroth and her cousin William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke. A distinguished patron and enormously powerful member of the nobility under King James, Pembroke was a notorious womanizer who in his youth had been dismissed from court by Queen Elizabeth for having an affair that led to the birth of an illegitimate child.²⁰ He was eight years older than Wroth, and they seem to have been close throughout their lives. The birth of twins (a girl, Katherine, and a boy, William) in the spring of 1624 confirms that they were physically intimate by this time at the latest. Throughout Wroth's writing, there is something of an "obsessive repetition" of narratives concerning the forsaken love of a cousin,²¹ but considering the sophistication with which she weaves autobiographical references into her fiction (see the section Content and Analysis, below), a longer-term romantic attraction can only be inferred. What is perhaps more important, if not more conclusive, is that writing itself played some role in the development of Wroth and Pembroke's relationship, providing not only a fictional veil for the representation of events and emotions, but also a shared creative activity. Pembroke wrote love lyrics, pastoral songs, and conversational poems that belong to the same Sidnean tradition as the poetry found in Wroth's *Urania*, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, and *Loves Victorie*. And while his poetry was not published until 1660, it circulated in manuscript decades earlier. Moreover, there is strong evidence that Wroth and Herbert exchanged poems and that some of these, too, circulated widely. For example, one of the sonnets in Wroth's manuscript of the second part of *Urania*, "Had I loved

17. Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, 218.

18. Roberts, *Poems*, 65.

19. The manuscript of the second part of the *Urania* is at the Newberry Library in Chicago (Case MS fy 1565. W95). It has been edited by Josephine A. Roberts, completed by Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller, *The Second Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (Tempe: Renaissance English Text Society in conjunction with Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999). All references to the manuscript continuation of *Urania* are to this edition. On the dating of the second part of *Urania*, see pages xx–xxi.

20. For biographical information on William Herbert, see Victor Stater, "Herbert, William, third earl of Pembroke (1580–1630)," *ODNB*.

21. Hannay, "Sleuthing in the Archives," 22.

butt att that rate,” exists in four other seventeenth-century manuscripts and is attributed to William Herbert in three of them.²²

When her prose romance *Urania* was printed in 1621, Wroth was known as a writer, but only a limited circle of friends and acquaintances would by that time have read her work. The publication of *The Countesse of Mountgomerie Urania* was a game changer: produced in a large, expensive format, with an elaborately engraved title page boldly identifying the author’s heritage as a Sidney and available for sale at two well-known London bookshops, Wroth’s book drew attention to itself and its author in a way that made it difficult for her to control its circulation and reception as had been possible with manuscript publication. Presumably this was intended, for there is nothing illegal about the circumstances of its publication: the book was duly registered with the Stationers’ Company; its title page was engraved by a prominent Dutch artist, Simon van de Passe, who had painted portraits of royalty and other members of Wroth’s family; and Wroth herself states that she sent a copy to the Duke of Buckingham.²³

Very soon after the book’s appearance in print, however, Wroth was accused of libeling the family of a courtier, Lord Denny, in one of the romance’s inset narratives.²⁴ If it had happened today, we might say their quarrel went viral. Denny attacked Wroth in a poem titled “To Pamphilia from the father-in-law of Seralius,” calling her a hermaphrodite, a monster, and a fool whose “witt runns madd not caring who it strike.”²⁵ The poem was circulated at court, and perhaps beyond: it survives in three manuscript copies.²⁶ Wroth responded with an attack poem of her own, mirroring his line for line and accusing him of being so enflamed with rage and passion that he has lost all nobility. Denny and Wroth also exchanged several bitter letters in which they insulted one another and disputed the extent to which *Urania* is or is not a representation of real people and events. These letters, too, were copied and circulated, and they gained enough notoriety that reference is made to them in the correspondence of other courtiers. According to one of Wroth’s letters, Denny even went so far as to bring his complaint to King James. In her defence,

22. For bibliographic information on these manuscripts, all of which are in the British Library, see Roberts, *Poems*, 217. On the literary relationship between Wroth and William Herbert, see Mary Ellen Lamb, “Can You Suspect a Change in Me?: Poems by Mary Wroth and William Herbert, Third Earl of Pembroke,” in Larson and Miller with Strycharski, *Re-Reading Mary Wroth*, 53–68.

23. Roberts, *First Part of The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, cvi; Roberts, *Poems*, 236. On the significance of the frontispiece, see Mary Ellen Lamb, “Selling Mary Wroth’s *Urania*: The Frontispiece and the Connoisseurship of Romance,” *Sidney Journal* 34, no. 1 (2016): 33–48.

24. For a detailed account of the Denny affair, see Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, 235–42.

25. Roberts, *Poems*, 32–33. On the circulation of the hermaphrodite poems and responses to them, see Paul Salzman, “Mary Wroth and Hermaphroditic Circulation,” in *Early Modern Women and the Poem*, ed. Susan Wiseman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 117–30.

26. The manuscripts are at the University of Nottingham Library, the Huntington Library, and the British Library; see Roberts, *Poems*, 32n82, and 33n83.

Wroth insists that she never intended to represent Denny or his family in any part of *Urania*, that his misreading of the book reflects his own perverse imagination, and that she is prepared to answer his slanders in public. In the year or two following the initial firestorm, Wroth wrote letters to a number of other courtiers seeking their continued support and insisting on her innocence; the affair was an ongoing challenge for her. But while Wroth had offered to have copies of her book removed from sale, whatever effort she made in this regard proved futile: at least twenty-nine copies of *Urania* have survived, and the marks of ownership and marginal annotations on many of them indicate that the book was valued and read with great interest.²⁷ One surviving copy even has Wroth's own handwritten corrections and revisions, showing that she gave the printed book the kind of ongoing attention evident in her manuscripts.²⁸ Perhaps she did this while she was at work on the second part of *Urania* in the early 1620s, the latest of her surviving writings.²⁹

The 1620s for Wroth were also marked by great personal change: she lost her mother and her aunt Mary Sidney Herbert in the months preceding the publication of *Urania*; she evidently resumed her relationship with William Herbert, for their twins were born in the spring of 1624; her father died in 1626; and her dear friend and sister-in-law, Susan, the Countess of Montgomery named in the title of *Urania*, died of smallpox in January, 1629. William Herbert died on April 9, 1630. Each of these deaths would have been a great personal loss to Wroth, and none of them brought her any relief from the financial problems she had been facing since the death of her son in 1616. Nor is there any evidence that Herbert contributed materially to the upbringing of his children, although it does appear that the children were known by his surname and that Wroth was not stigmatized on account of their illegitimacy.³⁰

Thus, throughout the 1620s Wroth was having to adjust to the loss of her closest relatives and the resulting shifts in family networks, while also, from 1624, attending to the upbringing of her two children. It was this responsibility and the management of her complex finances to which she seems to have devoted her remaining years. There are very few surviving documents to chart this period of her

27. For the contemporary reception of *Urania*, see Rahel Orgis, "[A] Story Very Well Woorth Readinge': Why Early Modern Readers Valued Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*," *Sidney Journal* 31, no. 1 (2013): 81–100. The details of Wroth's argument with Denny are discussed by Josephine A. Roberts, "An Unpublished Literary Quarrel Concerning the Suppression of Mary Wroth's *Urania* (1621)," *Notes & Queries* 222 (1977): 532–35; and Paul Salzman, "Contemporary References in Mary Wroth's *Urania*," *Review of English Studies*, new series, 29, no. 114 (May 1978): 178–81.

28. This copy is now at the University of Pennsylvania Rare Books and Manuscript Library and available in facsimile online at <http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017/d/print/3441687>, accessed May 6, 2018. For a list and brief descriptions of the known surviving copies of *Urania*, see Roberts, *First Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, 663–64.

29. Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, 263.

30. Hannay, "Sleuthing in the Archives," 25.

life, and it is certainly possible that any later writing she may have produced was destroyed in fires at Loughton Hall and Wilton House.³¹ She continued to live at Loughton until her death in March, 1651. Throughout this time, she entertained family and members of the nobility and is referred to by her title in various parish and legal records. It appears she retained her social position and was far from destitute.³² Her reputation as a writer understandably solidified around *Urania*, this being the only work of hers to have reached print, but later in her life she was also admired as a learned poet and continued to be addressed as the niece of Sir Philip Sidney.³³ The place of her burial is not known.

The Huntington Manuscript of Loves Victorie

Loves Victorie (HM600) was acquired by the Henry E. Huntington Library in 1923.³⁴ It is a folio manuscript consisting of twenty-one leaves and is written in Lady Mary Wroth's handwriting. The physical state of the manuscript suggests a complex process of composition. Wroth used two distinct hands, and the presence of numerous gaps, revisions, and insertions create a striking discontinuity both in the flow and in the materiality of the text.³⁵ The play is headed with a title, and its final page is written in a very compressed script. There are significantly more lines on this page than on any other page of the manuscript, possibly indicating that Wroth framed the play as it exists even though it ends abruptly with a speech prefix.

31. On the 1836 fire at Loughton Hall and the loss of its library, see Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, 309–10. Wilton House suffered a massive fire in 1647.

32. Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, 277. Hannay also reveals that Wroth's daughter Katherine married well and moved to Wales with her husband; Wroth's son Will was given an estate in Ireland and a prestigious military commission (287–94).

33. Hannay, *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, 307–8.

34. Portions of this section and the Content and Analysis section of the introduction were published in Marta Straznicky, "Lady Mary Wroth's Patchwork Play: The Huntington Manuscript of *Love's Victory*," *Sidney Journal* 34, no. 1 (2016): 81–92. I thank Iter Press and the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies for permitting early publication of this material. On the date of the Huntington Library's acquisition of the manuscript, see Josephine A. Roberts, "The Huntington Manuscript of Lady Mary Wroth's Play, 'Loves Victorie,'" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (1983): 156–74 (162); Arthur Freeman, "Love's Victory: A Supplementary Note," *The Library* 19, no. 3 (1997): 252–54, who states that HM600 was acquired "after 1922" (252); and Peter Beal, online *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts, 1450–1700*, http://www.celm-ms.org.uk/authors/wrothladymary.html#de-lisle-penshurst-place_id393287, accessed May 6, 2018. On the flyleaf of HM600 is a note stating that the manuscript "was acquired from Rosenbach Company on Sept. 6, 1923."

35. Wroth's hand in HM600 was established by Roberts in her seminal study, "The Huntington Manuscript." In addition, Roberts provides a detailed account of the physical nature of the manuscript, its provenance, and its literary context. For a detailed description of the manuscript, see below, "Note on the Text."

Introduction

Life and Works

Jane Cavendish (1621–1669) and Elizabeth Brackley (1626–1663) were born into one of the wealthiest families in northern England. Their great-grandmother was Bess of Hardwick, who, over several marriages, amassed enormous wealth and became one of the highest-ranking nobles in the country.¹ The daughters of William Cavendish, the Marquis (later Duke) of Newcastle (1593–1676), and Elizabeth Bassett (1594–1643),² Cavendish and Brackley were also the stepdaughters, after their mother's death in 1643, of Margaret Cavendish (*née* Lucas), who married their father in 1645 and whose many plays, scientific treatises, and other literary works continue to be read and studied.³ Cavendish and Brackley had a sister, Frances (?–1678), and two brothers, Charles, Viscount Mansfield (1626?–1659), and Henry (1630–1691), who became Viscount Mansfield after Charles's death in 1659, the Earl of Ogle in 1665, and second Duke of Newcastle in 1676. In 1641, Elizabeth married John Egerton, Viscount Brackley (later the Earl of Bridgewater).⁴ Margaret Cavendish reports that Brackley lived with her family for some time after the marriage on account of her young age.⁵ Brackley appears to have still been living with the family at the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642, and likely remained with her sisters at Welbeck Abbey through 1644–1645, when she and Jane Cavendish are thought to have written *A Pastorall* and *The concealed Fansyes*.⁶

1. See Elizabeth Goldring, "Talbot [*née* Hardwick], Elizabeth [Bess; *called* Bess of Hardwick], countess of Shrewsbury (1527?–1608)," *ODNB*.

2. For biographical information on Jane Cavendish, see Jennet Humphreys, rev. Sean Kelsey, "Cheyne, Lady Jane (1620/21–1669)," *ODNB*; on Elizabeth Brackley, see Betty S. Travitsky, "Egerton [*née* Cavendish], Elizabeth, countess of Bridgewater (1626–1663)," *ODNB*; and on William Cavendish, see Lynn Hulse, "Cavendish, William, first duke of Newcastle upon Tyne (*bap.* 1593, *d.* 1676)," *ODNB*.

3. See James Fitzmaurice, "Cavendish [*née* Lucas], Margaret, duchess of Newcastle upon Tyne (1623?–1673)," *ODNB*.

4. See Francis Espinasse, "Egerton, John, second earl of Bridgewater (1623–1686)," *ODNB*. Like Cavendish and Brackley's family, Egerton's family had strong literary interests. Egerton himself acted in John Milton's *Comus* (1634), which was written for performance at Ludlow Castle. The Egerton family also fostered women's involvement in household productions; Lady Alice Egerton, John Egerton's grandmother, devised an entertainment for Queen Elizabeth in 1602 at her house at Harefield. See Sara Mueller, "Domestic Work in Progress Entertainments," in *Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Michelle M. Dowd and Natasha Korda (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 145–59 (155–59).

5. Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High, and Puissant Prince William Cavendish, Duke, Marquess, and Earl of Newcastle* (London: A. Maxwell, 1667), 95.

6. According to Mary-Louise Coolahan, "the poetry spans a period encompassing events from 1635 up to at least 1648, although the quantity of poems concerned with Newcastle's exile and 'Sister

Cavendish and Brackley's upbringing was privileged not just because of their family's wealth, but also because they were well educated and had a father who encouraged their literary interests.⁷ Newcastle himself was a noted theatrical patron and writer, and his positive influence on his daughters' writing is explicitly acknowledged in their dedications of their work to him and, more generally, in the works themselves; both *The concealed Fancies* and *A Pastorall* are structured around his absence and express longing for his return.⁸ The Bodleian manuscript of their writings, entitled *POEMS SONGS a PASTORALL AND a PLAY by the R^h Hon^{ble} the Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley*, features numerous tributes to their father, beginning with a poem by Cavendish titled "The Greater Example":

My Lord.
 You are the Accademy of all trueth,
 And our next worlds greate Example, that's youth,
 Good natures quinticence, you are, all knowes;
 And by your happy sword, conquer'd, your foes.
 For courage, witt, and Judgement, this is true,
 With natures perfect frame, 'tis onely you:
 This Carrecter of trueth, none can but see,
 'Tis Newcastle's Excellence; none but hee.⁹

Cavendish conceives of her father as her "example," and in her writing seeks to emulate him. While Cavendish and Brackley's works highlight the influence of their father, their mother, who died not long before their plays were written, is

Brackley' ... locate the volume predominantly within the mid-1640s." "Presentation Volume of Jane Cavendish's Poetry," in Millman and Wright, *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Poetry*, 87–89 (87).

7. Newcastle's efforts to train his children to write witty verse is noted in Jane Milling, "Siege and Cipher: The Closet Drama of the Cavendish Sisters," *Women's History Review* 6, no. 3 (1997): 411–26 (414). Betty S. Travitsky observes that their education lacked the rigor of other famously well-educated women, like Sir Thomas More's children: "No one would—or should—equate the exercises Cavendish designed for his young children with the Latin compositions assigned the young More children or suggest that the worldly Cavendish was creator of a humanist academy on the austere model of More's home in Chelsea, but such manuscript witnesses attest to his pride in and nurturing of his very young children, and particularly to his fostering their interest in letters and their efforts at composition." *Subordination and Authorship in Early Modern England: The Case of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and Her "Loose Papers"* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), 29.

8. Newcastle was patron to playwrights such as Ben Jonson, James Shirley, William Davenant, and others. He also wrote plays himself, including a masque for his daughters that he called a "Christmas toye." See *Dramatic Works by William Cavendish*, ed. Lynn Hulse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 26–27.

9. Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 3.

commemorated in a short elegy that is included in their poems.¹⁰ Interestingly, Cavendish and Brackley's plays do not mention their mother, nor do any of their central female characters have a mother.

Cavendish and Brackley's plays reflect the benefits of their education and the environment in which they were raised. As Lisa Hopkins puts it, "The sisters were thus part of an extended family circle with copious and intimate knowledge of the dramatic productions and conventions of the thirty or so years preceding the English Civil War."¹¹ Accordingly, their works show a familiarity with genres popular in the commercial theater and at court. *A Pastorall* is written as a masque, a form of drama that flourished at court throughout the first half of the seventeenth century.¹² As noted above in the general introduction, Newcastle hosted King Charles I on two occasions and for those visits commissioned masques from Ben Jonson, a leading masque writer at court.¹³ *The concealed Fancies* also uses elements of the masque. Moreover, it includes references to the works of Shakespeare and other dramatists, making it likely that Cavendish and Brackley read plays in print as well as seeing plays performed in their own or others' households.¹⁴ The sisters' two plays, along with over eighty short poems, are collected in two extant manuscript books, one now in the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, and the other in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.¹⁵ Their collaborative writing appears to have taken place when they were living together, though both of them continued to write after their marriages.¹⁶

10. Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 31.

11. Lisa Hopkins, "Judith Shakespeare's Reading: Teaching *The Concealed Fancies*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (1996): 396–406 (399).

12. For a detailed definition of masque, see below, Content and Analysis section of *A Pastorall*.

13. The masques were *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck* (1633) and *Love's Welcome at Bolsover* (1634). Newcastle used these lavish entertainments as many courtiers did: to gain advantage at court. His efforts bore fruit, and in 1638, he became a member of the privy council and governor to Charles I's son, the future Charles II. See Hulse, "Cavendish, William," for further details on Newcastle's attempts in the 1630s to win favor at court.

14. Hopkins, "Judith Shakespeare's Reading," 399–405.

15. Based upon evidence from the Beinecke manuscript, Alexandra G. Bennett and Mary-Louise Coolahan argue that Jane Cavendish was the sole author of the poems. See Bennett, "'Now Let My Language Speake': The Authorship, Rewriting, and Audience(s) of Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 11, no. 2 (2005): 1–13 (6); Coolahan, "Presentation Volume," 87. Ezell says of the Bodleian manuscript that since "few of the pieces are specifically attributed ... the volume suggests a collaborative and cooperative effort rather than pieces of individual workmanship." "To Be Your Daughter in Your Pen," 284.

16. Jane Cavendish's elegy on her sister Elizabeth's death is printed in Germaine Greer et al., eds., *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of 17th Century Women's Verse* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1988), 108–9. Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship*, 174–207, gives transcriptions of Elizabeth Brackley's

During the English Civil War (1642–1651), Cavendish and Brackley found themselves without parental supervision in a castle that was, at different times, besieged, occupied, or captured. Paradoxically, it was this circumstance that allowed the sisters the time and the freedom to write plays that reimagined their own lives and to think through issues as varied as the roles of women in marriage, class politics, the tragedies of war, courtship, witch controversies, and familial and sisterly bonds.¹⁷ The Civil War is thus an essential context for understanding Cavendish and Brackley's plays. The war was fought between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians, primarily about the role of parliament in governance. The Parliamentarians advocated for an increased, formalized role of an elected parliament in the governance of the country, whereas the Royalists sought to protect the power of the monarch. The war saw tens of thousands of deaths and, shockingly, led to the execution of Charles I in 1649. Newcastle was captain general of the king's northern forces and, with his two sons, fought actively until 1644. After suffering defeat at the Battle of Marston Moor in July, 1644, Newcastle went into exile, first in Hamburg, then Antwerp, and finally in Paris at the court of Queen Henrietta Maria.¹⁸ Cavendish and Brackley, along with their younger sister Frances, remained at the family home of Welbeck Abbey. A letter from Jane Cavendish establishes that at some point in the mid-1640s, she and possibly her sisters also spent time at Ashridge, a royal residence that belonged to the Egerton family.¹⁹ Welbeck was captured on August 2, 1644, by the Parliamentarians under the Earl of Manchester, who vowed that Newcastle's daughters would remain safe.²⁰ Welbeck was briefly recaptured by the Royalists in 1645 and then finally

"Loose Papers" (Brackley, due to the complicated nature of aristocratic naming conventions, was also known as Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and, after 1649, the Countess of Bridgewater). The "Loose Papers" were compiled after Brackley's death by her husband and contain short poems and prayers. Three manuscript copies of the "Loose Papers" are extant; Travitsky transcribes one of two versions held by the Huntington Library (Ellesmere MS 8377; the other copy is Ellesmere MS 8376). The third manuscript of the "Loose Papers" is held by the British Library (BL MS Egerton 607). For more on Brackley's "Loose Papers," see below.

17. Findlay, *Playing Spaces*, 53. Sarah C. E. Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 102, notes that Cavendish and Brackley's situation at Welbeck was not unique; other gentlewomen of this period, like Lady Fanshawe, Lady Halkett, and Lady Brilliana Harley, took charge of their family's houses during the war. Deanne Williams, *Shakespeare and the Performance of Girlhood* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 189, argues that alongside these increased opportunities and responsibilities that came with the Civil War, Cavendish and Brackley also experienced a protracted girlhood because of their circumstances.

18. Hulse, "Cavendish, William," *ODNB*.

19. Huntington Library, Ellesmere MS 11143, quoted in Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship*, 64–65, and Greer et al., *Kissing the Rod*, 107. Further examples of letters written by Jane Cavendish can be found in the University of Nottingham's Portland Collection MSS Pw 1/86–90.

20. Edward Montagu, Earl of Manchester to Committee of both kingdoms, August 6, 1644, in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series of the Reign of Charles I, 1625–1649*, ed. William Douglas Hamilton

surrendered at the end of the year, at which time the family was forced to leave the house.²¹

In addition to the poems and plays preserved in the Bodleian and Beinecke manuscripts, letters written by Jane Cavendish during this period offer insight into what life at Welbeck was like under siege and while Newcastle was in exile. We do know that the family was in communication with one another; indeed, Cavendish wrote a poem about receiving a letter from her father.²² The sisters were active in the war cause and took pains to do what they could to preserve their family's estate, including "salvaging the family plate."²³ The paintings at Welbeck Abbey, including one by Van Dyck, were reportedly saved by Cavendish.²⁴ She relayed "military information to the King's commanders at Oxford" on behalf of her father,²⁵ sold her jewels to raise cash, and sent Newcastle 1,000 pounds while he was in exile.²⁶

After the war, Jane Cavendish married Charles Cheyne, who became Viscount of Newhaven in 1654. Madeline Dewhurst's analysis of family letters from this period shows that Cavendish, like her character Luceny in *The concealed Fansyes*, chose her own husband and also had to advocate for the marriage because Newcastle did not think Cheyne was wealthy enough for her.²⁷ In a letter from 1656, Lady Jane Cheyne, as Cavendish was known after her marriage, gives a glimpse of a happy marriage: "Did I not know my self Married, I should think by what hee writs, that hee was still a woer, which puts mee in mind of your woords, for you tould mee it would bee allwayes so, beeing the nature of the person."²⁸ According to the *ODNB*, the couple lived in the former royal palace at Chelsea, which was purchased with her dowry.²⁹ Cheyne had three children and it is known

(London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1888), 19:404–5.

21. For a full account of the events that saw the family lose both Welbeck and Bolsover, see Nathan Comfort Starr, "The Concealed Fansyes: A Play by Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley," *PMLA* 46, no. 3 (1931): 802–38 (804).

22. Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 29. This manuscript is the copy-text for the present edition of Cavendish and Brackley's plays.

23. University of Nottingham, Portland Collection, Pw 1/367, 368, quoted in Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship*, 64n115.

24. Margaret Cavendish, *Life of William Cavendish*, 91.

25. Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship*, 64, 115. See Edward Nicholas to the Earl of Forth, Lord General of his Majesty's Army, April 21, 1644, in Hamilton, *Calendar of State Papers*, 19:131.

26. Margaret Cavendish, *Life of William Cavendish*, 90.

27. Madeline Dewhurst, "True Relations: Piecing Together a Family Divided by War," *Lives and Letters* 2, no. 1 (2010): 1–20 (9–10).

28. University of Nottingham Portland MS Pw 1/88, quoted in Greer et al., *Kissing the Rod*, 108.

29. Humphreys, rev. Kelsey, "Cheyne, Lady Jane."

that she paid to have the roof of Chelsea church replaced.³⁰ Elizabeth Brackley, or Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton as she became known after her marriage, seems to have been happily married as well. On her death, Brackley's husband expressed great grief at her loss and never remarried.³¹

Dewhurst's discussion of the Cavendish family letters after the mid-1640s (when the Bodleian and Beinecke manuscripts are thought to have been transcribed) shows that there were significant tensions between Newcastle and his children, and that the idealized portrait Cavendish and Brackley present of their father in their plays and poems does not continue into the 1650s.³² The sisters, however, appear to have remained very close. When Brackley died in 1663 (in premature labor in prison, where she had joined her husband, who was being held on a dueling charge), Cavendish wrote a moving elegy, "On the death of my Deare Sister the Countesse of Bridgewater."³³ Jane Cavendish herself died six years later, in 1669.

While there is no evidence to suggest that after their marriages the sisters had the kind of opportunity their circumstances in 1644–1645 offered them to write plays together, there is evidence that both continued to write and were recognized for their literary interests and abilities. Jane Cavendish's tomb at All Saints Church in Chelsea features a sculpture of her by Bernini in which she is depicted, as Bennett says, "as a young woman reclining on one elbow with an open book before her while a scroll below lists her many virtues as 'the most pious and devout Heroine, made famous not so much by the long line of her ancestry, as by her own virtues.'"³⁴ Moreover, a poem written after her death by Thomas Lawrence claims that poetry was "an Art she knew and Practised so well / Her Modesty alone could it excell."³⁵ Lawrence's poem was published with a sermon by Adam Littleton, delivered at Cavendish's funeral, which states that "she took,

30. Humphreys, rev. Kelsey, "Cheyne, Lady Jane."

31. Francis Espinasse, rev. Louis A. Knafla, "Egerton, John, second earl of Bridgewater (1623–1686)," *ODNB*.

32. Dewhurst, "True Relations," 9–12. In a letter to her brother Charles, preserved in manuscript at the University of Nottingham (Pw 1/89) and transcribed by Dewhurst, Jane Cavendish writes, "the satisfaction I receive when you are pleased to like any Expression in Mr Cheynes letter wherin your likeing & kind acceptance of them wee both acknowledge is more then can bee deserved. I could wish you neere nighbours beeing confident you would both take much contentment in one an others companies" (12). Ann Hughes and Julie Sanders, "Disruptions and Evocations of Family amongst Royalist Exiles," in *Literatures of Exile in the English Revolution and its Aftermath, 1640–1690*, ed. Philip Major (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 45–63, give additional details from the postwar letters of the Cavendish family evidencing the tensions between the siblings and their father after his remarriage.

33. Huntington Library, Ellesmere MS 8353, quoted in Greer et al., *Kissing the Rod*, 118.

34. Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speake," 6.

35. "An Elegy on the Death of the Thrice Noble and Vertuous Lady the Lady Jane Cheyne, Eldest Daughter to William Duke of NEWCASTLE," bound with Adam Littleton, *A Sermon at the funeral of the Right Honourable the Lady Jane eldest daughter to His Grace, William, Duke of Newcastle, and*

when Young, special delight in her *Father's* Excellent Composures. And she hath left in Writing a considerable Stock of Excellent ones of Her own, ever spending the time that best pleased Her with her Pen."³⁶ Emily Smith notes that this passage demonstrates both that Cavendish "continued to write after her marriage" and that "her 'Stock of Excellent' works, which could include the plays written with Brackley, formed a canon of writings that continued to be read."³⁷

Elizabeth Brackley also continued to write. Her husband collected her prose meditations and prayers and had them transcribed for her children under the title "True Coppies of certaine Loose Papers left by ye Right ho.ble Elizabeth Countesse of Bridgewater Collected and Transcribed together here since Her Death, Anno Dm. 1663." Three copies of the "Loose Papers" survive: two are at the Huntington Library and one is at the British Library. They have been transcribed by Betty Travitsky and include forty-four compositions, most of which Travitsky says "seem to have been composed at moments of stress."³⁸ Travitsky further states that "the tone is uniformly sober, and religious concerns permeate almost every section. More than half deal directly with personal, domestic or interpersonal concerns."³⁹ The "Loose Papers" reveal anxieties about childbirth, motherhood, and expressions of loss at the deaths of her infant children; they do not contain any dramatic works. Brackley also wrote "Devine Meditations upon every particular Chapter in the Bible," including a commentary on Genesis that finds Adam to be as guilty of sin as Eve. Like her "Loose Papers," these "Devine Meditations" survive in multiple manuscripts.⁴⁰ While relatively few documents about Cavendish and Brackley are extant or have been discovered from the years after their marriages, what does remain speaks to the importance of writing to their lives and raises the fascinating possibility that they may have written more dramatic literature after the war ended.

The Beinecke and Bodleian Manuscripts Containing the Dramatic Works of Cavendish and Brackley

The dramatic works of Cavendish and Brackley are preserved in two manuscripts, one held at the Beinecke Library at Yale (Osborn MS b.233) and the other at the

wife to the Honourable Charles Cheyne, Esq, at Chelsea, Novem. I, being All-Saints day (London: John Maycock, 1669), no pagination.

36. Littleton, *Sermon*, 45.

37. Emily Smith, "The Local Popularity of *The Concealed Fancies*," *Notes and Queries* 53, no. 2 (2006): 189–93 (190).

38. Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship*, 158.

39. Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship*, 158.

40. Travitsky, *Subordination and Authorship*, 136–46, describes the manuscripts in which the "Devine Meditations" are preserved.