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**Paradise Negotiated:
Early Modern Women Writing Utopia 1640-1760**

Lisa K. Brewer

**Dissertation submitted to the Eberly
College of Arts and Sciences
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy
in
English**

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ABSTRACT

Paradise Negotiated: Early Modern Women Writing Utopia 1640-1760

Lisa K. Brewer

Utopian writing by early modern women traditionally has been left out of the canon of utopian literature because it has been overlooked, undervalued, and often does not conform to the genre characteristics set forth by the example of Thomas More and other male writers of “classic utopias.” The term “utopia” is taken from the pun that entitled More’s famous work, meaning the good place which does not exist. The works recognized by scholars as fitting into this genre have all been written by men, and the few agreed upon works considered as “utopia proper” describes an imaginary, perfect, political state. However, because class and gender greatly influence the form and content of utopia, I argue for the expansion of the definition of utopia and the inclusion of early modern utopian and millenarian writing by women. Utopias written by women do not look like utopias written by men because their experiences and gender position in society are different from men. Furthermore, the distinction between millenarian and utopian texts is negligible because the main difference is whether or not the ideal state is created by divine intervention or by an imaginary ruler. In the seventeenth century there is no division of church and state, and prior to the English Civil Wars, the belief in the divine right of the king was prevalent. The utopian tradition itself is rooted in religion and republicanism and can be traced back to Genesis and not just to Plato’s *Republic*.

When analyzing texts written by early modern women it is important to understand the social, historical, and political contexts in which they were written. There were many obstacles for the female author to negotiate. A woman who published in the seventeenth century transgressed gender boundaries because at this time, silence was equated with chastity, and the role of author was socially defined as masculine. The writer’s class and political affiliation must also be taken into account because the ideology of a Royalist writer was at odds with the ideology of a radical sectarian writer. I examine the publishing history of early modern women in order to demonstrate the strategies they used to authorize their texts and gain access to print. The form of the utopia created by the female writer is determined in large part by the negotiations she had to make as a female writer and as a member of a specific class and political group.

After examining the texts of Mary Cary, a Fifth Monarchist, Margaret Cavendish, a Royalist, and Mary Scott, a member of the Bluestocking circle, I found that despite the historical, class, and political differences of these women, they each attempted to redefine the social definitions of gender in order to loosen the sexual control of women by men. Cary and Cavendish were primarily concerned with prohibitions of female speech. The

control of female speech was linked to the notion of female chastity; therefore, the sexual domination of women was tied to silencing them. Early modern women pushed the boundary of acceptable female behavior by separating speech from chastity. Cary imagined a utopia in which women could preach, while Cavendish imagined a utopia in which a woman of rank and ability could participate in scientific pursuits and government. By the eighteenth century, the paradigm of what constituted female virtue had shifted so that it no longer precluded publishing. Scott was primarily concerned with the sexual exploitation and economic dependence of women, and imagined a utopian estate run by women who wanted an alternative to being treated as commodities on the marriage market. Common to all three of these texts is the absence of motherhood as the defining role of women, and the negotiation for greater female activity in the public sphere. Cary, Cavendish and Scott's contributions to women's writing are texts that demonstrate that women should not be bound by social codes of silence, sexual submission, and economic dependence.

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Introduction

The political upheaval of England in the 1640s and the lack of censorship of the press made it possible for many disparate voices to be heard. During this period of competing ideas about the divine rights of kings, the second coming of Christ, the authority of the Church of England, and the real and perceived instability of the kingdom, the female body became an overdetermined site of cultural anxiety. For the Royalists, the world-turned-upside-down was represented by the trope of a ruling female figure symbolizing the political chaos of the state. For the dissenting sectaries, female visionaries were earthly vessels through which God communicated his message(s) to his people. Given the political and religious tensions during the Civil Wars, the Interregnum, and the eventual Restoration of the monarchy, an investigation of women writing utopia in the early modern period should be grounded in the historical complexities of the time. A woman's gender, class, religious, and political affiliations were sites on which competing factions attempted to inscribe their ideologies. From a Royalist perspective, an anti-monarchy, outspoken woman is to be slandered as promiscuous and punished for sedition.

But from a radical sectarian perspective, she may be a vessel carrying messages from God.

Through such scholarly projects as Brown University's Women's Writing Project, Emory University's Women's Resource Project, Early English Books Online, and many other online databases, scholars now have access to original manuscripts otherwise "lost" because manuscripts written by women and other marginalized groups have previously not been deemed worthy of preservation, circulation, and serious study. This is especially true of utopian works because many "radical," anti-Royalist utopias failed to meet the so-called criteria of "universality" and literary sophistication New Critics required in order to warrant their escape from oblivion. We are only now beginning to recover texts of both kinds - those written by women and those formerly deemed unvaluable. Obviously, these categories overlap.

I began this study with a curiosity about how early modern women believed their lives could be improved. What changes in society did they wish for? My interest in the subject was sparked by the recent scholarship on Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle and author of what is believed at this time to be the first utopia written by a woman. Although scholars now call her *Blazing World* a

utopia and discuss it as such, her work, as well as the utopias of many others, had been consciously excluded from the genre. *Blazing World* is still treated as something of an anomaly, either praised for its "feminist" content, or criticized for its contradictions and stylistic deviations from representative male-authored utopias. With the ongoing recovery of works by women in the early modern period, debates about the generic placement of these works are bound to occur. However, rather than asking how closely a particular work conforms to a specific genre, I am more interested in the differences between the canonically approved, representative examples of utopia and those works by women that have been previously excluded, ignored, or devalued. In my investigation I hope to shed some light on the gender and class politics involved in the production and suppression of utopian works written during the British Civil Wars and after the Restoration of the Monarchy.

"Utopia" itself is a much contested term. It designates a specific kind of literature as well as carrying ideological associations - the initial ambiguity in More's use of the word notwithstanding. The speaker and the circumstances of his or her specific location in history inflect the word with either a positive or a

negative connotation. For instance, Bacon's academy of scientists in his *New Atlantis* was for him and other men sharing his views a "utopia," and a realizable one at that, but for Cavendish, the exclusively male, Royal Society that was the offspring of Bacon's fiction was a nightmare. Even wealthy, philosophically-minded women such as herself were banned from participating in it because of their gender. However, the utopia that Cavendish creates is hardly an egalitarian feminist utopia for all; commoners of both sexes are practically invisible in her fictional world as well as in her real life. Her "utopia" is filtered by Royalist politics, class privilege, and gender. The same can be said of male utopias, but because the male vision has been considered normative, it is from texts written by men that the so-called "universal" characteristics of the genre have emerged.

Utopia is a slippery term, and it is not surprising that generations of university educated scholars have studied and/or admired utopias written by university educated males. After all, More wrote his work as a piece of intellectual entertainment for his small circle of friends. Utopias written by self-educated women have been neglected for a number of reasons, not least of which is that they do not look like the academically approved works

written by men. Perhaps female utopias have been marginalized not just because they were written by women but because the style and the content of their works are at odds with what scholars have been trained to value in a text. A female writer who lacks a university education may have neither the knowledge of, nor the desire to emulate the classical model republics that educated men were reading, revising, and adapting to their political purposes. Thus, texts by women not only look different from those written by academically trained men, but they have been judged to be inferior because they are different in both content and style. These differences, rather than a work's similarity to a class of male dominated works, are the keys to understanding how a seventeenth-century woman imagined improvement in the circumstances dictating her life.

Class and gender have an enormous influence over both the content of the utopia written as well as its reception by a specific audience. Additionally, the social instability of this period provides a window of opportunity for examining the ideas women and the lower classes had for improving their lives. Cary's description of the New Jerusalem was welcomed by the Fifth Monarchists who initially supported Cromwell, but to Royalists, such

religious tracts were considered dangerously seditious, fanatical ravings that deserved only to be mocked and cast into oblivion. Once the Royalists regained power that is nearly what happened. Lower-class and/or female-authored texts which frequently expressed hostility to the king, the Pope, the Church of England, the university, or other patriarchal institutions such as marriage, were not welcomed by those who had the power to silence them. What remains is an incomplete historical record in which politically unpopular utopian works have been either expunged or neglected. Quaker women, however, printed and kept copies of their works, so their once neglected texts have been preserved and are beginning to be studied.

While there has been a resurgence to recover and analyze early modern works by women, there has been little if any investigation into the historical circumstances that shaped the content of utopian writing by women from different ranks of society. Gender studies of Cavendish's work abound, but to understand her work as well as other women writing at this time, the nuances of class politics must also be considered. In this very limited study, I have selected for the purposes of comparison Cavendish's *Blazing World* (1666), a millenarian work by the middling-class, *Fifth Monarchist*, Mary Cary (1651), and the Post-

Restoration Tory work by Sarah Scott called *Millenium Hall* (1762). This esoteric selection of works was based on the class and political diversity of the writers. It would be a mistake to assume that a study of gender alone would produce a representative set of utopian works to study, neatly fitting into a specific time frame, addressing the same issues. The ideas of Margaret Cavendish would be as distasteful to Mary Cary as they were to the men who mocked her although both women conceive of a realm of greater female participation in their separate social spheres.

There is as much variety in the utopias written by women as there is in the utopias written by men. The scholarly impulse to classify and to categorize works in this genre is both a practical concern and an impediment. If "utopia" is defined too loosely, then it is no longer useful as designating a specific class because such a class could be potentially boundless. On the other hand, if utopia is too narrowly defined, then the members of the class will represent the values and biases of those doing the classifying, which has always been a problem in utopian studies. Each scholar who sets out to define utopia before beginning a study of selected texts runs into the problem of what to include and what to exclude. In chapter one, "Expanding the Parameters of Utopia," I will review some of

the areas of scholarly disagreement, but I will concentrate specifically on the issue of class and gender and why they should be taken into account when analyzing any utopian or dystopian work. I will also discuss why it is necessary to consider millenarian literature in an analysis of seventeenth-century utopian thought.

In chapter two, "Authorship and Agency: Redefining the Social Constructions of Gender," I will focus my discussion of class and gender to the issue of authorship and the ways women tried to negotiate those social boundaries. Many critics have analyzed the proscriptions of female speech and how silence was socially constructed to mean chastity. Wall in her influential book *The Imprint of Gender* discusses not just the proscriptions of silence and chastity, but she also demonstrates how print culture became defined as masculine. I would like to extend Wall's argument by including the politically charged and class conscious writing of lower-class women as compared to that of the upper-class women Wall investigates. Although silence was the prescriptive, cultural "norm" for women in general, many women did speak, and their strategies for speaking and publishing demonstrate the class and political boundaries which separated them. Radical sectarian women, believing they were doing the work of God, spoke publicly,

demonstrated against the government, published, traveled to other communities of believers, and were imprisoned for challenging patriarchal authority. Upper-class women who benefited from or endorsed the patriarchal system chose more socially decorous and more self-effacing positions of authorship, but each was challenging the prevailing ideas about female activity and authorship at the time.

During the Civil War in England, the female body was the site upon which contesting ideologies did battle. Royalist propaganda made negative use of the female body to condemn the activities of Protestant dissenters, collapsing religious enthusiasm with sexual enthusiasm. However, the Puritans didn't exactly celebrate the female body either. The perceived weakness of the female body made it a more "open" conduit for messages from God. To the Puritans, the body of a female prophet was a spiritual vessel; to the Royalists, it was a perversion of the "natural" order. Female prophets were represented in newsbooks as frauds and harlots whose lascivious behavior was responsible for the corruption and chaos of the church and state. Believers considered them to be genuine messengers of God and their visions to be further evidence of the long awaited apocalypse. In fact, Royalist condemnation of female prophets was interpreted by the women themselves as yet

another sign that Christ's return was imminent, and the powerful would have to answer for their sins against the godly.

Given this tumultuous atmosphere in which the church and state have temporarily lost their ability to control the speech and activities of the under-classes, speech acts must be understood in the context of the speaker's religious and political affiliations. For instance, "doing God's work" may mean preserving the throne and the Church of England, or it may mean destroying both. A "virtuous, godly woman" may refer to one who is silent and chaste, or it may mean one who is actively petitioning Parliament to reform. "Chaste" is a loaded term that changes in meaning according to who is employing it and for what purposes. If an upper-class woman can be called unchaste because she publishes a text, and a religious visionary can be condemned as a whore for speaking her faith, how does a woman of either group justify her act of speech and at what cost? How did the Restoration of the Monarchy affect both groups and their speech practices? These are questions that I will address in chapter two.

In chapters three and four I will examine the millenarian and utopian works of Mary Cary and Margaret Cavendish respectively and how their works are inflected

with the biases of the social classes to which they belong. Mary Cary was of the middling class and belonged to the radical sectarian group, the Fifth Monarchists. Although she justifies her speech by calling herself a prophet, she redefines this term. She is not an ecstatic visionary; her work is an imaginative exegesis of the Book of Daniel. She and her group believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent and that they had an active part to play in bringing it about. They were a militant group fighting for the removal of the king and the overthrow of the Pope, or anti-Christ, as they referred to him.

Cary's class greatly influenced the utopia she produced. Except for the primacy of Christ, there was to be no class distinction among the people, nor a gender hierarchy. With the exception of non-believers and enemies to Christ, all saints were equal, and all would have the ability to speak, to teach, and to give praise. Furthermore, property was to be shared in common. The aged and diseased would be healed, and the land would be fruitful. This paradise would be enjoyed by the saints for one thousand years with Christ walking among them.

The fourth chapter is titled "Margaret Cavendish's Utopia for the Singular Woman." Cavendish is not as egalitarian as Cary; her sense of class hierarchy is

reflected in the utopia she creates. The heroine of her work becomes empress upon entering the Blazing World, and she then orders her subjects as she pleases. Her qualifications for being Empress are her great beauty, intellect, and marriage to the Emperor. Cavendish's utopia begins as more of a romance than a challenge to the social order.

However, Cavendish soon pushes the boundaries of acceptable female behavior by creating a heroine who is capable of participating in scientific and intellectual activities, of leading a military conquest, and of creating a cabbala. She is unlike other women and is an argument for such singular women to be able to apply their talents as do men. Cavendish was frustrated that she could not participate in the Royal Society because of her gender. She was able to privately converse with philosophers that her husband patronized, but most avenues of intellectual activity were closed to her because of her gender. She desired fame and recognition as an author and philosopher, but what she received was ridicule for putting her words into print.

Despite the negative reception of her work from both men and women, Cavendish places a great deal of emphasis on the importance of female friendship. The empress and her

friend Margaret provide each other with companionship and support for one another's work and desires. It is from this female bonding that Cavendish extends her project to her female audience, telling them that they too have the ability to create their own worlds just as she has done. Of course, her readers are upper class women like herself, but she invites other women to expand their intellectual possibilities.

In chapter five I examine the utopian text of Sarah Scott, written in the mid eighteenth century. Scott did not have to contend with proscriptions of female speech and the linking of speech with chastity. By the 1660s women such as Aphra Behn had begun making a living by writing and publishing, so Scott does not include a lengthy preface justifying the publication of her work, *Millenium Hall*. Scott's utopia is a secluded, all-female community. Marriage is not allowed within the community, and economic independence is the primary motivation for the establishment of the all-female estate. Again, motherhood and childrearing are absent from her project, but are given peripherally negative implications through the narratives of the founders who suffer from the hands of designing step-mothers and exploitative guardians. In Scott an alternative to the dangers of the marriage market and

economic dependence is the primary focus. Scott authors a radical thesis that women of varying economic backgrounds, if given the choice and means, would opt-out of the marriage market and would fare much better.

Chapter One

Expanding the Parameters of Utopia

*Give us good men, and they will make us good
laws, is the Maxim of a Demagog, and is . . .
exceeding fallible.*

Harrington, *Oceana*

(1656)

Utopian writing derives its name and status as a genre from the pun that entitled Thomas More's famous work. Although fictional, political, and religious constructions of ideal/alternative societies have existed since ancient times, definitions about what constitutes a utopian work are centered upon how closely a writer's work fits the paradigm established by More who used Plato's *Republic* as a model. As a result, utopian writing relies upon a male-dominated tradition in which works most resembling those of Plato and More receive the highest accolades from critics, while works which least resemble the paradigm of the

rationalist, classical utopia are regarded as deficient or excluded from the genre entirely.¹

Furthermore, critical reception of utopian works has changed over time because utopias and the issues they address are situated in specific historical and political circumstances. Whether a work is praised or derided as being utopian is relative to the ideological and historical differences of its audience. Critics may even disagree as to whether the work is utopian, anti-utopian, or dystopian. For instance, after the second World War there were several dystopian works such as London's *The Iron Heel*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Orwell's *1984* which served as a warning against the possibility of achieving utopia. Modern critical evaluations of Renaissance utopias also began emphasizing the totalitarian aspects of what were once perceived as ideal commonwealths, often questioning whether or not the writer intended for society to emulate such models.

Similarly, twentieth-century critics have been divided as to whether Swift's Houyhnhnm society is utopian or dystopian and whether such satires should even be included

¹ Davis praises the "blueprint" quality and solution seeking aspects of classical utopias (36-40), while Elliott in *The Shape of Utopia* uses the classical utopia to model his discussion.

in discussions of utopia.² Kumar argues in *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* that utopia and dystopia are mutually dependent, noting that Huxley's *Brave New World* was received by some as a utopian work, while Skinner's *Walden Two* was interpreted by others to be dystopian, in both cases against the author's intentions (25). Elliot gives utopia/dystopia a pre-history, tracing its roots to saturnalian rituals, while Fox and others claim that More's *Utopia* serves as the prototype of both genres. Clearly, there is some disagreement about the definition of the term "utopia" and how it is to be applied because historical circumstances affect ideology and thus, critical reception.

While commentators disagree about how to define the genre, they also insist that some definition of utopian literature must be made, or every printed piece of wishful thinking and fantasy would make the genre so boundless as to be impractical for study.³ As a result of these efforts to pinpoint utopia on the literary map, scholars have been remarkably consistent in designating "utopia proper" as the exclusive domain of well-educated and politically

² See Clifford for a discussion of "hard" and "soft" schools of interpretation of Swift's Houyhnhnm society in *Gulliver's Travels*. Clifford and most contemporary critics prefer a "hard" or ironic reading, while earlier critics are classified as belonging to the "soft" school which takes the horses at their word.

³ See Levitas for a complete discussion of the limitations of scholarly attempts to define utopia. Marina, who refrains from defining utopia, states, "from its origins a linguistic, topical, and generic oxymoron, utopia has always called for and frustrated attempts at definition" (2).

influential men. Works by women and lower class males are ignored, devalued, or left out of the debates in this field of study even though they may have been understood as utopian at the time of their publication. In this chapter I will provide a critical review of scholarly attempts to define utopia, pointing out the ways in which these definitions consciously or unconsciously exclude utopian texts written by women.

As many critics have noted, the initial confusion of definition stems from the pun in the title of More's work. When Thomas More coined the term "utopia," he combined two Greek words, "OU-topia" and "EU-topia," creating a pun which simultaneously means "no place" and "place where all is well." This pun from which the genre has been named also initiates the paradoxical problems of definition resulting from the intentional ambiguity in the word itself. Does utopia mean the good place, no place, or both simultaneously? Is it inherently unrealizable and therefore futile, or is the speculative fiction a model for social change? Must the utopia produce double readings as its name suggests? Does the pun frame multiple readings of utopia even if it doesn't organize them?

Despite the fact that *Utopia* itself is a hybrid, a mixture of a number of different poetical, rhetorical and

historical genres,⁴ the task of most utopian scholars has been to define utopia in exclusive terms; that is, their definitions have been designed to limit what is and is not to be included in the genre. For early modern women and lower-class males, this has meant that their contributions to the genre do not qualify; their productions have been cast outside the boundaries of "utopia proper." Although trying to define utopia formalistically may prove to be a futile exercise, what one learns from the exercise is highly illuminating of scholarly bias and ideological preferences. For instance, critics have been more likely to select for study utopias written by scholars who valorize classical ideas about education, but during the Interregnum, anti-clerical and anti-university sentiment was widespread among the radical sectarians who had other ideas for the improvement of society. A document such as Winstanley's *The True Levellers Standard Advanced* is not included in studies of utopian literature although he claims that his text is based on a vision in which "the earth should be made a common treasury of livelihood to whole mankind, without respect to persons" (qtd. in Hill 112). Abiezer Coppe and other Ranters advocated the

⁴ Rosalie Colie in "The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance" analyzes Renaissance genre systems and explains that *Utopia* belongs to the "genera mixta" or mixed genre, which she characterizes as

overthrow of King and government and that all things should be shared in common⁵. During this period of instability there were many sermons and pamphlets which contain utopian thinking, but they are not studied as such.

Although utopian scholars do concur upon a limited selection of works that qualify as "utopia proper," as Leslie states, More's work is strikingly inclusive:

More 'includes' and in so doing he transforms a number of literary topoi and their conventions: imaginary voyage, *speculum principis*, model commonwealth, dialogue, satire, paradoxical encomium, epideictic oratory, and so on. (2)

Despite the fact that More's utopia is a highly fluid and hybrid genre, a number of early works that could arguably be included in this category have either been ignored or excluded on formalistic grounds that need to be revised in light of this exclusion. Specifically, I will demonstrate that the traditionally established "universal" characteristics of utopia have been based exclusively on works by well-educated, politically influential men, and that works by women and lower-class men may not fit this paradigm primarily because they lived in different

a "mode of thought as well as of poetry" and describes under the rubric "inclusionism." She states that More includes and transforms a number of "literary topoi" and their conventions (19, 76).

economic, political, and educational circumstances. A reconsideration of early utopian works by women and other marginalized writers of utopia is needed in order to learn more about the context of their written productions and the ways that gender and socio-economic circumstances shape the form and content of their utopian desires.

In possibly the most extensive study of utopian works to date, the Manuels' *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (1979), there is not a single chapter devoted to female utopian writers, not even to those early nineteenth-century works such as Gilman's *Herland*, which have finally received recognition from feminist scholars. The only woman mentioned by the Manuels is Margaret Cavendish, and her *Blazing World* is invoked only as an exemplar of what must necessarily be excluded from such a study:

But if the land of utopia were thrown open to every fantasy of an individual ideal situation the realm would be boundless. The personal daydream with its idiosyncratic fixations has to be excluded. The ideal condition should have some measure of generality, if not universality, or it becomes merely a narcissistic yearning.

⁵ See Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down* for further discussion of radical sectarian groups and their ideas about social reform and religious doctrines.

There are utopias so private that they border on schizophrenia. *The Description of a New World, called the Blazing World* (1666) by Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, has much in common with the delusions of Dr. Schreber analyzed by Sigmund Freud in a famous paper. (7)

I have quoted the Manuels at length because their quotation marks two main issues that this study addresses: (1) the criteria used to define utopia and to exclude female works from the genre, and (2) the ways in which concepts of utopia as a genre changes once the influences of class and gender are considered.

Implicit in the quote above are several unquestioned assumptions, namely that "private" (even though the works were published) utopias are worthless, while "public" utopias have more value, and that male experiences are normative. Therefore, a proper utopia must address "universal" concerns of society and government, which is often translated to mean the concerns of men because they are the ones who occupy the public realm. The Manuels' distinction between private and public reveals a historically consistent ideological assumption about the value of and appropriate spheres for male and female activity: men occupy the more socially valued public

sphere, while women are relegated to the less valued private sphere.⁶ My argument is that it is not only women's social status that has kept their works from being collected and accepted into the utopian genre, but that their utopias do indeed look different from Plato and More and are thus, devalued by male/universal standards. Not surprisingly, their works, for instance, prioritize social relationships differently from male-authored texts.

Furthermore, since I examine texts written during the era of civil wars in England as well as post-Restoration works, the terms "public" and "private" are not easily and clearly distinguished from one another and often overlap in interesting ways. For instance, Anna Trapnel, fasting in her bed chamber, had an ecstatic visionary experience which was witnessed by several spectators and which contained political instructions for Cromwell that were transcribed by a male attendant. Is this religious experience to be understood as private, particularly since the personal experience of receiving a divine message happened in her bed, or should it be understood as a public spectacle with real political consequences affecting the commonwealth? While "public" and "private" discourses are not easy to compartmentalize, so-called "unruly" activities

⁶ See Nancy Armstrong for discussion of the development of the idea of the domestic woman.

of seventeenth-century women were socially condemned and could be legally punished because they were understood to be public, such as a group of women holding a prayer meeting together. Prayer in one's home or under the leadership of a male church authority is virtuous; women leading other women in prayer is unruly because it is public.

Given the rigid social constraints under which these women lived, it is amazing that there exists early modern writing by women at all, and indeed some of these works have only recently been recovered. Those women who did publish their visions of an alternative social order were described by their contemporaries as well as later critics as delusional. "Mad Madge" was the epithet given Cavendish by her contemporaries for publishing her fictional new world. Her two-part format, consisting of her philosophical opinions followed by the fictional *Blazing World*, resembles the format of Bacon's unfinished *New Atlantis*, and yet no one has referred to the father of the scientific method as schizophrenic or delusional. A writer who chooses to commit to print her vision of a better society places herself in the overlapping positions of social critic, moralist, intellectual authority, social engineer, religious expert, and political theorist,

depending on the breadth and detail of the utopia. However, these rhetorical positions were not socially appropriate for seventeenth-century women in reality or in fiction. Thus, their works were condemned as mere escapist fantasy. They have not been collected in bibliographies or anthologies of utopian literature, and the characteristics of their utopias have not been considered by scholars who have attempted to formulate definitions of the utopian genre.

Analyzing and comparing these early works by women with those by recognized male utopian writers creates an opportunity for re-examining assumptions about the ways in which a specific literary genre has been formulated and for understanding the influence of gender and class on the production and content of these texts. Because utopias are historically specific, class and gender influences in the construction of utopia must be historically contextualized. In the case of this study, the texts to be examined were written during the Civil War period in England and after the Restoration, so the political climate must be taken into account.

Problems of Definition

The common definition of utopia as cited in literary handbooks⁷ is "a form of fiction describing an imaginary world. [Utopia] describes a perfect political state" (Holman 458). Interestingly, for my purposes, only examples of utopias written by men are cited; Plato is acknowledged as having written the first utopia, though More is credited with coining the name of the genre. Because More's work is also a satire, one cannot be certain how seriously his perfect society should be received. According to Chambers, the underlying point of More's *Utopia* is to criticize the Christian, English State, showing it to be wanting in contrast to a pagan society founded with "nothing more than Reason to guide them" (139). However, not all scholars focus on the Christian critique in More's work.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the perfect political structure of this imaginary state seems to reflect only a modest few utopian writers such as Campanella, Bacon, and Harrington who are valorized for most closely following their predecessors, Plato and More. The multitude of writers who begin with different premises and thus arrive at different conclusions for their less-than-perfect or

7 A web search of the term reveals the following definitions for utopia: "an ideal commonwealth whose inhabitants exist under seemingly perfect conditions" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*); "a literary work which

less-detailed utopian societies are deemed not worthy of critical attention. One should also keep in mind that More himself did not imitate Plato's theoretically ideal republic. In the introductory letter to *Utopia*, More's friend, Busleiden, states that the perfect commonwealth must unite the following four "heathen" virtues: "Wisdom in the ruler, Fortitude in the soldier, Temperance in private individuals, and Justice in all" (Chambers 138). A handbook genre definition that credits only More and Plato as the utopian models is problematic and ignores oral, mythological, and sacred traditions of ideal states.

More coined the term that has since given name to the genre, but utopia as a literary genre with specific characteristics had not been critically established. The notion of genre presupposes shared assumptions on the part of both the author and the reader about its nature and ruling conventions. As Morson explains:

. . . the exemplars of a genre occupy a unique status. For a genre's first works cannot have been designed to be read in the tradition of previous works, nor can they have been designed

describes the ideal state or way of life" (*Literary Link*); "utopian is used to refer to good but physically, socially, economically, or politically impossible proposals . . . a hypothetical perfect society" (*Wikipedia*).

to be interpreted according to the conventions of a generic tradition that began only with them . . . works become exemplars only through the unforeseen creation of later works and the unanticipated emergence of a common hermeneutic approach to the entire class. History makes the exemplar; and tradition, insofar as it directs readers to take the exemplar *as a member of the genre* that it fathers, changes its semiotic nature: the original text is, in effect, re-created by its own progeny. (74-75)

While Morson's insight into the retroactive evolution of genre categories reminds one not to look at early "exemplars" as the defining moment of the genre, his discussion is also curiously patrilineal in nature. The exemplar fathers the progeny that resemble him in kind, elevate his status, and secure his title, and I would argue that this is precisely the way in which utopia has come to be a male dominated genre. Male texts that most closely resemble More's have been used to define the boundaries of a genre that is understood to be a mixed genre. But the female progeny of this genre, which could also contribute to our understanding of its development, have been ignored

or excluded because they lacked certain patrilineal characteristics, such as the sea voyage discovery or the development of a perfect judicial system.

Knowing that it is the progeny which "re-creates" the original, the genre categories can be conceived of as evolving. As T. S. Eliot declared, when new works are introduced into the canon, the canon itself is altered. Furthermore, many of the male- and female-authored works that have been excluded by twentieth-century anthologists were understood in their own time to be utopian, whether they were primarily political proposals, religious tracts, or imaginary voyages. For example, works as diverse as Priscilla Cotton's *The Saints Paradise* (1648), and Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694) could be considered utopian, even though they differ markedly from More's "exemplar."

Critical efforts to delimit the province of utopian literature to works most resembling More's are not just based upon the sexist notion of a founding father of a genre, but they are also motivated by the belief that a genre must be narrowly defined in order to prove useful. Davis acknowledges that it would be possible to use the term "utopia" for the whole field of ideal societies, but we would then have to find a new label for the kind of

ideal society that accepts the collective problem and seeks to deal with it by political means. But says Davis, More has done that, and since "we have to treat his work as a defining *locus classicus* of the genre," the limited definition of utopia stands (*Chronology of Nowhere* 11). Negley and Patrick make similar arguments in their anthology, *Quest for Utopia* (1952), and define utopia in terms of form:

The utopist . . . is not merely a reformer or satirist, not just a dreamer, nor yet only a theorist. Utopia is a distinct vehicle of expression Utopia is distinguishable from the other forms in which men have expressed their ideals, as philosophy is from poetry, or legal codes from political tracts. . . . [It] is impossible to understand utopian literature if all manner of speculations, idealization, vagaries, plans, political platforms and programs are to be considered utopias. (3)

Underlying this insistence on a narrow definition of form and content is the idea that when one reads a genre, one is reading a work that has a tradition, and understanding this tradition helps the reader to interpret the work by identifying it with and comparing it to other similar

works. Reading a work in context of a literary tradition is useful, but a tradition is not comprised of a single text. The study of a genre, especially a mixed genre such as utopia, should account for rather than dismiss the variations in form and content that appear. Utopian fictions as well as literal projects to build utopian communities flourish during times of intense social/political upheaval, reform movements, and scientific revolutions. Harrington's *Oceana* was dedicated to Cromwell in 1656; a plethora of communist and socialist utopias, as well as some early feminist utopias, were published in the nineteenth century; and the twentieth century saw a great many dystopias, science fiction, and fantasy utopian narratives. Innovation and/or radical social change are fertile soil for the utopian imagination.

In 1990 Levitas published a book length study devoted to the various attempts by scholars to define utopia and the unsatisfactory and conflicting applications of those definitions. According to Levitas, it was not until the 1960s that any serious academic study of utopia began, and although some commentators explicitly stated the criteria they used to define their object of study, most definitions of utopia were derived from the author's selection of primary works included in the study (9). While this

practice is not unusual, many lesser known or unknown works were not considered in the formulation of the author's genre definitions. This is problematic because genre describes a category of literature and its distinctions should bear the introduction of like species into its class. In the introduction to *Utopia and the Ideal Society* Davis writes that he began his study with the belief that "there existed a degree of consensus, and the proffered 'simple antithesis of social realism versus utopian dreaming' was not satisfactory" (6-7). Both Davis and Levitas note that in most studies of utopia the selection of works studied is more or less idiosyncratic with the exception of More who is the only author universally studied. Following More, the most consistently referenced utopian writers are Plato, Bacon, and Campanella. Once a commentator leaves these generic touchstones, the debate about what is and is not properly utopian begins.

In order to demarcate their field of study, utopian scholars try to limit the material included under the umbrella of utopia by classifying similar narratives as belonging to sub-genres of utopian literature and are thus not representative of "utopia proper." Such sub-genres include saturnalia, travelogues, Platonic dialogues, myths of a secular golden age or a sacred paradise, and

pastorals, as well as terrestrial paradises such as the land of Cockayne, fantasy and escapist literature, the Puritan millennium, science fiction, socialist progress narratives, and any type of work which imagines a fictional alternative to the society in which the writer actually lives. While each of these narratives mentioned above depicts an ideal society, the arguments used to exclude them from "utopia proper" are based to varying degrees upon questions about form and content: is divine intervention involved; is the utopia "realistic;" is the goal of the utopia entirely fictional, escapist, or actually implemented; is the structure a satiric inversion of the present conditions of society, and are socio-political relations described in great detail?

Completeness of description is of special concern to Mumford, which means that in his estimation Bacon's *New Atlantis* does not quite qualify and neither does Owen's communal utopia because their visions are, according to Mumford, limited, incomplete, and they are concerned with inventions rather than the ends to which they are put (123-124). Thus, Mumford excises another group of texts from the category utopia and instead categorizes them in the sub-genre of escapist literature. For Mumford, utopias are designated as either escapist or reconstructive, the latter

privileged for providing progressive social goals and the former lacking an extensive program of political and social reform.

Mumford's definition excludes many utopian texts by men and especially those by women that do not meet his genre requirements. I say especially by women because detailed political blueprints were not a high priority for early female utopists who were not recognized as full subjects with legal rights and protections. With the exception of political protest, men and women who were not property owners could not actively participate in government, so it is not surprising that references to political reform and "complete" social restructuring in their texts are limited, or are not prioritized to the same degree as educated, property owning males who could participate as full subjects in political affairs. Of course, such matters are touched upon, but they may not be the primary concern of lower-class and/or female writers.

Because the "ideal commonwealth" is emphasized in many definitions of utopia, there is much critical disagreement about the elements of fiction, realism, and plausibility of the imagined society. Surprisingly, Eliav-Feldon states that "genuine utopists do not indulge in fantasies about unattainable Gardens of Eden, but propose practical, though

sometimes very drastic remedies for the defects of their societies" (2). She also goes on to say that utopias are written by intellectuals sensitive to the miseries of this world, but, given the absence of women in her book, one could assume that their works do not fall into the category of realistic fiction, nor are they produced by intellectuals, though it is likely that Eliav-Feldon was not aware of their existence.

Morton also subscribes to the notion that a good utopia is a "realistic" utopia and includes in his discussion Harrington's *Oceana* (which was dedicated to Cromwell) as a utopian work, while Berneri and Mumford exclude it and for the same reasons:

the fact that in both the American and French
Revolutions Harrington's Utopia was the one to
which the acutest political theorists turned, is
proof of its close relation to the actual
problems of a revolutionary age. (Morton 103)

Whereas commentators such as Morton, Kaufmann, Hertzler, Ross, Negley and Patrick emphasize utopia as primarily a political phenomenon connected to real world problems, Berneri insists that the fictional ideal commonwealth must be impossible to realize. However, she also associates utopia, as many commentators do, with social progress

narratives while at the same time critiquing the connection between utopia and the socialist movements of the nineteenth century. Whether or not the work in question is completely implausible or has some real world applications seems to be a distinction without difference.

In fact, Berneri complains that in nineteenth-century texts it is difficult to distinguish between utopian thought and practical political reform. Berneri states that before Engels, "utopia was considered as an imaginary ideal commonwealth whose realisation was impossible or difficult, [but] Engels gave it a much wider meaning and included all social schemes which did not recognise the division of society into classes, the inevitability of the class struggle and of the social revolution" (207). Where one chooses to place the literary and political boundaries of utopia determines in one fell swoop what host of texts will be included and excluded from examinations of the. As Levitas reiterates in her analysis of utopian criticism, emphasis on form spills over into content, and content is often judged by authorial intent (assuming that one can ever know authorial intent). Also, scholars often do not articulate or apply their definitions rigorously, and sometimes their political interests are invested in their sympathies for or against early and especially modern

utopian narratives. In the twentieth century, "utopia" and "utopian" became more commonly used by social theorists as derisive epithets to hurl against the plans of a political opponent, suggesting, of course, that one person's utopia can be another person's foolhardy or oppressive regime.

Form and Content of Utopia

Critics such as F.R. Leavis, Northrop Frye, and Fredric Jameson concentrate particularly on the narrative form and content of the utopian text.⁸ Traditionally, the formal principle of such a work (termed an apologue by Sacks, and an anatomy by Frye) is its thesis about the real world, rather than an internal action. Characters in an apologue function not as individuals but as representatives of positions; psychological realism is not necessary and may even interfere with the "message" of the fiction (often described as didactic, but because utopia and dystopia can each be mistaken for the other, the didacticism is questionable).

Another critic, Robert C. Elliott, describes the structural characteristics of utopia by comparing it to satire. He states that "satire and utopia are naturally compatible [because they are] characterized by two main

elements: the predominating negative part, which attacks folly and vice, and the understated positive part, which establishes a norm, a standard of excellence, against which folly and vice are judged. The literary utopia reverses the proportions of negative and positive"(22). Fredric Jameson, however, explains the narrative "doubleness" of utopian structure by stating that utopia reveals the tension between "description" and "narrative" (16). Because a story needs some kind of conflict to launch it, to move it along, a description of pure harmony and contentment is static; narrative provides the conflict. In short, good news is no news.

While the many formalist and post-structuralist investigations of the genre illustrate the narrative sophistication of utopian fictions, they are also very limiting (the goal of these investigations is often to provide a rationale for the inclusion of some texts and the exclusion of other texts) and ironically, totalizing. I say ironically because the doubleness inherent in the narrative structure of this genre serves as a cautionary tale about the ideal society becoming a totalitarian regime, or in this case, a narrowly and sexist formalistic definition becomes overly restrictive of a discourse that

⁸ Levitas analyzes the formalist approach to utopia at length in chapter two of his book.

is itself predicated on its hybridity, its variety of forms, and its internal contradictions. It was not until recently (the 1980s) that anthologies of utopian works included any texts written by women, even though a work such as Gilman's *Herland* would also fit the form/content definitions given in the introductions of these anthologies (Levitas 32).

I agree with Levitas that definitions based exclusively on form or content are unreliable guides as to what should be included or excluded from study of the genre. Because the motivations for writing a utopia are largely based upon dissatisfaction of the status quo at the time of writing, the form and content of utopia changes over time and responds to different historical circumstances and to selective issues that are of primary concern to the writer. If one occupies a privileged position in society, it is highly unlikely that he would argue for the subordination of that privilege; similarly, if society is making the transition from a feudal economy, issues of enclosures and property distribution may well be prioritized in the work. Literacy, access to travel, or socially progressive notions about history may also influence the form, content, and setting of utopian longings. The premise with which one begins when writing a

utopia will also determine to a great extent the form and content of the work. If one begins with the premise that justice is the supreme good, the structure of "his" utopian society will look much different from that of a writer who believes that the return of Christ, the absence of scarcity, communal property, or gender equality is the ideal but impossible goal of society.

Utopia as a Human Propensity

To avoid trying to define the plethora of possible utopian permutations with regard to form and content that have been cited since ancient times, and recognizing that form and content vary over time, commentators such as the Manuels, Bloch, and Mannheim define utopia not in terms of function, but as a human propensity, and their definitions include all variety of "dreams of a better life" and "wishful thinking" (Levitas 86, Manuel and Manuel 1-29). While the Manuels claim that "anthropologists tell us that blessed isles and paradises are part of the dream-world of savages everywhere," and that their work "aims to communicate the diversity of experiences in which this propensity has manifested itself in Western society" (1, 5), it is interesting that their work shows no sign of this propensity manifesting itself in women or in the poor and

working classes of Western society. As Levitas notes, this universal human propensity has been represented critically only by texts of literate males, and as seen by Bloch, can only be projected into the future because the wished-for goal of a better life is assumed to be a progressive, social evolutionary goal (86-88).

Although defining utopia as a human propensity seems to be an all inclusive definition of utopia, it can be construed as a refusal of definition, which makes most critics uncomfortable. For instance, medieval folk poems such as *The Land of Cokaygne* or the American folk song, "Big Rock Candy Mountain" are ignored by proponents of utopian propensity. It is unfortunate too because the former is an explicitly male utopia in which all male appetites are satisfied to the fullest extent, including the sexual availability of women, the abolishment of Adam's labor (and the neglect of Eve's); the latter American folk song, scarcity and want are continually satiated by geese that fly roasted on the spit (Davis 21). A writer's personal as well as national economic status certainly influences the priority given to the theme of earthly abundance in a utopian text. However, the examples of the genre that are given the most serious attention and from

which the various formulations of genre have developed are those of upper-class, educated men.

The Function of Utopia

As Levitas explains, definitions from the liberal humanist tradition are based primarily upon form and content, while the majority of Marxist commentators emphasize the function of utopia. Although they all include speculations about future society, these speculations are regarded as unrealistic. However, "the imputed lack of realism applies less to the content of the utopian systems in question than to the models of social change associated with them" (Levitas 57). Utopian socialism is faulted not for its schemes for the future, but that "it entails an idealist model of social change, suggesting that the mere propagation of such schemes will have a transformative effect . . . a counter-revolutionary one" (57).

According to Marx and Engels, "the key question is whether movements foster a deeper understanding of the class struggle, or whether they disguise it behind plans to persuade all classes to combine in the construction of a society based on harmony" (57). The negative interpretation of utopia here is derived from the Marxist

critique of utopian socialism, and thus, has the political power of invalidating oppositional ideologies and policies by camouflaging them. Feminists have also been quick to turn Marx's condemnation on himself because he does not directly address gendered divisions of labor. However, as Levitas suggests, the Marxist critique does not justify a rejection of utopia defined in a broad sense of describing a good/better society, and "it does not follow that all speculation about the nature of socialist society is equally culpable on the grounds of being idealist, counter-revolutionary and plain wrong" (58). The controversial issue of utopia in Marxist thought drives home the point that context is important for understanding the way in which the term "utopia" is used and that arriving at conceptual clarity in such debates is difficult to achieve. By defining "utopian" in terms of function, it is mainly the differences in methodology, or the process by which one is to arrive at the goal, that separates Marx from the socialists.

In an effort to revive the positive function of utopia, Louis Marin, picking up on the internal contradictions of utopian narratives and drawing upon the linguistic theories of Saussure and Derrida, as well as from the theories of Kant and Husserl, is particularly

fascinated with More's initial word play (outopia/eutopia) and sets out to theorize utopia or "utopics" as an ideological critique of ideology. For Marin, utopia is a product and a process, the spatial play which corresponds to the negative or neutral space between the good place and no place; it is in-betweenness itself or to use the linguistic term, "indeterminate." Marin is careful to emphasize that this space is not a synthesis (as in the third term of the Hegelian dialectic), but it is a supplement which is symbolic of contraries in action. To pin them down is to freeze them in time, but utopics represents both timelessness and time as duration simultaneously, which is why it is also historically specific. Marin both acknowledges that one cannot escape ideology and at the same time illustrates that utopic thinking uses ideology to expose fissures in itself, even as the ideology of the utopian fiction covers them up. Utopic neutrality is, according to Marin, not simply a negation of ideology; because of the play involved, utopics is always dynamically in-between, neither negation nor affirmation.

Of course, critics say that Marin's theory is impossible because one can never escape ideology and that any critique of ideology either assumes an ahistorical

perspective, or the critique is anticipated and finally recuperated in the dominant ideology. However, according to Levitas, the concept of utopia is itself an ideological battleground between critics from a liberal humanist tradition who stress the positive capacity of social reform, and skeptical critics who use the term "utopia" derogatorily to stress the escapist or impractical nature of what they see as unrealistic solutions to real problems. But Marin is not looking at the construct of utopia itself; he is looking at it as a process of textually staging contradictions.

Marin anticipates his critics with the following statement:

when talking about the Perfect Island, utopia talks less about itself or the discourse it has on the island than about the very possibility of uttering such a discourse, of the status and contents of its enunciation position and the formal and material rules allowing it to produce some particular expression. (10)

Marin presents utopia as an ideological discourse which decenters itself; it masks and reveals the fundamental conflicts in its ideology but does this on multiple levels: "Produced in the distance between contradictory elements,

Utopia is the simulacrum of the synthesis, while yet signifying the contradiction which produced it" (9). Marin's theory is very illuminating about the ways in which word play, which maintains simultaneously a multiplicity of meanings, could possibly allow one to look at specific historical ideological contradictions and to open up a multitude of contradictions in play even as they are recuperated. Marin's theory is especially helpful when examining utopian texts written by women, a marginalized group who must work within the system which oppresses them. For example, in Cavendish's *Blazing World*, she imagines an ideal society in which a woman is the Empress and head of a scientific community. While this utopia presents a woman playing an active role in society, it also conceals the replicated social stratification and economic conditions which support her ideal realm.

Goodwin's Criteria for Utopia

Thus far, the definitions of utopia that have been based upon form, content, human propensity, and function have been shown to have a male bias in the selection of texts and descriptions of approved and non-approved forms. Recognizing this disparity, feminist scholars have ventured upon their own definitions of utopia that are intended to

be more inclusive, so that women's texts will receive the recognition that they deserve. However, many critical analyses of women's texts begin with the assumption that the term "utopia" does not need definition, and, as with the earlier male commentaries of utopia, one again has to infer the definition from its use in the text and the selection of texts used.

Feminist critics who begin their collections by formulating new definitions of utopia often reproduce the same problems found in their predecessors. Works selected for analysis are primarily taken from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and those selected are privileged for their ideological and political content. Female utopia becomes synonymous with feminist utopia or "female fabulation" as Barr terms it, which intentionally or not emphasize female solidarity in political concerns and contain blueprints of the perfect feminist society (Jones and Goodwin 22-23). Such definitions do the same to content that formalists have done with structure; they create a very limited definition of a feminist utopia, which may have feminist, sexist, political and gender assumptions. I am not implying that these feminist fabulations are not valid, but such definitions limit what works by women will be valorized and lend themselves to

examinations only of acceptable forms of feminist protest as judged by twentieth-century standards. However, one cannot expect a seventeenth-century woman writer to express the political self-consciousness of twentieth-century writers like Atwood and Le Guin, whose works are often put in this category.

In the collection of essays, *Feminism, Utopia and Narrative*, Goodwin, in justifying a defense for utopian feminism, takes a more inclusive position and draws the rationale for her working definition of utopia from the theories of Ernst Bloch. I will first list the criteria she gives for defining utopia, and then discuss the feasibility of using such a model:

1. The imagined utopia, the hoped-for betterment, need not be real or realistic in any narrow sense.
2. Utopian discourse does not necessarily present a paradigm or a program; it may also be a stance, a mode, or even something as diffuse as a feeling dispersed through a given context.
3. Although the utopian is a hopeful mode, it may also be a skeptical one. Indeed, it is most likely to be effective in realizing the

possible if skepticism and hope form
complementary aspects of it.

4. Although utopia typically is apocalyptic, an
imagined end, it may also be visionary, a
continual process. (Note that these two are
necessarily distinct).

5. Utopian discourse is not confined to any
specific narrative or discursive form. (4-5)

Intrinsic in Goodwin's model are ideas about content, form,
and function, but the model is so inclusive that everything
from a fairy tale to a novel or a song could be defined as
utopian or as having a "utopian propensity," and indeed
Goodwin later analyzes the "utopian propensity" of Jane
Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

The benefit of Goodwin's criteria is that it can be
applied to almost any type of discourse, and thus, offers a
new perspective to a text by highlighting its utopian
components. When a discourse expresses dissatisfaction
with the status quo, an examination of the contradiction
that the utopia tries to fill can provide insight into the
historical circumstances that give context to this
construct. Merely judging/evaluating the specifics of the
utopia produced and whether one would or would not like to
live in this fictional construct is not that constructive.

I specifically use the word "construct" because Goodwin fails to mention that her definition of utopia, which is drawn from Bloch, is open to the same critique. Bloch, as mentioned earlier, advocates the idea of utopia being a human propensity. However, his theory is often criticized for being too inclusive, for being essentialist, for ignoring economic theory, and for implying that utopian dreaming is ultimately a type of progress narrative moving towards a teleological end (Levitas 181-183). These criticisms aside, I believe that the definitions of both Bloch and Goodwin are beneficial to the study of utopia because they recognize that many texts contain utopian elements and that an investigation of utopian discourse need not be limited to a select few canonical texts erroneously regarded as having "universal" implications. Furthermore, Goodwin's paradigm opens the genre not only to texts written by women, but also to oral, sacred, and mythological traditions that were recognized as precursors to utopian literature but were not included in the genre. It is her five criteria that will guide my investigation of utopian texts.

Millennialism

Hill writes that it is "difficult to exaggerate the extent and strength of millenarian expectations among ordinary people in the 1640s and early 1650s" (96). Preachers who believed that Charles I's government was anti-christian saw the civil war as the beginning of cataclysmic events and called on their congregations to support Parliament. Milton even spoke of Christ as the "shortly-expected King" (Hill 96). It was an almost orthodox belief among the Parliamentarians that Christ's kingdom was at hand, that the common people had a role to play in the event, and that they were "the chosen" as opposed to the rich and powerful. The poor were to be set free from the grievous yoke of tyranny. The execution of King Charles I was to many a prelude to greater international events and Christ's return as King.

From a royalist perspective, Sir Edward Dering writes (1642) that "the vulgar mind is now fond with imaginary hopes. What will the issue be when hopes grow still on hopes?" (qtd. in Hill 34). Another royalist, Chestlin, confirms in the same year that "all sorts of people dreamed of an utopia and infinite liberty, especially in matters of religion" (qtd. in Hill 34). Hill writes that by the mid-seventeenth-century, a consensus seemed to have been

reached, indicating the advent of remarkable events in the mid-1650s. The fall of the AntiChrist, the second coming, and the millennium "underlay the utopian enthusiasm of the Puritan preachers in the early 1640s" (93). The millenarian hopes of the people at this time are described by both Roayalists and the scholar Hill as "utopian." Political action, millenarian hope, and religious enthusiasm are so intertwined at this time that it is difficult to separate them. Utopian and millennial thought are so bound together in the turmoil of the period that one cannot be studied without some understanding of the other. The sectarian's millennium is the royalist's improbable utopia.

With the exception of those scholars who define utopia as a human propensity, the one thing that most critics agree upon is that although closely related, millennium narratives are not to be included in the genre of utopia proper. Elliott does grant that myths about the Golden Age and the Christian Paradise are "transhistoric," and they provide the elements out of which the intellectual concept of utopia develops (6). According to Northrop Frye, there are two polarizing myths in the Western Christian tradition: "the contract and the utopia, the myth of origin and the myth of *telos*" (34). In the Christian tradition

the City of God is closely related to utopia in that it is an ideal place that cannot be attained on earth; however, Frye like Ferns and other commentators make a specific distinction between an ideal place of divine creation and one that is man-made. Frye states: "The conception of the millennium, the Messianic kingdom to be established on earth, comes closer to the conventional idea of the utopia, but that again does not depend primarily on human effort" (34). This seems to be the most common distinction made; divine kingdoms on earth are not utopias because they are not constructed by humans, even though the descriptions of what such a kingdom would look like are born of human imagination. Davis adds that in addition to the *deus ex machina*, millenarian works should not be classified as utopias because they lack "blueprint" detail and assume drastic changes in human nature rather than problem-solving to achieve the ideal (36-37). However, many radical millenarians such as the Fifth Monarchists believed they had a role to play in helping bring about the millennium.

Theodore Olsen, who has studied millennial thought in both Jewish and Christian traditions, attributes the Christian emphasis on the millennium as arising from the political pressures facing early followers of Christ who had to explain the significance of his unusual career.

Olsen states, "When this small but growing group, now no longer solely a Jewish movement, encountered the full force of Roman opposition to Christianity as an illicit superstition, it responded by reappropriating the analysis of the book of Daniel, the defining set-piece of Jewish apocalyptic writing" (13). This reappropriation became a thoroughly Christianized interpretation of God bringing about his will in the imminent, catastrophic climax of history.

When later Christianity moved away from this orientation, it provoked a powerful reaction from the Montanist movement, and the Joachite movement offered a new millennialist scheme of interpretation capable of being employed by common men everywhere to "cast their contemporaries in all the roles contained in the drama of the imminent end-time" (14). Thus, Olsen states that medieval millennialism came into early modern history as:

1. The conserver of the comprehensive and dynamic interpretation of the whole of history central to Jewish and early Christian millennialism.
2. The carrier of the newer and more problematic notion of the elite with a mandate to change history. (14)

According to both Olsen and Capp, millennialism arose in particular periods of crisis in which new events seemed to cast doubt on the adequacy of past formulations of the meaning of history. The narrative ordering of history provides a means of making sense of the world and one's place in it. In order to form a shared and consistent narrative interpretation of historical events, millennialism undertook to show that these new events, rather than questioning and casting doubt upon past interpretation of history, actually confirm history and deepen its interpretation. New events are cast as the foreshadowing of the apocalypse, and as the wait for Christ's return lengthened, various purposes were assigned to this interval.

Millenarianism gained widespread support during the Reformation as changes were made in the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation. St. Augustine had given these books of the Bible a metaphorical reading, but Protestant literalists used the scriptures to support their belief that the Pope was the Anti-Christ, that the chaos, wars, and disputes following the Reformation were evidence of Daniel's prophecy of a time of woe during the last days. Most importantly, according to Capp, by accepting biblical prophecy, "the whole of history could be read as the

working-out of an inscrutable but divine plan, leading to an inevitably just conclusion" (25). The civil wars in 1642 were interpreted as "the decisive apocalyptic or millenarian struggle," and during the period of 1640-53, Capp writes that at least 70% of the 112 ministers to publish at this time can be identified as millenarians. Only four writers denounced millenarian ideas (38-39). Ministers espoused a belief in an imminent kingdom of Christ on earth that would last one thousand years and claimed that the civil war was the precursor to this event. To achieve the ruin of their enemies and the establishment of the New Jerusalem, the ministers called for the zealous prosecution of the war: "the millennium, the war, and the cause of God were presented as the same struggle" (Capp 39).

Although millennialism was popular among the radical religious sects, the Fifth Monarchists advocated violence to bring down Babylon. Rather than purifying oneself and waiting for events to unfold, the Fifth Monarchists encouraged the saints to actively prepare the way for Christ's return. John James, a Fifth Monarchist preacher, said that "Christ would use his people in his hand as his *Battle-ax . . . and Weapons of War*" (qtd. in Capp 133).

For many Fifth Monarchists the New Model Army rather than the *deus ex machina* would bring about the millennium.

As Davis notes, many of the millenarian tracts at this time did lack detail. In *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory*, Thomas Goodwin stated only that Christ would reign personally on earth, the church would be purified, the Jews converted, and many prophecies fulfilled. Henry Archer in *The Personall Reign of Christ Upon Earth* (1642) likewise offers only a sketch of Christ's universal reign in which "hee will governe as earthly *Monarches* have done" but with honor, peace, and fullness of temporal blessings such as health, long life, and abundance of material things" (qtd. in Davis 35). Even some Fifth Monarchists were reluctant to set down the details of the millennium, feeling they ought "rather leave the Ordering and Management thereof" to Christ (Capp 72). This deference to Christ may explain the lack of detail in millennium literature. But lack of detail aside, the content falls within Goodwin's criteria for utopia in that there is a specific "hoped-for betterment," a skepticism of present conditions, and an apocalyptic or visionary process.

Davis is critical of millenarian literature for instead of the human problem solving involved in the construction of utopia, millenarian works assume a

fundamental change in human nature: "The utopian's method is not to wish away the disharmony implicit within the collective problem, but to organize society and its institutions in such a way as to contain the problem's effects" (38). While some millenarian tracts do assume that the saints will live in perfect moral harmony, thus requiring a change in human nature, the Fifth Monarchists not only believed that they had a hand in bringing about the millennium, but they had specific reforms in mind to prepare the saints for Christ's return. For example, because they believed the whole social structure was unjust, they advocated the redistribution of land and abolition of taxes, attacked the system of primogeniture, proposed that the magistrate provide work for the poor and use his power to enforce godly discipline among the masses (Capp 140-147). Once their reforms were in place, the Jews converted, and non-believers destroyed, Christ would return and govern his saints on this more perfected earth. Likewise, More's *Utopia* required a fundamental change in human values: the love of virtue, the shunning of riches, gems, and gold, and a love of hard work and learning.

Millennial literature fits the genre paradigm of utopia created by Goodwin. According to Goodwin, utopian discourse is not limited to any specific narrative form,

nor must it present a specific paradigm or program. The utopian mode can be both hopeful and skeptical. Goodwin does not insist that there must be an absence of divine intervention, but as stated earlier, millennial sects often believed that they had a definite role to play in changing their world. Furthermore, Goodwin states that the imagined utopia need not be real or realistic; however, millennialists were certain that Christ's return to earth was indeed imminent. After the dates predicted for Christ's return came and went, hope for the coming millennium did not immediately wane. Instead, preparation and watchfulness for the conditions under which the millennium was to occur were advocated by the leaders of these sects. In this respect, millennarian literature meets Goodwin's fourth genre criteria, that the discourse need not be apocalyptic, but may also be visionary or a continual process (4-5).

I am particularly interested in including the millennialism of the Fifth Monarchists in this study because of their activism and because the majority of their group was composed of the lower classes. Most of the utopian literature that is analyzed comes from the pens of upper-class men, and I want to see the ways in which literature from lower-class, female writers differs.

According to Capp, the membership of the Fifth Monarchists consisted primarily of small tradesmen and those in the clothing industry. Some of the leaders came from the gentry, the army, and the clergy, but the movement was particularly attractive to the very bottom strata of society, including laborers, servants, apprentices and journeymen. According to church lists which survive, women easily outnumbered men (82-86). Although the group was condemned as being full of journeymen and women, the Fifth Monarchists seem to have been the only movement to appeal to the servant class and treat them as equals (86). Even the Levellers did not include servants as equals, although they shared some of the same objectives of the Fifth Monarchists such as the abolition of tithes and the reform of the law.

Goodwin's definitional criteria opens the genre from the exclusive province of educated, upper-class males, so that texts written by women, by the lower classes and ancient traditions can be included. By including millennialism in my examination of early modern utopian texts, I will be able to analyze the perspectives of both upper-class and lower-class women, those who supported the Royalists and those who opposed the King.

Chapter Two

Authorship and Agency: Redefining Social Constructions of Gender

*The great point of honour in men is courage
and in women chastity. If a man loses his
honour in one encounter, it is possible for him
to regain it in another; a slip in a woman's
honour is irrecoverable.*

Joseph Addison - *The Spectator* (1711)

*The Church of Christ is a woman, and those that
speak against the womans speaking, speak against
the Church of Christ, and the Seed of the woman,
which Seed is Christ.*

Margaret Fell - *Womens Speaking Justified*
(1667)

Feminist scholars have done excellent work
establishing the historical, cultural hostilities to women
who chose to write and to publish. Feminists have
recovered conduct books, letters and pamphlets such as
Halifax's advice to his daughter, the *quelles de femme*,

sermons, satires, and moral treatises which dictated "natural" behaviors for women and their subordinate position in society. Along with the typical patriarchal admonishments to be obedient, dutiful, and virtuous, such literatures reveal that early modern women were taught that silence and chastity were synonymous. As most prohibitions go, women found ways of negotiating such restrictions, and recent scholarship has attested to their creativity in walking the tightrope of authorship and femininity⁹.

The social instability during the Civil Wars and Interregnum created a climate in which aristocratic authority and customs were challenged. Middling and lower class women were often less concerned about their temporal reputations than about their spiritual destination. The social chaos of the 1640s and 1650s gave rise to competing ideologies about the social and political activities of women. Unlike their aristocratic counterparts, radical sectarian women participated in political protest, marched on Parliament, held prayer meetings, traveled unchaperoned, and preached, activities which were justified by their religious beliefs but were in direct opposition to secular or Monarchical authority.

⁹ See Brown, Bowerbank, Gallagher, Khanna, Parker, and Wall for discussions about rhetorical strategies used by women to justify their writing and publishing activities.

In this chapter I examine first the well-known social proscriptions of women's speech as well as representations of women in newsbooks, which were popular in the seventeenth century. I will discuss also authorship and gender construction (both the gender construction of authors and the ways that gender is constructed by authors) in order to demonstrate that Cary and Cavendish each had to construct definitions of female authorship that would justify their publishing practices. I argue that women of the upper classes and politically conservative women, who feared a loss of reputation and material damage, carefully negotiated these social restrictions in the prefaces to their texts, such as the mother's legacy and utopian and millenarian literature. Upper-class women often embraced essentialized gendered binaries, choosing to write mother's legacies, tributes to their husbands, or like Cavendish, attempted to separate chastity from speech and to positively define socially constructed feminine characteristics. Next, I will analyze the strategies of radical sectarian women whose religious beliefs and communal support empowered them to resist social custom and temporal authorities, even if it meant going to prison. However, whether politically conservative or radical, women who published at this time had to contend with the idea

that they were transgressing gender boundaries. The writer's class and her political affiliations greatly influence the rhetoric she used to justify her transgression into print.

In *The Imprint of Gender* Cynthia analyzes numerous prefaces to early printed works by both men and women and has theorized that "because non-dramatic works published between 1557 and 1621 conceptualize the relationship between writer, text, and the new reading public in particularly gendered terms, the developing concept of authorship was masculinized"(4). She argues that sixteenth-century male writers consistently used gendered and highly sexualized language to legitimate publication, or rather, to overcome the socially produced idea of the "stigma of print." Unlike manuscript texts that were circulated in upper-class coterie circles, printed texts were as yet socially "unauthorized," considered to be lower class, "common," and available to scrutiny by the vulgar crowd. According to Wall, Sidney's refusal to publish during his lifetime set a powerful precedent for withholding poetry from the press, yet the successful posthumous publication of his works left later writers an ambiguous cultural legacy. They wanted the success of publication, but they also wanted to maintain the social

prestige of being an elite "amateur," a member of an exclusive coterie circle.

There were competing attitudes about publishing as manuscript culture made the transition to print culture. On the one hand, print can be seen as a marketable, egalitarian vehicle for fame; on the other hand, print was also perceived to be threatening to the social order by undermining class distinctions, or at least making them more fluid. Also, the patronage system gave the courtier a disincentive for jeopardizing the social capital attained in the highly competitive manuscript coterie circles. Printing makes "common" the flow of information and thus has a negative social connotation. Therefore, the numerous apologies and denials of knowledge that one's manuscript had been printed confirm, for Wall, the social prestige given to the coterie system of manuscript exchange as well as the class anxiety attendant upon appearing in print.

Wall has observed that male writers negotiated the transition from manuscript to print by using gendered language to manage anxieties about the press. Anthony Scoloker in his introduction to *Daiphantus* (1604) mocks the conventional apology for appearing in print:

He is A man in Print, and tis enough he hath
under-gone a Pressing (yet not like a Ladie)

though for your sakes and for Ladyes, protesting
for this poore Infant of his Brayne, as it was
the price of his Virginitie borne into the world
in tears . . . Thus like a Lover wooes he for
your Favor, which if you grant then *Omnia vincit*
Amor. (qtd. in Wall 1)

As Wall explains, in Elizabethan slang "to undergo a pressing" is to act the lady's part and be pressed by a man, thereby losing one's authorial virginity. Many other writers express a similar reluctance to print and convey this reluctance in gendered terms. Spenser, Harrington, Nashe, and Davies are among the many writers Wall cites as using gendered language to assuage the "stigma of print." While Harrington appeals to his Muse's female modesty to fend off the marketplace, Davies portrays it as a site of social deterioration and sexual scandal:

. . . you well know the Presse so much wrong'd
by abject Rimers that great Hearts doe scorn
To have their Measures with such Nombres throng'd
As are so basely got, conceiv'd, and bourne.
(qtd. in Wall 16)

Davies makes publishing and bookselling a kind of brothel in which bastard texts are conceived among and for the vulgar crowd.

When the dominant conventions used to negotiate authorship are constructed in gendered terms, the female author has to find other ways to authorize her text. A female author risks her reputation as a chaste, virtuous woman, and she can become "common" in a double sense of the word, lacking both class prestige and virtue. As Patricia Parker states, without the various positive connotations of being a "public man," a public woman is always understood to be a whore (104).

Representations of women in the newly uncensored print medium reinforced the binary definitions of women as either virtuous or unchaste. During the revolutionary period in England, newsbooks became widely circulated in print runs ranging from two hundred to a few thousand. Before 1640 there were no domestic newsbooks, but by 1645 there were 722, selling for as little as a penny each (prior to 1640, only foreign news was printed by a censored press in these books). All classes read newsbooks or heard them read aloud, but the chief audience was the middling class and the so-called "vulgar" (Raymond 9-13). The lower classes were believed to be the most credulous, and thus, the most willing to seek "news" especially if it were juxtaposed with sensational narratives. One of the major criticisms

of newsbooks was that they were "Calculated exactly to the low and sordid Capacities of the Vulgar" (14).

Newsbooks were believed to be dangerous not specifically because they blended fact with fiction, but because the availability of the news to the public was a "destabilising force which exposed the workings of government, stripping it bare of its opaque privileges" (Raymond 6). Raymond suggests that greed was also associated with the falsehoods in the newsbooks, and both let the "perfidious newsbook writer to aim at the uneducated, 'poore deluded People, the credulous Vulgar'" (13). Although he acknowledges that the "authors of polemical newsbooks did not behave as if factual news was incompatible with concentrated invective," he asserts that newsbooks participated in constructing the world around them, "not only by means of polemical invention and political propaganda, but by arranging recent, unrecorded events in a narrative" (20).

As with the social construction of the author as masculine, newsbooks contributed to and reinforced gendered stereotypes in their depictions of women. Representations of women were often used in the service of political and cultural propaganda. Images of women in newsbooks generally fell into one of three categories: woman as

victim, woman as harlot, or woman as sensationalized cultural other. In their political propaganda both Royalists and Republicans used the image of the female as an indicator of male transgression and blamed for radical sensuality, for women are what make men transgress. For example, *The Man in the Moon* (no. 21, 5-12 September, 1649), a Royalist newsbook, discredits the parliamentary "Rebels" by undermining their religious convictions with accusations of frequenting brothels. The article states:

Since the great mock-*Victory of Jones*, nothing but Joy, Feasting, Revelling, and another Recreation with the Saints called in plain English *Whoring*: Now their Bellies are full of all the good things belonging to *God*, the *King*, and the *People*; . . . they have erected Three *Nuceries* of *Sodomy*, *Lust*, and *Uncleanness* to Recreate their spirits, and keep their Gifts and Rebellious members in action. (Raymond 142)

The writer goes on to state that freedom and liberty are the passwords to the brothels. The "news" item borders on the pornographic in its double entendres and descriptions of the parliamentary men at the brothels:

The first [brothel] erected by the Worshipful Colonel *Martin* for the encrease of the Saints

in the *Iuncto*: None is to enter here except a *Parliament man*, and not he neither without the *Word* which is *Freedom*: At the Door he gives Five Shillings the first time, and then he is after *Free*. He is presented with a *naked wench* lying upon a Bed, to whom he approaches with bowing himself three times, and offers Crown in Gold and lyes it upon her Chin, which she by a dexterious trick gives a toss and flings it into her *Tinder-box of lust*; then afterwards he goes and chuseth which pleaseth him best, and so they go to their *Exercise*.

The Royalist propagandist does not confine himself to attacking the politics of the "rebels" and their fight for freedom from the monarchy. The ad hominem assault exploits the figure of the prostitute to expose the rebels' supposed hypocrisy and to heap all the social opprobrium upon their heads that can be mustered. Apparently, a drama of lust and loose women is the most effective way of discrediting enemies of the crown, and of course, selling newsbooks.

Not only prostitutes, but also women of religious sects were depicted as being disorderly, sexually aggressive, and unchaste. The *Mercurius Fumigosus* (no. 12,

16-23 August, 1654) describes a group of religious women as follows:

The *Celestial Dogg-star* casts so Powerful an
Influence this Week on Womens Cod-pieces, that it
is impossible to carry a Virginitie among them,
which will not be seized on by these *Shee-*
Mastiffs that are so eager of their *Game* . . .
They run *open-mouth'd* at their prey.

The particulars of the ways in which these women ravished their hapless victims are given in graphic detail. Thus, sectarian women are presented as more vicious than their hypocritical male colleagues. According to the Royalists, these women are like wild dogs threatening civilized males, or rather usurping male authority.

The Republican polemicists also used images of women as moral barometers of male behavior in their newsbooks. Rather than harlots, these women are either innocent victims of an immoral Royalist army or worthy women supporting the cause. *Certain Informations* (no. 27, 17-24, July, 1643) begins as a factual news report relating information about the battle in Yorkshire between Lord Fairefaxe and the "Newcastellians," which was interrupted because of a lack of gunpowder. However, the article then relates that once the Earl of Newcastle stole the powder

intended for Fairefaxe, he broke the cease-fire. After Newcastle forced Fairefaxe's army out of town,

the Popish Army slew many of the Inhabitants . .
. [and] most shamelessly they stripped the women
and maidens naked, and ravished and deflowered
them, and amongst the rest . . . those barbarous
Souldiers had severally abused a maid servant
belonging to the lady Fairefaxe. (Raymond 145)

Further particulars are "too horrible to be related." This use of women as victims to characterize the enemy as barbarous has endured as standard fare for war-time propaganda.

Women were also used in newsbooks as indicators that the social order had been turned up-side-down. These stories provide evidence of cultural anxiety within the political and gender hierarchies. Stories of infanticide, monstrous births, poisoning of husbands, and the hangings of women for such crimes abound in the newsbooks. A *Perfect Account* (no. 211, 17-24 January, 1654) reports that "many strange disasters have fallen out this week":

At Cobham in Kent, a woman jealous of her
husband, sent for the suspected female, and
having drunk freely with her, she at the last
demanded of her, if she would have her nose cut

off, or her bearing part; and immediately she and her maid servant fell to work, and exercised that part of her body which they thought had most offended. Not long after her husband came home, and demanding what there was to eat, she replied, that she had got the best bit which he loved in the world, and so presented him with that most ungrateful object.

While this story may have been inspired by Greek mythology, it titillated its audience and reinforced the idea that the social order was in danger. Despite all the changes in the historical circumstances of newsbooks, the exploitation of women as social markers of male impropriety did not change. Different writers used these images for different purposes, but they rarely stretched cultural conventions. Women were either worthy and chaste, or they were whores and criminals; the binaries these images represent didn't change, just their political appropriation.

Images of lower-class women were used by male publishers to condemn male behavior and to illustrate social upheaval. Although upper-class women could participate in coterie circles, it was not appropriate for them to appear in print. Because silence and virtue were synonymous in the literature and conduct codes at this

time, the danger of a woman's speech was represented as both explicitly sexual and directly threatening to the social order. In a 1639 conduct book, Francesco Barbaro writes: "it is proper . . . that not only arms but indeed the speech of women never be made public; for the speech of a noble woman can be no less dangerous than the nakedness of her limbs" (qtd. In Brown 21). A woman and her body became analogous; to speak publicly is to be unchaste, a "wanton."

In Elizabeth Cary's play, *The Tragedy of Mariam, Queen of Jewry* (1613), the chorus articulates the dominant ideology about women and public speaking:

When to their husbands they themselves do bind,
Do they not wholly give themselves away?
Or give they but their body, not their mind,
Reserving that, though best, for other's prey?

Her mind if not peculiar is not chaste.

For in a wife it is no worse to find,

A common body than a common mind. (ll. 233-244)

This passage illustrates an interesting paradox. The first premise reinforces the familiar Christian and Cartesian dualism between the mind and the body, but in the second premise, a woman's mind and her body become analogous. If

she shares her mind, it is comparable to sharing her body. Furthermore, since any gendered dualism posits a hierarchy in which the body is inferior to the mind, the transgression of a woman speaking publicly becomes more subversive than prostituting her body.

Patriarchal oppression of women in part justifies itself by connecting women more closely than men to the body and restricting women's social and economic roles to biological functions (Grosz 14). In order to preserve the blood lineage of the patriarchy, a woman's reproductive function must be contained; therefore, chastity is constructed as a moral necessity for women. But in the example above, a woman's body and her speech are rendered synonymous. While the relegation of the female to associations with the body creates negative assumptions about her capacity for rational thought, restricting her speech also preserves the dominant ideology from any threat of subversion. Thus, the patriarchal order is maintained by controlling the bodies and the speech of women.

The idea that educated, literate women are a threat to the social order is emphatically expressed by Daniel Tuvill in *Asylum Veneris, or A Sanctuary for Ladies* (1616):

Learning in the breast of a woman, is likened by
their Stoicall adversaries to a sword in the

hands of a Mad Man . . . It doth not ballast
their Judgements, but only addeth more saile to
their ambition; and like the weapon of Goliah
[sic] an instrument to give the fatal period to
their honour's overthrow The pen must be
forbidden them as the tree of good and evil, and
upon their blessing they must not handle it. It
is a pander to a virgin chastity, and betrayeth
it, but venting forth those amorous passion that
are incident to hotter bloods. (qtd. in Brown
24)

An educated woman who writes is represented as a danger to herself and to others; as education is a "sword in the hands of a Mad Man," so too a pen is a "pander" to virgin chastity. To publish is to overstep the boundaries of womanhood, impinging upon the activities and attributes of men. In the warning above, both images, the sword and the pen, are phallic and essentialize education and writing as solely masculine activities; furthermore, the language of this warning to women is implicitly sexual equating writing with promiscuity.

When Wroth wrote her *Urania*, Denny attacked her work with a parody of her sexuality. Of course, he may have attacked her for personal reasons since he was mentioned in

her work, but his attack is clearly gendered. He accused Wroth of being "a Hermaphrodite in show, in deed a monster/ As by thy words and works all men may conster" (qtd. in Brown 25). Denny calls Wroth a hermaphrodite in order to emphasize that she is unnatural, a monster. She is transgressing gender boundaries simply because she chose to publish.

Likewise, Cavendish was attacked by the anonymous author of "A Session of the Poets" who wrote the following about Cavendish's husband, the Duke of Newcastle:

Newcastle and's Horse for entrance next strives,
Well Stuff'd was his Cloakbag, and so was his
Breeches
An unbutt'ning the place where Nature's Posset-
maker lives,
Pull'd out his Wife's Poems, Plays, Essays and
Speeches. (qtd. in Mendelson 60)

It is clear that in taking up the pen Cavendish risks both her reputation and her gender identity. The pen becomes a phallus, thus making Cavendish vulnerable to charges of hermaphroditism. She has usurped a masculine occupation, so her works become associated with male genitalia. Not only is Cavendish's gender assaulted in this way, but the

comment also emasculates her husband for not controlling her discursive and unruly behavior.

Cavendish is unique among aristocratic women because she had a companionate marriage, a wealthy husband who supported her discursive activities, and since William already had heirs by his first wife, Margaret was able to pursue her literary interests without spousal constraint. Most of the scorn of her activities came from gossip among her peers and insults in pamphlets. William Cavendish was a wealthy patron of such figures as Thomas Hobbes, and it was his patronage that protected Margaret from open hostility; however, this hostility was expressed behind her back.

The most active female writers and publishers during the Civil War period were the Quakers. Elizabeth Hooton was the first person in England to preach the doctrines of George Fox, but many soon followed her lead. She was married to a farmer and the mother of five, but nevertheless opened her house to Quaker meetings and was thrown into prison on at least three different occasions (Mack 127-128). Quaker women were radical in their beliefs about a divine "inner light" which justified their acting on God's word. Hooton was fearless of any man; she rebuked King Charles II in Whitehall, and traveled and suffered as

a missionary in Jamaica and Barbados. For a Quaker woman, social slurs about one's reputation and the material consequences that followed for aristocratic women did not apply. Their souls mattered most, and if preaching the word it meant going to prison, then most Quaker women were willing to go. According to Mack:

in assuming the personae of biblical prophets, Quaker women seemed to be denying the reality of all outward cultural constraints. They denied class and status differences by refusing to use the verbal or body language of deference; they denied gender differences by insisting that they preached as disembodied spirits 'in the light,' not as women. (134)

Social constraints upon gender meant little to Quaker women, many of whom even traveled without their husbands or their husbands' consent.

Quaker women were unique in that they operated printing presses, published their own works, and kept copies of their texts. They actively petitioned parliament, gathered thousands of names for their petitions, and advocated anti-clerical and anti-hierarchical political positions. However, after the restoration of Charles II to the throne, the government was openly hostile to them. The

Corporation Act of 1661 demanded that all Englishmen swear oaths of allegiance; the Act of Uniformity in 1662 required all schoolmasters and clergy conform to the liturgy of the Anglican Church; The Quaker Act that same year declared that anyone who refused to swear an oath or who met with five or more other Quakers was liable to a five or ten pound fine, three to six months in prison, or transportation to the colonies (Enright 5-6).

Although the Quakers continued their activities in the face of this persecution, the role of women was gradually suppressed and altered to conform more closely to society's notion of acceptable female behavior. Women's freedom of expression and movement was sacrificed for the freedom of the entire community. After 1672, Quaker women's writings were frequently altered or rejected by the all-male censorship board.

Mother's Legacies

As with most social proscriptions, not everyone adhered to them. Women did publish at this time and were very creative in the ways in which they negotiated this social boundary. One such attempt to maintain one's reputation as a virtuous woman was disturbingly self-effacing. Wall demonstrates that in texts known as

mother's legacies, the upper class author imagines her death in childbirth as an occasion for leaving her motherless child written guidance from beyond the grave. The transgression of appearing in print is mitigated by the author's death and by her duty to instruct her child. Also, being unable to transmit material property, the soon-to-be dead mother gives her child a more valuable legacy, her wisdom and spiritual guidance.

The mother's legacy is a very disturbing form of authorship. Written in the rhetorical form of the will, the writer speaks in the present to an audience of the future, and her authority for speaking comes from the afterlife because she is dead. Wall gives an example from Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing* to demonstrate how women negotiated this morbid form of writing:

But lest you should marvaile, my children, why
I doe not according to the usual custome of
women, exhort you by words and admonitions,
rather then by writing, a thing so unusuall
among us . . . know therefore, that it was the
Motherly affection that I bare unto you all,
which made mee now . . . forget my selfe in
regard of you: neither care I what you or any
shall thinke of mee, if among many words I may

write but one sentence, which may make you

labour for the spiritual food of the soule. (289)

Leigh's anticipated death in childbirth gave her authority to disregard custom and to fulfill her duty to nurture her children. Wall states that Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing* went through fifteen editions, but the "price a woman paid for the authority of authorship was a large one: her life" (289-293).

Elizabeth Joceline's *the Mothers Legacie to her unborn child* proved to be prophetic. She died in childbirth and her husband had the work published after her death. Thomas Goad, the editor, assured readers that Joceline was both "virtuous and dead" (284). Wall explains that as women began to assume control of their textual presentations, "they found that the legacy's enabling vantage point outweighed its morbid associations" (293). According to Wall, by evoking imminent death, the writer could take control of the precarious circumstances of her life, articulate her beliefs, and display her knowledge (293).

The mother's legacy may offer a female writer socially acceptable entry into print, but the occasion and subject matter are quite limited. Furthermore, the mother's legacy does not challenge the social construction of gender; it reinforces it. Women were primarily valued for their

ability to reproduce, so motherhood is their most acceptable role. Women writing in this vein must have a reputation of virtue, and the content of the legacy provides socially sanctioned religious instruction and guidance for moral behavior. Initially, the legacy was published after the author's death, but even if the writer survived childbirth, the legacy enacts an erasure of the author by assuming her imminent demise. Therefore, to author a text, not as a mother, or as an adoring wife, but as a woman who desired to put her ideas in print was a transgression that required careful negotiation. When Cavendish and Cary published their utopian texts, they were assuming a role outside the boundaries of acceptable female behavior. Furthermore, since their texts do not define women as mothers, but rather as preacher and political leader respectively, they attempt to expand the social roles for women.

Motherhood and Utopia

The mother's legacy was not perceived to be a cultural threat; after all, motherhood was the primary function of a woman's life. Marriage presupposed the birth of children who represented the perpetuity of property and the care of parents in their old age. According to Hufton, married

women were defined as vessels for the reproduction of the species, so "not to have children carried with it connotations of failure and inadequacy; to be barren was a judgement of God"(177). Almost without exception, failure to produce offspring was laid at the woman's feet. To ensure conception, there were many herbal remedies and religious rites to help a woman conceive. For instance, a barren woman could eat leeks and onions while performing certain incantations, or she could take the waters of specific springs and mix them with scrapings from the statue of the Virgin, in order to lift the curse of barrenness (Hufton 180-181). As late as the eighteenth century *Aristotle's Masterpiece* gave advice about the best way to conceive and the ways to conceive a male.

Motherhood was a central fact of women's lives and their duty as Christian wives, and yet it is noticeably absent in the early utopian texts examined here. Cary, Cavendish, and Scott do not include representations of motherhood in their works. As the genre of the mother's legacy suggests, it was certainly acceptable for a woman to address this topic in print, and male utopian writers included in their fictional communities descriptions of marriage and child rearing. So why do female utopian writers avoid the subject?

The marriage relationship and the education of children are recurrent topics in utopias written by men. More's Utopians emphasize the physical desirability of a marriage partner by having the prospective bride and groom undress in front of each other before marriage, in the same way that a horse trader will not purchase an animal without examining it first. Children are given a moral education by the priests, and although a widow of advanced years may become a priest, this rarely happens. The gendered division of labor is conventional with males in charge of public office and agriculture, and women performing domestic work such as spinning and cooking.

The same is true for Bacon and Campanella, except that marriages are arranged. In *The New Atlantis* the patriarchal head of house arranges marriage partners, while in *The City of the Sun* magistrates "distribute male and female breeders" by a type of lottery system (173). Apparently, "love born of eager desire is not known among them" and "domestic affairs are of little account" (174). Likewise, in both texts, children are educated by the state because the proper rearing of children is of such vital importance it cannot be trusted to individual parents:

And since individuals for the most part
bring forth children wrongly and educate

them wrongly, they consider that they remove
destruction from the state and therefore,
with most sacred fear, they commit the
education of children, who as it were are
the element of the republic, to the
magistrates. (Campanella 172)

Mothers are allowed to nurse their infants for two years in
temples set apart from the rest of the community, but
afterwards that the children are reared by the state.

If marriage and child rearing are important elements
of discussion in male utopias, why are these topics absent
in female utopias? In Cavendish's *Blazing World* both the
Empress and Margaret, her scribe, are married, but neither
of them have children, nor do they even address the topic.
Cavendish herself was a second wife who had no children of
her own, but she was a stepmother to five grown children.
Jane, the eldest, was two years older than Cavendish, and
Henry, at twelve years old, was the youngest. At twenty-
two, Cavendish was much in love with her more experienced
husband, but found the initial move into his household to
be fraught with difficulties. She wrote that she was
treated as an interloper:

When a second wife comes into a family, all
the former children, or old servants , are

apt to be factious, and do foment suspicion
against her, making ill constructions of all
her actions; were they never so well or
innocently met, yet they shall be ill taken.

(qtd. in Whitaker)

With no direct experience of motherhood and little positive experience as a stepmother, perhaps Cavendish avoided the subject for personal reasons. However, that doesn't explain the absence of motherhood in the other utopian works.

Although Cary mentions men, women, sons, and daughters as inhabiting the New Jerusalem, it is unclear whether or not anyone will be born into the New Jerusalem. Christ's thousand year reign on earth appears to be static. There will be peace, harmony, and fruitful abundance for His saints to enjoy, but Cary does not specifically mention family relationships. One could assume that those saints who are living at the time of Christ's second coming are the only ones who will inhabit the New Jerusalem. She does state that the Saints will become the "Bride, the Lamb's wife," and then interprets this to mean that "ardent and entire affection shall be in the Saints to Christ" (250). Apparently, all love, joy, and affection is to be mutually received from and given to Christ.

Further in the text, Cary states that during Christ's reign there will be no suffering and no crying (279). One could interpret to mean that the saints will no longer be oppressed and made to endure their present suffering in the world. But if the passage is interpreted literally, it would mean that all suffering and crying are to cease, in which case there would be no childbirth and no crying of infants. To suffer in childbirth was one of the consequences of Eve's sin, and since the Saints who reign with Christ are to be cleansed of their sin, one can assume that either suffering in childbirth has ended or there will be no new births. I read the passage literally because Cary earlier states that the saints will live into very old age, "for as the daies of a tree, are the daies of my people" (69).

In Sarah Scott's work, the absence of motherhood is a conscious choice built into the requirements of life at Millenium Hall. The founders of the utopian estate do not have children, and should any of their members choose to marry, they are given a dowry and must leave the estate. The women of the hall do take in poor children from the village and school them, but none of the women who reside there are mothers. Furthermore, the women who founded the hall are orphans, are sent away to boarding schools by

jealous stepmothers, or have an absent or coquettish mother. Each of their narratives is a cautionary tale against the dangers of marriage, and the hall provides them as widows and as single women an alternative to the marriage market. Millenium Hall is a refuge from the world of marriage, childbirth, and child rearing.

If, as Scott insists, marriage is a potentially dangerous and precarious situation for women who are ruled by their husbands and who have no income or ownership of property, motherhood could be just as dangerous and precarious. Perhaps a utopia for women is one in which the travails of pregnancy are avoided. As stated earlier, married women were expected to bear children, but this wasn't always a blessed event. The mortality rate for infants at this time was very high. According to Stone, the percentage of children who died before age 15 was 35% to 25% for the years 1650 and 1750 respectively (69). Children were not highly likely to survive their first year, and even as late as 1764 in London, "forty-nine percent of all recorded children were dead by the age of two and sixty percent by the age of five" (Stone 68). Poor sanitation, disease, premature weaning, accident, abandonment, infanticide, and neglect all contributed to

high mortality rates, assuming the child lived past the first few days or hours of birth.

As the mother's legacies attest, death in childbirth was no idle apprehension. Hufton translates a French proverb that states, "a pregnant woman has one foot in the grave" (183). She also explains that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on average about twenty-five women in a thousand died during childbirth as compared to 0.12 per thousand today (185). Mothers who had stillborn children were four or five times more likely to die than mothers who gave birth to living children.

The process of labor and delivery was more primitive, lacking in skilled practitioners and drugs to help alleviate pain or to accelerate labor. Alice Thornton described the breech birth of her fifth child as follows:

The child staid in the birth, and come crosse
with his feet first . . . at which time I was
upon the racke in bearing my child with such
exquisite torment, as if each limbe weare
divided from other, for the space of two hours;
when . . . being speechless and breathlesse, I
was . . . in great mercy delivered. (qtd. in
Hufton 186)

Unfortunately for Thorton, after enduring such great pain, the nearly suffocated child only lived for half an hour. Also, because of ineffective contraception, a woman could spend a great many of her childbearing years pregnant. With the complications of miscarriage, stillbirth, and the aforementioned environmental factors, a woman could become pregnant many times and still only have a few children reach adulthood.

The absence of motherhood, childbirth, and child rearing in these early utopian texts written by women indicates both an unwillingness to romanticize motherhood and a conscious effort to redefine women in ways other than by their reproductive abilities. The women in these texts engage in unconventional activities. They preach and minister, they are writers, scientists, and military commanders, they run commercial enterprises, and they do all this without the supervision of men.

As seen in the beginning of this chapter, social constructions of female gender primarily revolve around a woman's sexuality. A woman had to be chaste and silent to be virtuous, or she could be defined as a harlot, or a victim. Even the dutiful mother was only granted license to write as such in apprehension of her impending death. By avoiding the conventional role of mother in their texts,

the heroines of the New Jerusalem, the Blazing World, and Millenium Hall open the eyes of their readers to many possibilities for female activity outside of the home. First, these writers claimed the right to speak and to publish; then they began to act on the arguments of their creative efforts. Scott, after leaving her husband, worked with Barbara Montague on charitable projects and inspired other women to broaden their ideas of what a woman was capable of doing.

Chapter Three

Mary Cary: Expanding the Role of the Female Prophet

*If any shall hereby receive any light, or any refreshment
let them blesse the Lord for it, from whom alone it came:
for I am a very weak, and unworthy instrument, and have not
done this worke by any strength of my owne . . .*

*-Mary Cary, Preface to A More
Exact Mappe of New Jerusalems
Glory (1653)*

In this preface Mary Cary takes the conventional pose of the female religious writer in the seventeenth century. Because women were supposed to be silent, chaste, and obedient, Cary legitimizes her text by adhering to the socially constructed gender category of the female prophet; she claims to be a weak, passive vessel through whom God has communicated a message. However, the text which follows this disclaimer belies the apology. In *A New and More Exact Mappe or Description of New Jerusalems Glory when Jesus Christ and his Saints with him Shall reign on earth a Thousand years, and possess all Kingdoms*, Cary is hardly a passive vessel. She actively and methodically

interprets scripture, uses her own reason to justify her interpretations, applies her interpretation to contemporary political situations, and selectively chooses to explicate biblical passages which valorize women, the meek, and the poor.

Cary gains access to print because she claims to be a prophet, but unlike other female prophets whose trance-induced visions were interpreted by male intermediators, Cary's discourse is not ecstatic or trance-induced, nor does she need a male to interpret her vision of the future for her audience. Cary takes advantage of the license granted to female visionaries at this time, but she also redefines what it means to be a female prophet. Rather than producing an "irrational" text based upon a divine vision, Cary's millennial work is a highly rational critique of the existing social order with a utopian description of Christ's thousand-year reign. Cary appropriates the figure of the female prophet and utopian elements of religious discourse to produce a text that is a religious utopia.

What little is known about Mary Cary comes from her own printed works. She was a Fifth Monarchist who wrote that she began studying the Bible in 1636 at the age of fifteen. Between the years of 1648 and 1651 her name was

changed from Cary to Rande, but she does not indicate whether it was changed by marriage or for some other reason (Greaves and Zaller 127). In her first work, *The Glorious Excellencie of the Spirit* (1645), she identified herself as "a minister of the Gospel," which was an unusual claim because most Puritan sects did not allow a woman to be a minister; however, it is unclear whether Cary was a member of the Fifth Monarchists at this time. This particular tract is a fairly conventional Puritan work which speaks about grace. Since the one reference to the Kingdom of God is given a traditionally allegorical rather than a millenarian interpretation, Greaves and Zaller assume that Cary had not yet joined the movement.

Cary's Fifth Monarchist millenarian beliefs are most clearly asserted in her later works: *The Resurrection of the Witnesses* (1648), *The Little Horn's Doom* (1651), and *A New and More Exact Mappe or Description of New Jerusalem's Glory* (1653). In 1648 Cary also published *A Word in Season*, which was a sweeping defense of the principles of free speech with particular focus on the right of all saints, regardless of sex, denomination or ordination, to preach (Greaves and Zaller 128). In her *Twelve Humble or New Proposals* (1653), she addresses the Barebones Parliament with specific reforms for the new government,

including proposals for relief and justice for the poor, and a proposal that university revenues be used to train poor but godly youths. Cary's last published work was an enlarged and corrected second edition of *The Resurrection*, this time urging vigorous prosecution of the war against the Dutch (128). Cary was not just a student of the Bible; her religious convictions were the source of her political activism and social conscience. She was empowered by the scriptures to publish her ideas about social reform and the coming millennium. This empowerment, however, was provisional. In order to understand the radical nature of Cary's position as a female prophet, it is necessary to examine seventeenth-century conceptions of prophecy as it was understood generally among the Puritans and specifically within the Fifth Monarchist sect.

The Female Prophet

Christopher Hill argues that the revolutionary decades in England stimulated the spirit of prophecy, making the prophecy almost a new profession (91). However, the term "prophet" is difficult to define. It could mean an interpreter of the stars, an interpreter of the Bible, a preacher, a visionary who could predict the future, or a person who received divine messages from dreams and signs.

Nigel Smith explains that generally "prophecy" referred to "divinely inspired utterance, the prophet being God's agent for speaking to the people" (26-28). The contemporary definition of the term "prophecy" to mean a foretelling of the future was actually subsidiary to what is meant by the term in Puritan theology (except in the case of women, a point which I will elaborate upon later). To the Puritans, prophecy was more generally understood as the interpretation or expounding of scriptures, so a minister who taught from the scriptures could be considered a prophet (Smith 26). Women, however, were not allowed to teach the Bible, so the term "prophet" as applied to them indicated that they were mouthpieces of the divine.

Smith also demonstrates that there was a distinction between "experimental knowledge," which was the application of syllogistic reasoning to one's conscience, and "intense emotional questioning of 'experience,'" which was emphasized in many congregations. Communal fellowship was maintained in Independent congregations by the act of prophecy, or rather the recounting of individual experiences as a sign of one's election in order to join the congregation. Smith states, "the greater the belief in inspiration of the individual by the spirit, the more 'experience' looked like prophecy" (27). This communal

sharing of religious experience is more like what is now called personal testimony, but it also falls under the collective heading of prophecy because of the Puritan insistence on individual contact with the divine, unmediated by a priest. While both sexes could claim unmediated access to the divine, only men could teach, interpret, or "prophecy" from the scriptures.

The term "prophecy" as it was applied to women did not include the ability to expound upon the scriptures. For a woman to speak, she had to be authorized by God, not by her own mind or reading - she was merely the vessel through whom God spoke. The paradox of this peculiar authorization to speak is that it both gives the individual tremendous authority because she is communicating with and for the divine, but it also means that she supposedly has no personal investment or authority to speak because she is a woman. As a transmitter of a divine message, she also lacked the agency to interpret the message. Men often interpreted the female visionary experience. Many women, however, were "singled out for their ability to prophesy" but only in this respect were they allowed to speak in meetings (Smith 12). Women were singled out as having the gift of prophecy for precisely the same reasons they were subjugated to men. Women were believed to be naturally

passive, irrational, and because of their physiology, more "open" to outside influence, which made them a "natural" type of prophet (Trubowitz 119).

In this sense of the term, prophecy itself is depicted as a passive, feminine activity, whether the actual prophet is a man or a woman. It is the ecstatic experience of the divine that characterizes this type of prophecy, not a rational understanding of God's word as it is mediated through scripture. This type of prophet is the instrument of the divine. Quakers, however, are a notable exception to this definition of prophecy because there were some Quaker women who actually were allowed to preach. But as Hilary Hinds has shown, virtually all sectarian writing by women, whether autobiography, warning, or prediction, conformed to this definition: it was glossed as the work of God, with the human author as no more than a medium for its dissemination (10).

This distinction between prophecy as a message communicated directly through the individual by God and prophecy as scriptural interpretation was maintained even in the more radical Fifth Monarchist sect. In this millenarian sect, women were respected as prophets, were allowed to have separate meetings, and could vote on church matters. John Rogers, a leader of the Fifth Monarchists,

used scripture to prove that in the past women had often surpassed men in piety and good deeds. He even wrote that women "ought to have equal rights with the brethren in speaking and in the general management of affairs - though he agreed that women could not be allowed to preach in public, or teach as ministers did"(Capp 105). Fifth Monarchist women like Anna Trapnel were highly respected prophets within their groups, especially if their prophecies coincided with the group's political agenda, but only if they were perceived as the medium for God's message, and they did not preach from their own authority.

Of course, it is difficult to discern whether or not the message was authored by God, but the spectacle of an ecstatic visionary experience seemed to authenticate the veracity of the prophecy. While Capp indicates that Rogers seems to be advocating a "progressive" attitude toward the female members of his congregation, his advice to the sisters is, as Phyllis Mack has noted, highly ambiguous:

To women, I wish ye be not too forward, and yet not too backward, but hold fast your liberty . . . keep your ground which Christ hath won and got for you; maintain you right, defend your liberty, even to the life, lose it not, but be courageous

and keep it. And yet be cautious too . . . Your silence may sometimes be the best advocate of your orderly liberty, and the sweetest evidence of your prudence and modesty . . . (107)

Rogers' statement is equivocal. He appears to be endorsing the right of women to speak, but at the same time suggests that silence may be best, and he very conventionally equates silence with modesty and chastity.

The freedom Rogers mentions that women have gained could very well refer to the freedom gained by all saints. The Fifth Monarchists were a fairly militant group who supported the regicide of the king and who believed that the victory of the Commonwealth in the revolution was ordained by God. It was the first step in preparing the way for the second coming in which Christ would literally appear and rule his kingdom with his saints. For the Fifth Monarchists, all believers were saints, and in the thousand year reign, male and female saints would be spiritually equal. Therefore, the rhetoric of freedom for women which Rogers states Christ won for them could mean the earthly victory of the saints, which was symbolic of the thousand years of freedom to come, for then preaching and prophecy would become extinct because Christ would be on earth to guide believers. Until that time, there was a fine line

between preaching and prophecy for women, which makes Mary Cary's prophetic works an interesting case study. Her method of prophecy has more in common with the masculine, rationalist model of discourse than the spiritually heightened ecstatic discourse that characterizes most other female prophets.

A comparison of the prophetic tracts of Mary Cary with those of Eleanor Davies or especially Anna Trapnel, who was also a Fifth Monarchist, demonstrates that Cary does not conform to the model of prophecy that was acceptable for women. In order to authorize her text, Cary makes the conventional disclaimer in the dedication that she is only a "weak instrument," but within the text Cary appropriates the masculine definition of the term "prophet" to include teaching from the scriptures. Cary defines prophets as "preachers and publishers of Gospell-truths: those that are gifted and inabled to hold forth publikely to edification, and comfort Gospell truth; for this is prophesying as I Cor. 14.3" (106). In Corinthians 14, on which Cary bases her definition of prophecy, a distinction is made in the first five verses between those who speak in tongues and those who prophesy:

For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men
but to God for no one understands him, but he

utters mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, he who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church . . . He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.

Since women were allowed to prophesy, Cary calls herself a prophet, but she uses scripture to justify her method of prophecy because she does not conform to the expectations of this culturally defined discourse. The distinction in Corinthians between speaking in tongues and speaking for edification is what separates Cary from other female prophets. Whether or not the other female prophets actually speak in tongues, their discourse is supposedly "uttered in the Spirit," and the vision must often be interpreted either by themselves or more often by a man in order for the message to be comprehensible to others. Cary, on the other hand, does not need an interpreter because her intent is to "edify" others with the clarity of her own rational interpretation of the Bible.

While Cary's "prophesies" are derived from scriptural exegesis, Mack states that Anna Trapnel "delivered her

public prophecies in a trance state, as if inundated by the spirit, [and] combined biblical themes with images of women's fluidity in order to validate her own authority to prophesy" (110). For example, in *The Cry of a Stone* (1654), it is reported that Trapnel was "seized upon by the Lord: She was carried forth in a spirit of Prayer and Singing, from noon till night." Trapnel's visionary experience was transcribed by a male who, along with other spectators, crowded around her bed while she battled with Satan, conversed with God, and sporadically burst into song. The language of her prophecy is highly symbolic and must be interpreted to be understood:

A third vision followed, wherein I saw great
darkness in the Earth, and a marvellous dust,
like a thick smoak ascending upward from the
Earth; and I beheld at a little distance a great
company of Cattel . . . their faces and head like
men, having
each of them a horn on either side their heads.
(13)

Trapnel's discourse and behavior are ecstatic. She denies her body food, often becomes ill, and stares transfixedly when she has her visions. Hilary Hinds states that "illness provided crucial substantiating evidence for the

writers' claims to the divine origins of, and authorization for their activities" (94). The illness, denial of the body, and mystic discourse are all markers of the authenticity of the female prophet.

Eleanor Davies, on the other hand, does not make a performance of her revelations, rather her discourse is "conveyed in fractured feminine images" and she uses anagrams and symbols in her speech as when she "changed the 'A' and 'O' of a quotation to 'Da' and 'Do,' the abbreviation of her two married surnames, thus making herself the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last" (Mack 109). The following is an example of Davies' prophetic discourse:

Her Judgement followeth; And a name was written
upon her forehead BABILON, the Mother of Harlots,
and Abominations of the Earth, the Print is not
small, yet not so large as the mysterie is deepe;
It was written, and therefore to bee read: Thus,
the hidden mystery of the Enigmaticall writing is
here, the secret of numbers to teach us to number
her dayes; The numbers are these, and I heard the
number of them. (3)

The prophetic discourse of these two women goes beyond the pale of rational discourse, and this is precisely what

makes it appear to be authentic. In the preface to *Cry of a Stone*, the male reporter of Trapnel's visionary experience states:

If any may be offended at her Songs; of Such it is demanded, If they know what it is to be filled with the Spirit . . . to be gathered up into the visions of God, then may they judge her; until then, let them wait in silence, and not judge in a matter that is above them. (Preface n.p.)

While this declaration certainly gives Trapnel's prophecy unquestionable authority, at least to the sectarians, it also indicates that eccentric behavior and symbolic speech are prerequisites for female prophecy – such utterances are beyond normal experience. As Mack states, "the female visionary was constrained to behave as though she were literally out of her mind" (109). The more her discourse bordered on insanity, the more genuine the spiritual gift was believed to be.

Mack questions the ability of the female prophet to challenge gender barriers because her "irrational" discourse actually conforms to cultural expectations of what it means to be a female prophet. Christine Berg and Philippa Berry, however, argue that "prophecy in its most exaggerated form – that is, in the form in which it most

clearly distinguishes itself from rational discourse - has much in common with that phenomenon described by Luce Irigaray as 'the language of the feminine,' and by Julia Kristeva as the semiotic"(39). Furthermore, Berg and Berry claim that it is precisely the feminine character of prophetic discourse that makes it a source of anxiety and a cultural threat:

The sustaining of a multiplicity of various levels of speech and meaning, as well as by relinquishing the 'I' as the subjective centre of speech, the extremist forms of prophetic discourse constitute an extremely dangerous challenge to conventional modes of expression and control within seventeenth-century patriarchal society. (39)

While I agree that the prophetic discourse of Trapnel and Davies could be characterized as "feminine" and disruptive of social order (indeed I believe this is precisely why their speech acts were endorsed), I do not agree with Berg and Berry that "the anxiety over the unique phenomenon of prophetic speech" constituted a threat because of its feminine character alone (39).

Prophetic speech is intentionally disruptive, particularly to non-believers or government officials who

are declared to be ungodly. When one utters prophecy, he or she is speaking "in the Spirit," not consciously, or rationally, but other-worldly. Linguistically, I agree with Berg and Berry that the phenomenon does challenge rationalist modes of discourse and is subversive, but this type of discourse does not challenge (in fact it endorses) gender categories for women. The anxieties created by such prophecies must be understood in the context of the political situation. Berg and Berry cite John Harvey's tract, which criticized the contemporary explosion of prophesying, but they do not state whether Harvey is a Royalist, a Parliamentarian, or what his religious affiliations were. He may condemn prophets "who pretend divers, and sundry misticall causes," but those who supported or condemned prophesizing almost always had religious or political motives for doing so. When Anna Trapnel's prophecy coincided with the agenda of Cromwell, her prophecies received political endorsement, but when she later became critical of Cromwell's "backsliding," she was arrested and thrown in Bridewell for "spreading subversion" (Berg and Berry 49).

Furthermore, the feminine character of prophetic discourse was fairly conventionally and strategically employed by both male and female prophets. Rachel

Trubowitz covers several reasons why Puritan men appropriated tropes of the female body and allegorized the church as feminine (120-124). According to Capp, the visionary prophet had definite feminine characteristics, and Puritan men who defined themselves as prophets in this way (as distinct from ministers) had to become "as open and receptive to divine influence as women; they were required, in short to acquire a kind of allegorical female body" (Trubowitz 120). Trubowitz shows that male prophets used feminized language such as calling themselves "breasts of God" and their congregations "New born babes desiring the milk of the Word." Female "interiority" and "receptivity" were important metaphors for the Puritan doctrine of private inspiration and "inner light" of believers. Trubowitz also states that "sectarian antagonism to the university-trained Anglican clergy also conspired to make 'femaleness' - as an essential condition of unlettered lowliness - a prerequisite to true belief" (121). Of course, there were already existent scriptural metaphors of the church as "the bride of Christ." Trubowitz claims that Puritan efforts to de-institutionalize the church deepened the significance of these feminine metaphors:

In their desire to rid the church of its
institutional scaffolding . . . radical

Protestants succeeded also in allegorizing the church, abstracting it from actual physical sites and structures and locating it instead in spiritual construct and foundations. (121)

Conservative protestants also employed such metaphors to distinguish their communities from the institutions of the Catholic church (Francus).

The image of the male-mother appears in both political and religious metaphors. Cromwell is depicted as "that most eminent Servant of the Lord, and nursing father of the churches (Cross 117). During the Civil War period radical sectarians challenged institutionalized authority and evoked feminine metaphors to justify this displacement. The allegorized female church was an effective trope for the revolutionaries. In a sense Berg and Berry are right: the feminine character of this religious discourse is a destabilizing tool, but it was also contained and employed by male church leaders to serve their political agenda.

Cary's New Jerusalem

The desire for a radically new, anti-traditional cultural order was also a driving force behind the tremendous proliferation of utopian proposals, platforms and manifestos during the Civil War period. Mary Cary's

utopian tract is unique in that it redefines prophecy for women, and it mixes a rationalist, masculine discourse with the valorization of feminine tropes. Cary claims to be a female prophet, but her tract is not ecstatic; her method of discourse is rational and empirical, but it is based on a religious text. She uses feminine images and the Christian paradox as key elements of her utopia, but for Cary these are not just tropes to be used rhetorically; they have literal significance in her vision of the future.

Because Cary's method of discourse is not characteristic of the female prophet, there are male testimonies which frame and verify the authenticity of her text. One could argue that her discourse is ultimately authorized and validated by men, but this can also be indicative of the radical nature of her work - the prophetic claim is not enough to authorize the work. Her work looks different from that of other female prophets, and in the introduction, the male writers verify that it is her own. Her tract is described in the letters which frame the texts as "a Gentlewoman's thoughts put into form and order by herself"; "Scriptures clearly opened, and properly applied; yea, so well, that you might easily think she plow'd with anothers Heifer, were not the contrary well known" (A 2). In other words, the men who endorse Cary's

text recognize that her method is masculine, and it is assumed that her audience will think the author to be a man because the discourse is like that of a male minister. She is actively interpreting and applying scripture, which is not within the province of the female prophet, so her work is suspect. Thus, her claim of being a prophet is not sufficient authorization for her text because her text differs from that of other female prophets.

Cary does not base her prophecy on a direct experience of the divine; she methodically interprets verses of scripture that are relevant to her purpose and logically explains their application. For example, she interprets 5 Romans 1-5 as follows:

He [Paul] tells us that at that time the condition of Saints shall be such as that their bodies shall be redeemed from the servitude, and slavery in which they have been subjected to men, in that (over their bodies) other Lords have had dominion, for that must needs be his meaning those words, *Waiting for the redemption of our bodies*. What shall our bodies have redemption from else but that? And that is also the meaning of those words, *The glorious liberty of the children of God*. (83)

Cary is not relating a dream-vision of the second coming in which the saints will rule, but she is using scripture to describe what this rule will be like. She speaks authoritatively from the position of one who has studied the scriptures, and she interprets "redemption of our bodies" very literally because she is applying this verse to the "bondage" of saints under the monarchy. She not only gives her interpretation, but she also asks rhetorical questions which presuppose that all rationally thinking members of her audience will agree with this interpretation because it is "laid down in these words [so] plaine and cleare, and needs no explanation at all" (52).

In this passage a feminist voice can be detected, asserting that no one's body either male or female will be controlled by lords or men when the saints gain their liberty. The passage also denotes class consciousness within the historical context, indicating antagonism to the Royalists and an affinity for the lower classes and those in servitude. Cary, as a Fifth Monarchist, was militantly opposed to the monarchy, supported the overthrow the king, and supported the regicide which took place thereafter.

Several times throughout the text Cary attempts to negotiate between the positions of authoritative interpreter and passive vessel. She actively "opens" the

scripture, but displaces her authority by stating that the scripture she has explicated was so clear as to be self-explanatory, as if her audience would have come to the same conclusion if they had taken the time to explicate the verse. For example, Cary uses the first person in her explication of Biblical passages, but she sometimes displaces her authority to that of the text: "I could not passe it by without this briefe observation of it;" "I shall not inlarge any further;" "as farre as I have yet discovered, (or rather hath been discovered to me from the Scripture) in my weake travels" (115). By using this rhetorical technique she both validates her reading and undercuts it with the self-effacing comment that the meaning is obvious. Of course, this could a be a rhetorical technique, but given her gender and the fact that she is not supposed to be interpreting scripture, she states that the passage needs no interpretation.

In the epistle dedication she again states that her authority is derived from the text: "so it bee with the plaine, and cleer demonstrations of the hole Scripture" (125), but more frequently she justifies her interpretation with phrases such as, the scripture "cleerly implies" (122) or "the assertion . . . is plaine and cleare, and needs no explanation at all, which is this . . ." (52), and she

then provides her explication of the passage. Cary may occasionally retreat from asserting her authority, but she is treading upon dangerous territory. Her insistence that the scriptures are plain and clear may seem disingenuous because the holy text is far from transparent, particularly scriptures from the book of Daniel. Also, she is an "untrained" woman who is telling others, including men, how to interpret scripture, specifically, those "known clear" passages (213) from Daniel and Revelation which she relies on the most, which are arguably the most controversial books of scripture.

The passive, feminine posture of inspired discourse was effectively used by Puritan radicals who opposed university-trained Anglican ministers. Cary, however, appropriates this technique for her own ends. Since she has studied on her own and her method of exegesis is as competent and logically reasoned as men who have been trained, she must periodically resort to displacing her own authority onto the text she is explicating. Throughout her text, the voice is most often confident and assertive, while the displacing of authority onto the text appears as a rhetorical gesture which both reflects the humility of the writer and deflects criticism of her work.

When Cary does encounter passages of the Bible that are not quite "clear," she either supports her interpretation by presenting a logical connection between the problematic passage and other more easily explicated verses, or she deductively reasons through the exegetical problem herself. For example, she states, "Now this may be made cleare by comparing Scripture with Scripture, for the spirit of God ordinarily cleares that in one scripture, which he leaves more doubtfull in another" (108-109). After thus explaining her method in this instance, she goes on to justify a metaphorical reading of the less "clear" Old Testament passage by citing several New Testament passages in which the same language is used, but it is given a "spiritual" rather than a literal meaning (109-110).

In other cases, Cary bases her interpretation on reasoned deduction. She interprets 8 Romans 21, which states that the "creation itself will be set free from its bondage," to mean that men and wild creatures will live in harmony in the New Jerusalem. Although this sounds like an odd interpretation, the word "creation" in this passage (Oxford Standard Bible) is distinct from people: "not only the creation, but we ourselves." It is also possible that Cary's text reads "creatures" instead of "creation" because

that is the word she uses. Cary reasons through this passage as follows:

For what put an enmity between some of these creatures and Man but Mans corruption? Before man fell, he was Lord of them all, and they . . . offered him no violence: But now are these creatures in enmity against Mankind, and many times they prove hurtful and destructive . . . by reason of the corruption that is upon Mankind: but when men shall be cleansed from corruption, then this bondage shall be taken away, and the creatures shall appear in their primitive beauty and goodness wherein they were created. . . they shall then do them no hurt at all. (292-293)

Cary reasons that men and animals will live in harmony, without violence to one another, after the second coming because men will be cleansed of their sin. Since men and wild creatures do not now live in harmony as they did in Eden, it must be because of man's sin that this enmity exists. Cary doesn't mention Eve at all with regard to the fall from paradise: Adam was lord over the animals and he lost that authority. One could assume that he lost whatever authority was given to him by God. It must have

been refreshing to the women in Cary's audience to see an interpretation of Genesis that does not scapegoat Eve for the fall and that emphasizes Adam's corruption. Cary's New Jerusalem also borrows ideas from the Genesis account of the Garden of Eden, recognized for its utopian elements.

In a similar but less complicated example of Cary's deductive exegetical skill, she interprets the phrase "then shall the lame man leap as an hart" to mean that the lame will have "more than ordinary abilities" because "a hart is a swift creature"(265). In the New Jerusalem not only are the sick and infirm made healthy; they will be stronger than before. Cary's method of "prophecy" is careful, reasoned exegesis based on her own understanding of the language of the text. In other words, her discourse is masculine, not the ecstatic, feminine discourse of a passive vessel.

Although Cary's method of discourse can be described as masculine, she takes advantage of the feminine imagery and allegorical representations of the church and the saints as feminized bodies, much as the male preachers do. The church is often referred to as "the bride of Christ," which implies that the church, or rather church members, are feminized. Cary states that "the Scripture is so pregnant, and so full of such passages, as it would be very

tedious to mention them all" (57), and she uses the pronouns "her" and "she" to refer to the Church (63). She explains that the kingdom will be given to the saints in the following manner:

The truth is, that which is given to the head, is given to the members, that which is given to the Husbands, the wife must partake of: for there is nothing that he possesses, which she hath not a right unto. And Saints of Christ are the members of Christ, they are the Lamb's wife. (54)

In Cary's syllogistic reasoning, she begins with the right earthly relationship between husband and wife and then explains that this is also the relationship between Christ and his saints/wives. This is a subtle inversion of the conventional representation. Typically, whether one is a royalist appropriating the marriage metaphor or a sectarian, the logic of the analogy is "just as Christ is the head of the church, so is the husband (or king) the head of the wife." Even in the more feminized version of sectarian literature in which the church is valorized as "wife," there is still a hierarchy involved. However, Cary implies that the marriage metaphor means that each has an equal share. Although the marriage metaphor she is using is a conventional trope, her use of the generic "he" in

other passages shows that Cary is quite conscious of her manipulation of gendered pronouns; she conventionally retains the generic "he" when citing scripture, but when interpreting the passages, she genders the pronouns when it is advantageous for her to do so. For example, when Cary talks about the loss of paradise, she says it was lost because of "man's sin" or "Adam's sin" (85), which is typically interpreted as a generic use of these terms, but when she does mention Eve once in her text, she says that Eve was "deceived by the serpent" which is glossed masculine, implying the serpent and Adam are chiefly responsible for the fall. This technique is very subtle, because the reader becomes accustomed to her gloss of saints as collectively feminine and specific evil-doers such as the Pope and the king as masculine, so that when she generalizes good and evil with feminine and masculine pronouns, her usage becomes normative.

Many of the images in her text are also gendered in a similar vein. The more positive images in her description of the New Jerusalem are gendered feminine with the pronoun "she": "they shall bee as the wings of a Dove, covered with silver, and *her* feathers with yellow gold" (84 emphasis mine). In the New Jerusalem "the worship of God shall then be totally freed from mens inventions" (252),

and the "the captive daughter of Sion" shall be free (242). Saints, the church, and a dove are all "she," but "corruption breakes forth in *him*" (85). Cary holds nothing back when attacking the Pope, the king, or the "little horne" as specific males who have oppressed the righteous, and her latter use of gendered pronouns becomes a subtle moral indicator of good and evil.

Equality and collectivity are the most important characteristics of the saints in the New Jerusalem. These characteristics often appear in utopian texts. Christ's glory "shall be manifested to all people, and nations, and languages: who casting off all other Lords shall rejoice in his glorious reign" (97), and all previous division will be superseded, "gathering the Nations themselves," "not their wealthe, but their weale; not their treasure but their safety; not their riches but their happinesse; not their outward things, but the salvation of their souls" (56). The antithetical style of this passage demonstrates Cary's skill with language, and the emphasis on the unity and well-being of the saints shows that Cary makes "no a *priori* exclusions on the basis of sexual difference, social rank" or religious affiliation (Lilley 108). Although one must be a true believer in order to become a saint, Cary's language is inclusive: "all Saints, from the most eminent

Prophet, and Teacher, to the meanest and tenderest babe, that waites upon, and loves, and feares the Lord Jesus, shall all be rewarded at his coming" (107). This collective identity of saints makes gender categories obsolete. Cary, like others interested in reforming the Commonwealth, was against tithes, wanted relief and justice for the poor, and public ownership of land (Lilley 107). But unlike, for example, the Levellers, for whom universal suffrage did not include women, wage earners, or servants (Macpherson 127), Cary imagines that all saints will be equal, not just in the hereafter, but beginning in the year 1656 with the conversion of the Jews, the prerequisite for Christ's return (114).

Even though her description of the New Jerusalem holds great benefits for all saints - there will be no famine, and the "confusions and combustions, and oppressions, and troubles that are in the old frame of the world shall be forgotten" (71) - it has particular significance for godly women and the poor. Cary predicts that the time is coming when "the Saints shall be fulfilled; and not only men, but women shall prophesie" (238). Cary contrasts this time to the present in which "there are many godly women, many who have indeed received the Spirit: but in how small a measure is it? How weake are they? and how unable to

prophecies" (137)? Although the word "prophecy" here seems to refer to the ecstatic outpouring of the spirit which gave some women authority to speak, the context in which Cary later uses the word conforms to her previous definition of prophecy as speaking and teaching publicly. She states, "but they [women] are generally very unable to communicate to others, though they would do it many times in their families, among their children and servants" (238). "Unable" here indicates that women are not allowed to speak publicly, not that they are incapable of it, because apparently they are able to teach privately in their own homes.

Furthermore, the abilities to prophecy, to speak, and to publish, for Cary, are based on conversion and reason:

There is nothing absolutely necessary to the making of a convert, and of a convert, a publisher of the Gospel, which a soul that is but furnished only with Understanding and Reason is not capable of . . . one brought up in the possession of Christianity; or whether it be learned, or un-learned, a soul indued with Understanding and Reason is capable of Religion, and all religious performances. (239)

Although Cary states that all saints will be allowed to speak and to prophecy in the New Jerusalem, her logic in this passage indicates that there is no reason why this should not also be true in the present, except that the kingdom is now under control of "the Roman Papall Beast" (92) and the tyranny of "the King of England [who is] one of those that was of one mind with the Beast" (118). Cary's position is radical not only in that it challenges the institutionalization of the Anglican church, but it also challenges the gendered prohibition of women's speech. Cary places much emphasis on the freedom to preach publicly; in fact, she calls it the "main ingredient" of the saints' joy, "the top-flower, the crown of all their joys" (279-280). From reading Cary's text, one can see that she is both devout and rhetorically skilled, and so it is easy to understand why the freedom to publish is so important to her and a cause for joy.

Implied in the paragraph above is Cary's criticism of the contemporary prohibitions of speech, and like most utopian works, the vision of utopia inherently contains criticism of present conditions. In her *Twelve Humble Proposals* Cary is concerned about the circumstances of the poor, and this concern is also present in her utopian work with her description of how the material conditions of life

will change in the New Jerusalem. Not only will there be no suffering, no sadness, and all former afflictions alleviated, but there will also be no exploitation of labor:

They shall inhabit the houses which they build,
and eate the the fruite of their vineyards which
they shall plant, & none shall take from them;
but they shall long enjoy the work of their
hands; and they shall have abundance of flockes,
and heards; and eat and drink. (71)

Several times Cary mentions that the Saints "shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eate" (969); "they shall every man sit under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid" (299). Cary's utopia is not just based on the idea that there will be plenty for all, but that there will be no alienation of labor and no hierarchy of class or wealth which allows one to exploit the labor of another. Her ideal is an agrarian state of equality and self-sufficiency.

Unlike Bacon's utopian work, *New Atlantis*, in which the feminized earth will "yield up its secrets under the discipline of the new science" (Trubowitz 124), Cary

imagines that earthly abundance will result from good husbandry and stewardship. Trubowitz states:

Bacon's natural science appealed to English Puritans 'by virtue of its freedom from authoritarian influence, sound inductive foundation, great utilitarian potential,' but his Puritan disciples also enlarged upon the anti-female implications of his efforts 'not only to bend nature gently, but conquer and subdue, even to shake her foundations. (124)

Cary, however, does not employ metaphors of rape and conquest with regard to the feminized earth; she emphasizes that the earth will be "fruitful" because "the Kingdoms of the world shall be put into such a new posture and be so changed from what they were" (71). The fruitfulness of the physical world is linked to the morality and spiritual health of the kingdom now ruled by the saints. The replacement of the male monarchy with the rule of benevolent saints, who are glossed as feminine, ensures the plenty of the earth and the end of suffering for the oppressed.

Cary blames the corruption of the physical world on man's, which begins with Adam and ends with the overthrow of King Charles I and the Pope, who she calls the Anti-

christ. Once these anti-christians are removed and Christ returns, the saints will no longer live in corruption. Consequently, the earth will be fruitful, people and animals will live in peace, the sick will be cured and sorrow will vanish. The health and harmony of this utopian kingdom are dependent upon the moral spiritual harmony of the saints.

The image that underpins Cary's utopian vision and empowers her as a female writer is that which many of her contemporaries, particularly those of the royalist party, derisively refer to as "the world turned upside-down." This metaphor was revitalized because of the parliamentary challenge to absolute monarchy, and because it was often represented by the figure of the unruly woman usurping her position in the home and in the public sphere. Newsbooks published many sensational stories of witches, infanticides, and sexually aggressive women to indicate that the "natural" social order had been turned on its head¹⁰. In a 1641 pamphlet there is an illustration under the title, *The World is Ruled & Governed by Opinion*, in which a female figure rules, her gender signifying the

¹⁰ For a first-hand look at some of the sensational representations of women as they appeared in popular newsbooks, see chapter three of Joad Raymond's *An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England 1641-1669* (1993). Royalist newsbooks were particularly vicious in representing radical sectarian women as sexually aggressive, and they often printed stories of women committing murder of husbands and infants and having monstrous births as indication that the "world was turned upside-down."

trope of political inversions. Achinstein describes the illustration as follows:

The woman is blindfolded, a parody of Justice, and she addresses the gentleman who approaches her: 'Tis true I cannot as clear judgements see, / Through self-conceit and haughty pride of mind.' Her seat of power is a tree bursting with its fruit, pamphlets . . . many are real titles of actual pamphlets. On her left arm lies a chameleon . . . the earth [sits] in place of her womb A fool waters the tree, performing a kind of artificial insemination: 'Folly giveth life to thee.' (22)

In contrast to this widespread parody of political inversion, Cary embraces the idea of the world turned upside-down. She states that "there must be such a time, when the saints must be the top and the head of all Nations" (73). Cary's valorization of the new order is, of course, authorized by the Christian paradox that "the weak among them shall be made strong" (283), but she seems to also accept the feminized representation of the toppled world order, not in the sense that a woman will rule, but that all saints "learned and unlearned, male and female, old and young" will rule this new kingdom: "the greatness

of the Kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints" (52). The saints are conventionally characterized as feminine, meek, poor, and weak, but in the New Jerusalem the wealth, power, and material possessions of those presently in command will be taken from them and given to the saints; thus, "kings, and Nobles, and mighty men, are to be subjected to his Saints, This honour have all his Saints" (62). Her representation of the world turned upside-down includes the wresting of power from those who presently rule and the dissemination of that power among all the saints.

It is this Christian paradox which also makes Cary's initial representation of herself as a "weake instrument" rhetorically effective. Although in the preface Cary appears to be adhering to the conventional disclaimer that she is but a passive vessel in order to authorize her text, after reading her work, the word "weak" is redefined to mean strength, and it is through these "weak instruments" that God will wreak his vengeance on the ungodly. In fact, Cary uses scripture to justify the taking up of arms against those who oppress the saints and describes in graphic detail how the "great Papall Beast shall be destroyed with the fire of [God's] wrath" and that "he will breake them in peeces as a Potters vessel" (97). Weakness

becomes a defining characteristic of those who will violently enact and who later will reap the benefits of the Lord's power. Individual weakness is transformed into political and military strength necessary to do God's will. Understood in the context of Cary's tract, her representation of herself as weak is not a disclaimer of passivity; it is the source of her authority.

Hence, far from adhering to the socially sanctioned role of the female prophet, Cary redefines this role and challenges the discursive practices claimed by the female prophet. The speech of the female prophet may to some extent disrupt conventional modes of discourse, but to be "genuine," it must be ecstatic and irrational. By method and definition, Cary effectively transgresses gender boundaries, proving that a woman is capable of rational discourse, can teach and interpret scriptures, and is scripturally authorized to do so. Although Cary's feminist practices and her social concerns stem from her religious convictions and some may argue that she has exchanged one form of male dominance for another, Cary reads scripture "against the grain." The Fifth Monarchists were certain of Christ's return and thousand year reign and were willing to overthrow violently an earthly king in order to hasten the coming of what could be described as a feminized ruler.

For Cary, like other members of marginalized groups who endure oppressive political and social situations, the Bible (or other comparable religious text) is to be read as a liberating, revolutionary document.

Chapter Four

Cavendish's Utopia for the "Singular" Woman

*To desire fame, it is a noble thought,
Which Nature in the best of minds hath
wrought.*

-Cavendish, *Poems and
Fancies* (1653)

Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, writes her utopia from a radically different social and political position than Mary Cary. As a seventeenth-century aristocrat, Cavendish is something of an anomaly among her peers. She wrote and published a large number of her own works, experimented with genres, designed her own fashions, and developed her own theories of natural philosophy. Although she enjoyed the support and encouragement of her husband, the Duke of Newcastle, her literary pursuits earned her the appellations of madness, hermaphroditism, and unruliness from her detractors. Her contemporary, Dorothy Osborne, held the opinion that "the poor woman is a little distracted, she could never be so ridiculous else to

venture at writing books and in verse too" (Smith 92). Although Hilda Smith claims that aristocratic women such as Cavendish were the first feminists, the feminism of her *Blazing World* is not extended to women of the lower classes. Unlike Cary, Cavendish's utopia supports the monarchy, class hierarchy, and the social benefits available to high ranking women of singular ability such as herself. Throughout this narrative Cavendish pushes for a broader range of female agency, but implicit in the work is the notion that the only sort of women to whom her utopia is available are talented, aristocratic women such as herself. Those without class privilege, who are not wealthy, who do not have a companionate marriage, education, money, time, and leisure are neglected. In other words, controlling husbands, children, labor, poverty, and illiteracy put Cavendish's brand of utopianism beyond the reach of most women. Unlike Cary, Cavendish seems unconcerned with those beneath her rank.

In the preface to *Blazing World* Cavendish writes that hers is a work of fiction and that such fictions "are an issue of man's fancy, framed in his own mind, according as he pleases without regard, whether the thing he fancies, be really existent without his mind or not" (123). This disclaimer seems to be unnecessary, especially since the

world she creates is so obviously fictional. It is peopled by multi-colored, amorphous creatures called bear-men, bird-men, worm-men, and so on, as well as immaterial spirits. Cavendish may have preserved the fictional framework of her narrative in order to justify writing it. Both Brown and Bowerbank argue that Cavendish clears a space for authorship by building an alternative rhetoric based on the disparaged feminine faculty of fancy. As Brown explains:

Feminine fancy, which can create infinite worlds from a limited number of sense impressions, is uniquely available to a woman in literal exile from her country and in intellectual exile from its body of traditional learning. (34)

Writing from a marginalized position might explain her need to construct an alternative social order, but Cavendish insists that her work is a product of her fancy in order to legitimize her activity and to insulate herself from criticism.

Audience is a primary concern for Cavendish. Because she is a woman presuming to encroach on the male prerogative of writing, she is careful to avoid criticism of her enterprise and her reputation if she can. In her preface, she not only stresses that the work is a product

of her own fancy, but she also invites the audience to participate in the invention. She states, "I have made a world of my own: for which no body, I hope, will blame me, since it in the every one's power to do the like' (124). Cavendish anticipates a negative critical reaction to her text, refutes it by stressing that the text is a harmless piece of fancy, and invites readers to try their own hands at such utopian fictions. Because her rhetorical strategy is inclusive, the reader is theoretically given the same opportunities as the author, and so to condemn Cavendish's active imagination is to condemn this capacity in every one. Cavendish thus empowers her reader which in turn protects herself.

This rhetorical strategy is markedly different from that of male utopian writers such as More and Swift, but it is quite similar to that used by Mary Cary. Both Swift and More ironically insist on the veracity of their fictional accounts even to the point of providing fictional publishers and letters to frame their narratives, all of which add to the humor and entertainment of their texts. But Cavendish and Cary are treading upon the dangerous territory of female imagination. While reason is associated with male intellect, imagination is associated with female irrationality, instability, and inconstancy.

Both Cary and Cavendish take advantage of this gendered faculty to legitimize their activities as writers by giving it a positive, productive spin. Accepting and then transforming social constructions of gender are the primary methods used by Cary and Cavendish to clear a space for authorship.

A seventeenth-century female author writing in the utopian genre also faces a significant logistical problem: one must undertake a voyage to utopia because it is the "good place/no place" that does not exist in known regions on the globe. Swift's Gulliver and More's Rapheal are male protagonists so it is quite conceivable that they could embark on such a voyage, but a proper woman does not have the same opportunity for world travel. In order even to begin her utopian project, Cavendish calls on the romance tradition and its theme of woman as victim to initiate her heroine's journey. A brief synopsis of the plot of *Blazing World* would here be helpful in order to understand the romance comparison. The work begins with a deconstruction of the romance plot and the image of woman as simple object of male desire: "A merchant, visiting a foreign country fell extremely in love with a young lady" (1). Because of the merchant's lower social status, he is unable to obtain the lady's hand, so he kidnaps her with the help of a few

sailors and a small boat. The boat sails for days, eventually negotiating a narrow passageway near the North Pole, and enters a new world. At this point all the men freeze to death, but the lady survives, warmed by the light of her beauty and favored by the justice of heaven. She is greeted by "bear-men" coming across the ice, travels with them over many rivers and kingdoms, and finally reaches the capital city, called Paradise. There the Emperor falls in love with her and gives her absolute power over the kingdom.

Unlike the voluntary voyage undertaken in masculine utopian texts, the protagonist in Cavendish's work is kidnapped and transported to the North Pole. More typically, the hero is an adventurer who is blown off course into distant tropical regions just beyond existing trade routes and boundaries. Gulliver is an example of just such a case. He voyages to new lands, and by luck, rather than providence, he is the sole survivor of a shipwreck. Obviously, the gender difference in the protagonists can account for the female protagonist's inability to initiate such an adventure, but Khanna argues that it is significant that Cavendish invokes the romance convention (which includes woman as victim) and then departs from it in order to begin her narrative: "Just as

many a male artist's success has arisen from the bodies of beautiful dead women, it might be argued that Cavendish, in simple gender reversal, kills off men in order to create" (30). Whether or not she must destroy in order to create, the absence of male presence and direction is a common feature of female utopias. It is also important to note that Cavendish emphasizes that her heroine is an exceptional woman in contrast to the men who victimize her; it is as if she must prove that she is worthy of such an adventure and of the title that will later be conferred upon her. In this way Cavendish does not radically subvert the dominant ideology concerning women because her heroine is the exceptional, proper woman. She is not unruly, she is chaste, and her virtue preserves her life. However, Cavendish does push the envelope concerning the perception of female accomplishment. Her aristocratic heroine will become an Empress of a new world, ruling and overseeing her many subjects. Advancing the realm of female agency may be important to Cavendish, but so is class distinction.

The inhabitants of the Blazing World are of several different races, but only those of the imperial race may rule or become governors and priests (133). The imperial race is easily identified because the skin complexions of the other races are of different colors such green, azure,

and purple. There are also other types of "men" such as bird-men, bear-men, and worm-men. The skin color of the imperial race is not identified, so one may assume Cavendish had an anglo-caucasian bias, and that the imperial race was white. The lady who marries the Emperor of the Blazing World makes no mention of an inter-racial marriage.

Not only is class hierarchy preserved in the Blazing World, but a type of sumptuary law exists as well. Only those of the imperial race are permitted to use or wear gold, or any precious jewels. This prohibition exists despite that fact that they "had larger extents of gold, than our Arabian sands; their precious stones were rocks, and their diamonds of several colours" (133). Cavendish then describes in great detail the many gems, diamonds, pearls, and gold that made up the Empress' dress and accoutrements. In More's *Utopia* no one wore jewels and foreign dignitaries who wore them were ridiculed. In Cavendish's world those of the imperial race are distinguished by birthright, by social position, and by sight.

After Cavendish's heroine becomes Empress, she quickly turns her attention to government, the primary focus of the utopian genre. Her first acts concern learning and

education. She organizes the citizens into professions "schools" and founds a learned Society comparable to the Royal Society of England. Significantly, in Gulliver's third voyage, he visits the Academy of Projectors at Lagado, which also corresponds to the Royal society. Both Swift and Cavendish are critical of the Royal Society, but have different motivations and rhetorical approaches for their critiques. Swift's work is an anti-utopian satire, while Cavendish is critical of the gender bias in her own society. Swift calls his scientists projectors, indicating that they are given to impractical schemes and suspect activities. The first academic that Gulliver encounters is a good example of just such a projector. He is described as having "sooty Hands and Face, his Hair and beard long, ragged and singed in several Places He had been Eight Years upon a Project for extracting Sun-Beams out of Cucumbers, which were to be put into Vials hermetically sealed and let out to warm the Air in inclement Summers" (152-53). The experiments Swift describes are based on actual experiments proposed by his contemporaries, and Swift's parody of them is meant to expose their impracticality and inherent foolishness.

Cavendish, on the other hand, was excluded from the Royal Society because she was a woman, but she very much

wanted to participate in its activities¹¹. When her heroine meets with her scientists, she engages in debate with them and submits their projects to the scrutiny of her own reason. Sometimes she is satisfied with their explanations and sometimes not; thus, she does not condemn their activities as completely as does Swift, nor does she like Bacon look to science as a panacea to human problems.

Cavendish's critique of the scientists is based more upon the exclusiveness and artful conjecture of their enclosed society. When the bear-men, her natural philosophers, dispute among themselves the nature of the stars viewed through their telescopes, the Empress commands them to break the telescopes, stating that "nature had made your sense and reason more regular than art has your glasses, for they are mere deluders and will never lead you to the knowledge of truth" (141-42). While Swift's rhetoric is primarily aimed at exposing human foibles, separating the fools from the knaves, Cavendish criticizes the exclusiveness of the society as well as the uncertain foundation of its pretension to knowledge.

By stressing that knowledge is available to anyone who has eyes to observe and a mind to reason, Cavendish's

¹¹ Cavendish actually visited the Royal Society, and Samuel Pepys in his diary gives an unflattering description of this visit, stating that she looked ridiculous.

rhetoric is inclusive rather than exclusive; she is attempting to open the doors of natural philosophy to anyone, presumably upper-class women like herself, who have the intellect to engage in it. Since nature and art are polarized terms, Cavendish uses this binary opposition to her advantage by equating reason with nature and art with delusion. Thus, women here become "naturally reasonable" unlike the scientists deluded by their artificial devices. By valorizing the natural abilities of women, Cavendish indirectly suggests that educational opportunities should be extended to women, at least to gifted and aristocratic women.

Cavendish, like Swift, also believed that the new sciences were based mostly on conjecture. However, instead of condemning the new science and its proponents who have excluded her from participation in their activities, she embraced the speculative nature of their work, seeing a point of access to the kind of learning which she has been denied because of her gender. Cavendish and her husband were ardent skeptics, and this was especially empowering to a woman who was denied a formal education and who desperately wanted to engage in scholarly pursuits. From her self-education, Cavendish nevertheless developed her

own theories of natural philosophy and was particularly interested in the "new science."

In *Poems and Fancies* Cavendish advocated an atomistic cosmology which Robert Kargon, the historian of English atomism, characterizes as "so extreme and so fanciful that she shocked the enemies of atomism, and embarrassed its friends" (Sarasohn 290-91). Sarasohn explains that Cavendish's atomism was very extreme and reflects her rejection of intellectual authority: "According to Cavendish, the world is composed of four differently shaped kinds of atoms [which correspond to the elements] The various concatenations and motions of these different atoms make up all the variety of forms and change we find in nature; their motion in the brain constitutes our understanding and emotions as well; their harmony produces health, their disharmony, sickness" (291). Although this system sounds strange, Sarasohn explains that it was not much different from the corpuscular philosophies of Descartes, Hobbes, and Gassendi. What was shocking to her contemporaries was the absence of theological qualifiers, and the notion that the duchess's eternal and infinite atoms acted out of their own volition (291). This absence of theological qualifiers evidences Cavendish's rejection of established authority, and the independent agency of the

atoms in her theory suggests a rejection of determinism, social, individual, or atomic.

Cavendish's criticism of the exclusive nature of the scientific community is pointedly gender-based. When the Empress of *Blazing World* asks the immaterial spirits to send her a scribe, she suggests that they send "the soul of some ancient famous writer, either of Aristotle, Pythagoras, Plato, Epicurus, or the like" (181). The spirits inform her that although these men are "fine ingenious writers," they are also "so self-conceited, that they would scorn to be scribes to a woman" (181).

Cavendish exposes what she sees as the main defect in these "subtle and ingenious" men; they are too arrogant to condescend to work with a woman. Males in this work are presented in an unflattering light. With the exception of the Emperor who puts his power in the hands of his Empress and exits the scene, Cavendish is very critical of the sexism that appears to be inherent in her world as well as that of the ancient world.

The Empress's solution is to choose a female to be her scribe. The spirits recommend "honest Margaret Cavendish" to act as her scribe because she has the characteristics which the ancient scholars presumably lack:

Although she is not one of the most learned,

eloquent, witty, and ingenious, yet is she a plain and rational writer, for the principle of her writings, is sense and reason, and she will with-out question be ready to do you all the service she can. (181)

In this fictional representation of herself as a character in the book, Cavendish rhetorically begs the questions of whether she is as qualified or more qualified than the male philosophers to assist the Empress in her work. By setting the qualities of learnedness, wit, and eloquence against those of reason and sense, Cavendish makes the former appear to be only the polish and trappings of a formal education, while sense and reason are represented as a more substantive natural ability; thus, her lack of "eloquence" now becomes her chief qualification for acting as the empress's scribe. This clever rhetorical technique again inverts the categories of Cartesian dualism. Eloquence is now associated with a formal education available only to men, while reason is represented as a natural ability of women; thus, to be superficially loquacious is to be male, but to be plain-spoken and rational is to be female.

This description of "honest Margaret Cavendish" also functions as a self-reflexive comment on the author; it is at once self deprecating to the extent that she does not

boast of her abilities and thus protects herself from criticism, but the text itself is evidence of the author's learning, imagination, and ingeniousness. She is not just a scribe. Most importantly though, she emphasizes the value of cooperation between women who are not given the opportunities of pursuing scholarly activities with men, and she does this without ridiculing the entire system as would Swift. Although women must work within their social system, if they work together, they can form productive associations. Cavendish indirectly supports the dominant social ideology of seventeenth-century England, but finds gaps in which to insinuate that exceptional women be allowed more latitude within the social system.

When the Empress must decide who would make a good scribe, immaterial spirits are called upon to assist her. Although this detail has been neglected in the scholarship, it is very important because it highlights the way in which Cavendish chose to interpret Cartesian dualism, or the mind/body dichotomy. The Empress has a lengthy discussion with the "immaterial spirits" which reveals that in Cavendish's fictional representation, the mind and the body are exactly split into hierarchical categories, and although she distinguishes the material from the immaterial, there is a mutual relationship between the two.

For example, the Empress asks the spirits whether there are any "figures or characters" in the soul, and whether spirits could be naked. The spirits reply, "where there was no body, there could be no figure. . . . As for nakedness, it is a very odd question . . . for you judge of us as of corporeal creatures" (175). It appears that the immaterial spirits have no gender characteristics; thus, the soul is not masculine as in the Cartesian system. However, there is a mutual relationship between the material and immaterial because the spirits inform the Empress that "souls having no motion of themselves must of necessity be clothed or embodied with the next parts of matter" (175). Only matter can have motion, so the immaterial spirits take on material vehicles/bodies made of differing degrees of rarified matter in order to move. This matter can be of different elements such purified air or fire. The body and the soul are genderless, separate entities, but even when the soul leaves the corporeal body, it must rely on some type of matter to move - the two are still mutually dependent and there is no hierarchy between the two, gendered or otherwise. To elaborate, the spirits state, "properly there is no ascension or descension in infinite nature, but only in relation to particular parts . . . we can neither ascend nor descend without corporeal

vehicles, for there can be no motion without the body" (174). They must have some type of genderless body to move, but there is no up or down in nature because nature is infinite; any such movement can only be thought of as relational. This theory of the soul is radically different from traditional religious teachings in which gender and the so-called "natural" hierarchy are carried over into the afterlife.

The Empress also asks the spirits an unusual question. She asks whether or not "they could have knowledge without body" (168). The question is very perceptive in that "knowledge" is often a euphemism for sexual knowledge, a bodily knowledge. After eating from the tree of knowledge, Eve and Adam realize they are naked. To have intimate relations with someone is to have knowledge of him or her. To suggest that knowledge and the body are connected is to invert the cultural associations that polarize male/mind against female/body. The spirits tell the Empress that they do not have a natural knowledge without the body, but a "supernatural knowledge" (169). Except for a God-like supernatural knowledge, all other knowledge is connected to the body. Again, Cavendish accepts cultural associations but inverts them to valorize that which is gendered as female.

With regard to religion, Cavendish, like Cary, allows women to be active participants in her world. Although the inhabitants of the Blazing world have a sort of religion, consisting mainly of prayer, the Empress finds it defective, lacking in knowledge of divine truth. Therefore, she builds churches and establishes some congregation entirely of women. Very quickly the women prove themselves to be excellent students of religion; "the women, which generally had quick wits, subtle conceptions, clear understandings, and solid judgements, became, in a short time, very devout and zealous sisters" (162). However, only the Empress herself is allowed to preach; the women are gathered together in congregations to be instructed and converted. While the primacy of the aristocratic woman is maintained in Cavendish's work even with regard to religion, Cary's idea of church is very different. For Cary the church is synonymous with its members, the saints. She is nearly obsessed with the idea of allowing women to speak from the pulpit as well as men because all saints are equal. For Cary the church is of utmost importance. It is her earthly authority, her purpose and means of educating herself, and her source of morality. Cavendish, on the other hand, married into the aristocracy and has standing within the royal court.

After having converted her subjects to her religion, the Empress becomes troubled that they may eventually "follow their own fancies" and "desert the divine truth" (163). To remedy this, the Empress builds two contrasting chapels. One chapel is lined with fire-stone, and in it she preaches "sermons of terror to the wicked, and told them of the punishments for their sins" (164). The other chapel is lighted by a star stone, and in it she preaches sermons of comfort to those who had repented. With the complexity of religion reduced to sermons of heaven and sermons of hell, the Empress is proud to have kept her subjects in constant belief without "enforcement or bloodshed" (164). Apparently, it is best to give the masses only a simplified, black and white understanding of religion, despite the earlier description of the women's "clear understandings and solid judgements" (162).

In addition to converting her subjects to one religion, the Empress proves to be an exceptional military commander as well. Although there are no wars within the Blazing World, the Empress receives news that her native country is besieged by foreign invaders. Upon hearing this news, she sets her worm-men and her fish-men about finding the narrow passage between the Blazing World and her world so that she may aid her homeland. Because the passage is

too small for a fleet to pass through, the Duchess Cavendish is called upon to help her scientists to invent a fleet of submarines. By means of the submarines, the magical fire stone, and the help of her bird-men and fish-men, the Empress is able to astonish and defeat the foreign invaders. Her country is called ESFI, which may be a reference to England, Spain, France, and Italy. The Empress miraculously creates peace among the nations by making them all subject to her kingdom's monarch and requiring that they all pay tribute to the king. The Empress is an example of a woman ruler who is also an effective military commander, taking an active role in planning a strategy of invasion, leading her army, and negotiating among national leaders.

Despite her accomplishments and efficacy as a leader, the Empress seeks, as she does upon many occasions, the counsel of Margaret Cavendish. The Empress is troubled that the Blazing World is "not so quiet as it was" when she first arrived, and she seeks Cavendish's advice about what to do about it (201). The cause of the disquietude is the dissension among the various societies of learning that she had established. Cavendish advises the Empress to dissolve all of the societies of learning, which are comprised entirely of men, because:

wheresoever is learning, there is most commonly also controversy and quarrelling; for there be always some that will know more, and be wiser than others; some think their arguments come nearer to truth, and are more rational than others; some are so wedded to their opinions, that they never yield to reason; . . . which needs breed factions in their schools, which at last break out into open wars, and draw sometimes an utter ruin upon a state or government. (202)

So much for learning. Cavendish's critique here is not of learning per se, but of the arrogance she attributes to the males in such learned societies. She both wanted to be a participant in such institutions as the Royal Society and disparaged it, perhaps because her gender prevented her from joining, or because her opinions about atoms and other scientific theories were not taken seriously by the learned males of the Royal Society. She could also be referring to the danger of factions which had broken out into civil wars in England.

In addition to dissolving the learned societies, Cavendish advises the Empress to return the Blazing World to the state in which she found it because it had been entirely orderly. The Empress fears that it "would be an

eternal disgrace to her, to alter her own decrees, acts, and laws" (202). Cavendish explains that is good to recognize one's errors, but it wise to not persist in them. Why does Cavendish, after creating a world in which a woman proves to be a skilled and gifted leader, decide to return the world to its previous state? The only conflict that existed was within the various learned societies made up of multi-colored animal men. In other words, it is men rather than women who disrupt the harmony of the utopia. While disappointing, Cavendish does not exactly undermine the argument put forth by her utopia that talented aristocratic women should be allowed to participate in public life in the arts, sciences, religion, and government. The Empress retains her status and authority, but the changes she introduced to the Blazing World seem a kind of experiment. Indeed the rationale she gives for altering the Blazing World is that it is "the nature of women, being delighted with change, [that I] did somewhat alter the form of government" (201). Change is problematic for a utopia because utopias are static, perfection needs no change. The Duchess and Empress conclude that the best form of government is "to have but one sovereign, one religion, one law, and one language, so that all the world might be but as one family" (201). The family metaphor is, of course,

problematic, but since Cavendish had a companionate, mutually supportive marriage, the analogy may be apt for her. As a Royalist, the analogy between family and state is one with which she was familiar.

In Cavendish's work, the relationship between two extraordinary women is set in the foreground. Much of the book is centered upon the conversations between the Empress and the fictional Duchess, "who did often meet and rejoice in each other's conversation" (202). As Khanna points out, "when the subject position is occupied by a woman, private and public worlds begin to intersect, and the depiction of human relations becomes as or more important than the discussions of laws and social institutions" (16). The impetus for the male utopian project is the reformation of government and social institutions, in both of which men can actively participate, and this reform is typically framed within a contestatory dialogue. For example, in the Socratic dialogues Crito is always wrong or his ideas incomplete, and they are corrected by Socrates. Rapheal Hathliday debates the Cardinal about capital punishment. Similarly, Gulliver and the King of Brobdingnag discuss the function of government and what constitutes an orderly society with English government, of course, taking a severe pummeling. However, the relationship between the Empress

and the Duchess is not represented as an occasion to contest competing ideas of social order. This relationship is presented as a model for feminine friendship. Their souls commune with one another in the same body, and this relationship is described as a "platonic" friendship in which they enjoy intimate conversation, share ideas, and support the attainment of each other's desires. As Khanna suggests, "this crucial portion of *Blazing World* seems to inscribe female friendship, relationship, and intimacy as the context for utopian visions" (24).

Because women were denied a university education, had no legal rights as citizens, and could not participate in public affairs, one would think that in writing a utopian novel Cavendish would create a world in which women were in charge and could realize any of their aspirations, but ultimately Cavendish does not completely upset the hierarchical order. Her Empress does take over the government, religious institutions, learned societies, and proves herself to be an effective military commander, but she does not change the hierarchical order, nor does she maintain her rule throughout the novel. The Empress enjoys absolute rule for a limited time, but ultimately relinquishes it to her husband because of the threat of factions in the government, resulting from the societies of

learning that she has established. It is the unruliness of the male philosophers that undermines the Empress's government. What at first appears to be a radical feminism on the part of Cavendish is later subsumed by the dominant ideology.

The fictional Duchess expresses a desire to rule her own kingdom, but since she cannot rule a terrestrial kingdom, the spirits suggest that she create and rule a celestial kingdom. Thus, the fictional character who inhabits the world that Cavendish creates must create multiple worlds of her own if she is to rule anything. Gallagher interprets Cavendish's desire for an absolutist subjectivity as deriving from "a certain female disability, not her inability to be a monarch but from her inability to be a full *subject* of the monarch" (27). Of the two available political positions, subject and monarch, monarch is the only one Cavendish can imagine a woman occupying. Although the absolute feminine monarch has no country and withdraws into the traditionally private space proscribed to women, Cavendish transforms this space. According to Gallagher, the self-enclosed feminine monarch creates within her mind a multiplicity of worlds, "anticipating the *mise en abyme* structure" (32). Gallagher calls this rhetorical maneuver, this infinitude of

selfhood, "the birth of the woman as subject" (32).

According to Gallagher, Cavendish finds a satisfying sense of her own complete being in political "nonsubjection" by becoming an absolute monarch of her own subjectivity. Or one could argue that Cavendish has a vested interest in preserving the hierarchy of which she is a member of the privileged class, but as an exceptional woman she would also like to have more room within her social class to pursue her interests.

In the epilogue to her work, Cavendish extends her monarchical powers to her audience, inviting them to create their own utopian worlds. By doing so she again breaks the fictional frame, blurring the boundaries between herself and her fictional Duchess, between fiction and reality. Khanna argues that her text establishes permeability and creativity as textual strategies for empowerment:

This principle of permeability blurs those very categories taken as normative in dominant discourse. Unsettling as this may be for the reader, this technique works to transgress borders often used to exclude women and eliminate difference. The representation of creativity in Cavendish's text empowers female characters and gestures toward the potential agency of readers

as well. (24)

Cavendish first invites her readers to be subjects of her fictional monarchy "if any should like the World [she] has made," but if "they cannot endure to be Subjects, they may create Worlds of their own, and Govern themselves as they please"(224-25).

There is however, one caveat to Cavendish's invitation. She states:

But yet let them have a care, not to prove unjust Usurpers, and to rob me of mine: for concerning the Philosophical-world, I am Empress of it myself; and as for the Blazing-world, it having an Empress already . . . I shall never prove so unjust, treacherous and unworthy to her, as to disturb her Government, much less to dispose her from her Imperial Throne, for the sake of any other, but rather chuse to create another World for another Friend. (225)

As in the preface to her work, even as Cavendish asserts her authority, she shares her discursive power with her audience, but here, instead of insisting that her work is fiction, she blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality. By blurring these boundaries, Cavendish creates an analogous relationship between herself and her fictional

character, Margaret Cavendish. She is the loyal friend who will subvert any potential threat to the fictional Empress's domain, and by doing so she secures her own authorial position from threat of usurpation. She is asking her reader to extend to herself the same consideration that she extends to her fictional creation. Yet, least readers feel excluded from this playful and elitist friendship, Cavendish urges them to similar achievement. Her rhetorical strategy is inclusive rather than exclusive. This explicitly inclusive invitation secures her authorial position by extending to her readers not only the same privilege of authorship but also the perils from a potentially "treacherous" readership. Her example of mutual support between her fictional characters now figures as mutual respect between author and reader, or rather between author and potential new authors of their own fictional worlds. However, implicit in this invitation to readers to create their own imaginary utopias is the assumption that such readers are like her, and in a position to follow her lead. Realistically, few women had the wealth, time, education, and their husbands' support to create and publish fiction, even if they were willing to risk their reputations for the fame and pleasure they might receive.

In *The Blazing World* Cavendish's rhetorical strategies are as much about clearing a space in which to write as they are about structuring her utopian project. Cavendish must anticipate the criticism she will receive just by presuming to write, and she does this by making her rhetoric inclusive, appealing to her peers to become singular women. Her inclusive strategy for authorship is also extended to her critique of social institutions within her utopian construct.

Although she does not quite reject the dominant ideology regarding women's roles in society, her strategy of inclusiveness implies a reformation of the existing paradigm to give upper class women more latitude within the patriarchal system. She also subverts Cartesian dualism by aligning "natural" reason and knowledge with the body, and she uses her socially constructed, marginalized subject position to blur the boundaries between fiction and reality in order to assert her authority as a female writer. Her creative project establishes fancy and the creation of multiple worlds (using the *mise en abyme* structure) as the locus of feminine authority. As she states in her preface, "Fortune and the Fates" have placed imitations on her gender, but though she cannot be "Henry the Fifth, or Charles the Second," she will become "*Margaret the First*"

by creating a world in which feminine subjectivity becomes the ruling figure (124). It is important to examine the discursive strategies of such women writers working within an oppressive patriarchal system because they can aid the feminist project of better understanding gender barriers and of seeking ways in which to establish a feminine subject position which can overcome or transform these barriers. Although Cavendish was a royalist who supported the monarchy and class hierarchy, she wanted her society to allow upper-class women the opportunity to pursue their creative and intellectual potential, and to publish without damaging their reputations as virtuous women.

Chapter Five

Capitalizing on Domesticity:

Old Maids, Monsters, and an Estate of One's Own in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*

*Family affairs are by far the most proper
objects to engross their minds, or occupy
their talents. This is their natural province.*

John Moir, "Female Tuition or An
Address to Mothers On the Education
Of Daughters" (ca 1797)

Prior to the restoration of Charles II to the throne, women like Mary Cary and Margaret Cavendish were most concerned about legitimizing women's voices and using print media to advance their causes. After the restoration, writers like Aphra Behn and Delariviere Manley began to earn a living by writing, mainly out of financial necessity, despite the lack of respectability of the occupation for women. Gradually, and with the support of male editors, publishers, and collaborators, the professional woman author could compete with men in the literary marketplace by the end of the seventeenth century.

Samuel Johnson, who assisted such women authors as Anna Williams the poet, Charlotte Lennox, the novelist, and Hester Thrale (before she became Piozzi), wrote in *The Idler and The Adventurer* in 1753:

In former times, the pen, like the sword, was considered as consigned by nature to the hands of men . . . the revolution of years has now produced a generation of Amazons of the pen, who with the spirit of their predecessors have set masculine tyranny at defiance. (qtd. in Bate 457-58)

This increased respect for women authors, however, did not significantly change women's economic dependence on men. A woman's name, fortune, and liberty were still subsumed by her husband upon marriage, but as Moir's quote illustrates, the domestic realm was believed to be her "natural province." Women of the upper classes were trained in the genteel arts such as music, painting, sewing, and other such accomplishments that would enhance their value on the marriage market, provided, of course, they had decent dowries. This domestic "province" was not a space in which women governed, but rather a site of containment.

Women were the property of their fathers until they were married, and then they were controlled by their husbands. Mary Astell wrote in *Some Reflections on Marriage* various reasons why marriage was undesirable for a woman, not the least of which was having to accept as sovereign lord a man who was not worthy of her devotion:

Indeed, your fine Gentleman's Actions are now a-days such, that did not Custom and the Dignity of his Sex give Weight and Authority to them, a Woman that thinks twice might bless herself and say, Is this the Lord and Master to whom I am to promise Love, Honour and Obedience? (38-39)

For Astell, custom which gives men control over their wives was not argument enough to submit herself to a wifely servitude. *The Lawes Resolutions of Women's Rights* describes a woman's marital state as follows:

When a small brook or little river incorporateth with Rhodanus, Humber or the Thames, the poor rivulet loseth her name; it is carried and recarried with the new associate; it beareth no sway; it possesseth nothing during coverture. A woman as soon as she is married is called 'covert'; . . . she hath lost her stream. (1632)

By law and by custom, a woman had no identity outside of her husband's. She was a "covert femme," legally covered by her husband.

Women were expected to marry, giving control of themselves and whatever fortune they may have to their husbands. Women who remained unmarried were considered to be a drain on family resources. If a woman could get her education paid for, she could become a governess and have room, board and some income provided for her; otherwise, there were few opportunities for female employment outside of domestic servitude, common labor, or prostitution. However, in *Millenium Hall* Sarah Scott envisions an estate run completely by women, which provides them with economic independence and an alternative to the potential dangers of the marriage market and the economic risk of remaining single.

Unlike most utopias, which are descriptions of ideal societies that include both genders, Scott's project is of a smaller scale and feminocentric. Her imaginary estate provides economic security for women who have either been abused by marriage or who desire an alternative to the marriage market. The narrative structure of *Millenium Hall* consists of description, inset narratives, and a simple plot. The inset narratives recount the histories of the

founders of the estate, who were forced to submit themselves to men either as mistresses or wives. They were driven to build Millenium Hall as a refuge for themselves and others who had been exploited by the customary control of women by men. Rather than being economically dependent and socially subservient, the women of Millenium Hall are able to succeed by applying what Kelly calls "the reform of gentry capitalism by bluestocking feminism" (28). The women show themselves capable not only of managing an estate, but also improving the estate by applying social and economic attributes conventionally assigned to women, attributes such as nurturing, healing, artistry, and charity (28). Using these female arts, they create a profitable estate and a haven for themselves and others, particularly poor girls and those no longer able to compete economically in society.

The feminized estate described in Millenium Hall and the rationale for its creation are not that far removed from the actual circumstances of the author. Sarah Robinson Scott had married George Lewis Scott in 1751, and despite the presumed suitability of the match, the marriage failed. According to Kelly, Scott maintained a long-lasting contempt for her husband, suggesting either "brutal behavior" on his part or some illicit, adulterous affair.

Either way, her family "did not seem to have doubted the rightness of her leaving him" (21). Although divorce was too expensive and difficult to obtain, Scott's brothers persuaded her husband to provide her with an allowance. She then joined Lady Barbara Montagu in Bath, where she wrote books to supplement her income and did charity work with Lady Barbara who was also a member of the bluestocking circle of ladies.

Scott and Lady Barbara put into effect work-based welfare programs for poor women similar to those described in *Millenium Hall*. One such program provided girls with material to make bed linens and clothes that were then given to the local poor. In exchange, the girls' education was paid for, and it included instruction in writing and arithmetic. Some girls were even instructed alongside boys at the parish church. Another program initiated by Scott and Lady Barbara was the selling of needlework and ornamental objects produced by poor women (Kelly 42). They even helped and protected some women from the sexual exploitation they faced as members of the lower class. Their bluestocking reforms were later imitated by others such as Hannah More, a second generation bluestocking who promoted literacy skills to young girls.

From her own experiences and those of the women whom she helped, Scott knew the problems faced by women in her society. In Scott's analysis, economic dependence and the inability to provide for themselves the necessities of life caused their suffering. Scott's utopian project both illustrates and provides a remedy to these problems. In *Millenium Hall*, financial need, arranged marriage, and male sexual predators drive the principal characters to retreat from society and create a female utopia in which economic dependence and male dominion no longer control their fates. The inset story of one of the founders of Millenium Hall, Louisa Mancel, begins with the death of her aunt, which leaves her penniless and alone in the world. Then a wealthy male benefactor appears to take pity on her, assuming the responsibilities of her care and boarding school expenses. However, his generosity turns out to be a scheme to exploit her as soon as she becomes of age. Louisa finds out from a friend that her guardian has a reputation for "gratifying his favourite vice . . . seldom [keeping] a woman long after he had obtained the free possession of her" (98). Luckily, her guardian dies of an apoplexy just before she is supposed to leave with him into the country. Had Miss Mancel been sexually exploited, she would have become damaged goods, of no value on the

marriage market and with no reputation for "honest employment" as a governess.

Although marriage may appear to be preferable to becoming a mistress and then being discarded, Miss Melvyn's inset story of her experience with an arranged marriage is not a desirable alternative. Melvyn explains that she was forced into marriage with a much older man whom she despised. Her stepmother, viewing her as a competitor for her husband's resources and attention, wanted Melvyn out of the home and influenced her husband to arrange the match. Once married, Melvyn is isolated from her friends and is not allowed to have visitors. Her husband believes that a "wife must have no other companion or friend but her husband" (130). She endures the forced isolation of this miserable marriage until his death. It is only as a widow with an inheritance that she is able to live as she chooses. In both cases, Mancel and Melvyn are completely dependent upon men for economic survival and are under their control until the men die. They can compete with other women on the marriage market, hoping to make a desirable match, or more likely be forced into an undesirable match for economic resources. If not married, they are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Mancel was not born into the servant class, and she had no skills except

for the education her guardian paid for, so she was fortunate to find a position as a governess. As a governess she would live in the same house with and under the control of the family that hired her.

As with Miss Mancel and Miss Melvyn, the fates of the other women who help found Millenium Hall are precariously determined by the men who prey upon them and the widows who aid them. Lady Mary almost marries a bigamist, and Miss Selvyn learns that she is the illegitimate child of a woman who chose not to marry because she was ashamed of her sin. Lady Emilia, Selvyn's mother, reasons that the father of her baby would not be able to esteem her in marriage because of her weakness in having premarital sex. His sin and spousal esteem are never at issue. Even though the two of them committed the deed, she, rather than her lover, is held morally accountable. Because she is unable to bear the loss of respect she knows he must feel for her, she secretly gives up the child and resolves never to marry. His reputation, of course, remained unaffected. In both cases, Lady Mary and Miss Selvyn resolve not to marry and were able to do so only because two wealthy widows favored their company and supported them. When the widows die, the ladies decide to join their inheritances to those of Miss Mancel and Miss Melvyn, thus, providing the economic

foundation of Millenium Hall. Each of the inset stories is a cautionary tale about the dangers of entering the marriage market and the financial risks and possible sexual exploitation of refusing to enter it. By combining their resources, the women are able to secure their future and those of the girls they take in by providing an alternative to the marriage market.

In addition to Scott's personal experience with an unhappy union, Ruth Perry claims that Scott's *Millenium Hall* is based upon Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*: "it is an imaginative fulfillment of Astell's first book" (112). Unfortunately, Astell's *Serious Proposal* wasn't taken very seriously when it was first published. Astell knew that her defense of women and her proposal for an all-female monastic community would be ridiculed, but she chose to ignore her critics and wrote specifically to an audience of "dissatisfied, thoughtful, sensible women" (Perry 113). Although the idea of a religious retreat for women sounds like an innocuous way to contain them, it would have looked too similar to a Catholic nunnery to garner support from the recently restored monarchy or a public still recovering from religious war and rebellion. However, Daniel Defoe was inspired by Astell to respond with his own outline for a

women's academy in his *An Essay Upon Projects* (1697), and Mary Wortley Montagu wrote that Astell's monastery "was a favorite Scheme of mine when I was fifteen, and had I then been mistress of an Independent fortune, would certainly have executed it" (qtd. in Johns 26).

Lilley has observed that the failure of Astell's Proposal to garner the support required for its implementation led Astell to offer a Part II, in which the rhetoric of a separatist retreat for women is modified to mean an "innate rationality" which obviates the need for a literally separate and separatist building (114-15). Lilley states, "separatist retirement is retroped as temporarily and freely available to the inwardness of self-knowledge, a self-regulated and self-regulating oscillation between active contemplation and contemplative action which offer equilibrium and improvement" (115). Even more than in the original *Proposal* the sequel "locates the possibility of female liberty, 'a natural Liberty within us,' in a changed understanding and self-evaluation" (Lilley 115). Thus, in Part II Astell leaves the existing patriarchal relations intact, stressing individual reform (reading, contemplation, good deeds, and Christian piety) from within. If Astell, to her detriment, first chose to ignore her critics (both male and female) and later decided

to tone down the polemical language of her text in order to placate them, it is quite possible that Scott anticipated a similar response to her own utopian work in which she envisions a separatist female community. The appearance of social and political conservatism in her work which both Carretta and Schnorrenberg critique may be owing to her attempts to appeal to a broad audience.

Schnorrenberg is disappointed to find that eighteenth-century writers such as Astell, Scott, and Clara Reeve rarely advocate "complete equality;" they do not suggest "allowing women into professions," nor do they propose a "better answer to the problems of women than pious thought and good deeds or retirement from the world" (271). This complaint is echoed and reformulated by Carretta who argues that Scott's utopia is a limited, male-authorized, enclosed space dependent upon control and containment (310). While the same could be said of More's *Utopia* or Plato's *Republic*, Scott is criticized for lacking a radically feminist vision. However, given the marginal position that women occupied, the appeal of Scott's work is that it both conforms to and yet alters the boundaries which restrict eighteenth-century female behavior. The criticism of Scott's work is ahistorical, considering that professional

career opportunities for women had not be established at this time.

Carretta states that the earliest readers of Scott's work failed to find a radical message:

The *Critical Review; or Annals of Literature*, 14 (December 1762) declared its 'moral precepts trite' and the 'very title unmeaningly and ridiculously pedantic'; the more charitable *Monthly Review*, 27 (November 1762) 'perused it with pleasure; and highly recommend[ed] it, as a very entertaining as well as a truly moral and sensible performance.' (304)

Not only does Scott's work conform to conventional, that is masculinist, codes of morality even to the point of accusations of triteness, but according to Carretta, the authorship of her work was first attributed to Oliver Goldsmith and then to Christopher Smart (305).

Carretta accounts for the widespread acceptance of Scott's work by pointing to the increased number of proposals for education and marital reform during the mid-eighteenth century. However, he also mentions that the view of women such as Astell, Lady Chudleigh, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu only gained respectability once men, including Defoe, Swift, Richardson and Johnson, authorized

ideas that these women had earlier advocated (305).

Scott's choice of a male narrator does give her authority within the existing masculine discourse of education and marriage reform. But in contrast to Carretta's claim that the male narrator contains and limits the utopian text, I will argue that the male narrator serves as one of many rhetorical devices which provide a dialectic between the values of the patriarchy and those values that Scott advocates. Scott's use of a male narrator and conventional codes of morality may have made her work more acceptable within the existing social structure, but her use of such conventions exposes to critique the system which produced them.

Although Carretta acknowledges Jane Spencer's suggestion that Scott's novel "aims to educate *men*," he is critical of this interpretation because the male narrator "exerts control" and "exercises the power of naming, controlling the identity of what he has seen" (310). While it is quite clear that the male narrator does exert his authority and repeatedly attempts to order and contain the narrative, even giving the community its name, this male narrator was written by a woman. Scott also provides information about this narrator by which to judge and to question his presumed authority. The narrator, "a

gentleman on his travels," is also one who has "dedicated all his application to mercantile gain" and who has undertaken the journey which brings him to the neighborhood of Millenium Hall on the advice of a physician. He is there to "cure the ill effects of [his] long abode in the hot and unwholesome climate of Jamaica" where he "increased his fortune" but "impaired his constitution" (54-55). The description of the narrator is thus a morality tale about the physical hazards of pursuing fortune abroad for its own sake. The ladies of Millenium Hall provide a counter-example to the narrator's colonialism with their working estate. In his introduction to Scott's text, Kelly describes *Millenium Hall* as a "feminized, Christian economy," and a critique of gentry capitalism (34).

Furthermore, the narrator is an owner of a sugar plantation in Jamaica which is worked by African slaves. It is, therefore, not surprising that a male narrator who is also a slave owner would try to contain and control the representation of Scott's female community, but this not the case. The oppressive, masculine model of containment which the narrator represents is called into question a number of times by the ladies of Millenium Hall. Also, the narrator's ill health can be interpreted as an indictment of his brand of imperialist and capitalist enterprise, for

which the feminine capitalist economy of Millennium Hall serves as an antidote.

Because Sir George is a slave owner, it is ironic that he purports to endorse a community whose principle design is to resist social and economic subjugation. For example, Mrs. Mancel, who is not aware that Sir George is a slaveholder, remarks:

to see a man, from a vain desire to have in his possession the native of another climate and another country, reduce a fine and noble creature to misery, and confine him within narrow inclosures whose happiness consisted in unbounded liberty, shocks my nature. (71)

Although Mancel was referring specifically to the confinement of wild animals (which conveniently allows Sir George to escape personal affront) her censure of man's domination over animals can be logically extended to include humans and specifically to include Africans and women. Sir George may not perceive himself to be implicated in the remark, but the reader can certainly make the connection and therefore understands that a woman's happiness consists in liberty, not domination.

Throughout the novel, Sir George represents and articulates the values of an oppressive system that Scott

critiques in a kind of veiled Socratic dialogue. Each time Sir George engages in dialogue with the inhabitants of Millenium Hall, the values he represents and those of the women come into conflict. The conflict may be subtle and indirect as in the example above, but this rhetorical technique allows Scott to expose problems in her society without directly attacking her audience.

The reader of Scott's text must therefore be wary of uncritical acceptance of Sir George's representation of Millenium Hall. His interpretation of scenes and events are often at odds with that of the female inhabitants. As James Cruise notes, "the language with which he invests the place subtly undermines its intrinsic value and perhaps explains . . . his patriarchal character" (556). For example, Cruise states that in the eyes of Sir George, Millenium Hall is "a *locus amoenus*, a paradise, a heaven, a female Arcadia, and a community of saints" (556). The hyperbolic and pastoral language which Sir George imposes upon this community in order to relegate it into the realm of fantasy and impossibility is challenged by the inhabitants, who point out that they themselves "were the only persons who had laid out that wood, and the commonest labourers in the country had executed their orders" (68). The narrator's assumptions are challenged because he could

not conceive that women were capable of architectural design, landscaping, money management, and the supervision of labor necessary to create a such a pleasing and practical estate.

For Scott, Millenium Hall is not an improbable Eden, but a model of a working estate created by the labor (and inheritance) of the women and their servants to meet their material needs and those of the neighboring community. In fact, it is a fictional embellishment of the charitable projects Scott and Lady Barbara Montagu had begun on Montagu's estate (Elliott 537). Despite Sir George's attempts to remove the community from the temporal plane and thus undermine its value as a legitimate social model, it is the management, work, and skill of the female inhabitants that are consistently stressed in the novel. Thus, the conflicting representations of Millenium Hall constitute a dialogue in which the critics of Scott's work are both anticipated and refuted.

Sir George's authority as an objective narrator is undermined time and again in the novel when he misses the point of the narratives told to him or his remarks unwittingly reveal an unflattering insight into his character. Because the question of the narrator's authority is the subject of a recent article by James

Cruise, I'll elaborate only upon a couple of examples from his work to illustrate the point. As Sir George is given a tour of the estate and the misfortunes of its inhabitants are told to him, he reveals himself to be much more concerned with matters of economic success than with the problems of an exploitive economic system that drove the poor individuals to seek refuge. For instance, when Sir George solicits information from an old woman spinning at the door of a cottage, she tells him that although she and her neighbors are now "as happy as princesses," they had all formerly been on the brink of starvation because two local squires had exploited their labor: "they indeed grew rich, because they had our work, and paid us not enough to keep life and soul together" (65). Surprisingly, the only recorded matters with which Sir George interrupts her narration pertain to employment and to the obstacles to profit posed by the presence of children. "He offers no censure, not even a single word against or about the squires who 'grew rich'" (Cruise 559). In fact, Sir George never responds to the plight of individuals in the episodes that preface Mrs. Maynard's narratives.

Similarly, after Mrs. Maynard's first narrative, she must "extract for Sir George the all-too-obvious lesson about marriage," namely, that had Mrs. Mancel married Sir

Edward Lambton she would have had to "conform implicitly to all his inclinations" (564). Apparently, Sir George either willfully does not recognize or is indifferent to the perils of marriage for women that each of Mrs. Maynard's narratives illustrates. The rhetorical effect of Sir George's missing the point is that the reader is called on to supply the emotional and intellectual reaction to the plight of individuals, which is an important step in Scott's suggesting a gender-based, socio-economic critique of patriarchal exploitation. Calling upon the reader to react to the text in this way is much more effective than standing on a soap-box. This strategy allows Scott to avoid censure from a reader such as Sir George who apparently does not recognize and is not offended by this kind of economic victimization, but hopefully, the narratives persuade her audience to recognize the unhappy condition of economic and social privation of women in marriage.

If Sir George seems to miss the point of Mrs. Maynard's narratives and only values the estate's commercial and conventionally moral success, even to the point of wanting to create a similar community on a smaller scale, his companion, Lamont, is quite affected by these accounts. Younger than Sir George and described as a

"coxcomb" given to all the "fashionable amusements," it is he who benefits the most from Mrs. Maynard's narratives. As an embodiment of fashionable, rakish seducers, it is he who poses the greatest threat to women who allow themselves to be seduced into romantic intrigues or marital subjugation. While the women may have little control over their financial misfortunes, it is a character such as Lamont who can manipulate a woman into becoming a willing victim. Both Lamont's youth and his role as a sexual predator make him a good candidate for reform, and this is the object of Scott's novel--to educate not only a female audience but to educate young men.

Lamont's conversion begins in the first of Mrs. Maynard's narratives. Lamont interrupts the story to comment negatively on the character of Mr. Hintman, who had failed to provide adequately for Miss Mancel. This interruption occasions a debate about whether Hintman was more despicable for having left Miss Mancel in poverty, or for having designed to make her his mistress. Mrs. Maynard explains that it would be inconsistent in the character of a man who had no regard for the "infamy" of a young woman "in this world" or her "eternal perdition in the next" to scruple himself over her financial situation. To which,

Lamont responds, "You see gallantry in a very serious light, madam," and Mrs. Maynard replies:

I do indeed, sir . . . I look on it as the most dangerous of vices, it destroys truth, honour, humanity, it is directly contrary to the laws of God, is the destruction of society, and almost as inconsistent with morality as with religion.

(103)

Lamont, "a little touched with what she said," begs her pardon and continues listening and asking questions during each of the following narratives. Scott's rhetorical technique is to create a fictional male audience who engages with the inset narratives told by female characters and by comparing his postulated values(i.e. the values of the dominant male society), to those of the narratives, finds himself in need of reform. Mrs. Maynard's rebuke to all potential rakes is quite effective with Lamont. By the end of the novel, his conversion is seemingly complete; he has retired to his room, reading the New Testament (248).

Scott may have used a male narrator to frame, and possibly authorize her text, but her use of the male narrator and his male companion subverts the values they represent. The dominant discourse advocated by the narrator is undermined constantly when he fails to see the

class and gender conflicts created by patriarchal authority, and the havoc it wreaks upon the disenfranchised, whether they are women or dependent laborers. Lamont's conversion in the novel accomplishes two of Scott's goals - to critique the system which oppresses these people and to educate a male audience to make the necessary reforms. Thus, Scott's utopian project reaches beyond the fictional frame by critiquing contemporary culture, and by suggesting practical reform from within. The implication is that if men are unwilling to make the necessary reforms (i.e. give up control of women's bodies and fortunes), then women will have to create a separatist community in which to work and live.

The most severe criticism of Scott's work is that she replicates societal mores that restrict the conduct of women and consign women to a desexualized domestic sphere, which presumably indicates her inability to envision a active role for women outside of marriage and the home (Schnorrenberg 271). While *Millenium Hall* can be described as a retreat from the world men, it is clear that the women want to escape. As each of the interpolated narratives suggests, Scott is quite critical of marriage; the ladies of Millenium Hall have chosen either not to marry or not to remarry, and the text shows that they are quite content and

successful within their female community. While professional enterprise outside Millenium Hall is not an option for these women, it is not lacking within. The ladies manage an estate, establish schools and an almshouse, and finance the commercial manufacture of rugs. Even though Scott emphasizes the domestic and charitable occupations of women in this novel, this emphasis should not be seen as simple compliance to cultural definitions of a woman's place in society. The binaries of public and private are broken by the ventures of these women. Their charitable enterprise moves beyond the privacy of Millenium Hall, demonstrating female competence in the public sphere, but they must be above moral reproach in for their activities to be acceptable.

Scott's rhetorical strategy is to accept and then transform the cultural space designated for women. If women are resigned to the domestic sphere, then Scott valorizes and expands this feminine space. If women are confined to a strict code of morality, then Scott empowers women to be active rather than passive agents of moral influence. By adhering to the socially constructed role of the worthy woman, Scott avoids criticism while at the same time redefining domestic ideology. The primary way in which Scott challenges what constitutes domestic activity

is to reclaim philanthropic enterprise and discourse for women.

In chapter two of *Desire and Domestic Fiction* Nancy Armstrong examines the "rise of the domestic woman," the characteristics prescribed to her by conduct books, and the transformation of women into "bearer[s] of moral norms and socializer[s] of men" (89). As Armstrong explains, the counterpart to the new economic man was the new domestic woman (59). Scott has been criticized by scholars because the inhabitants of Millenium Hall conform to the conduct books' descriptions of the virtue of this ideal domestic woman. The patriarchal commentator, Sir George, is most impressed by the neatness, efficiency, and modesty of the ladies and their wards. Over and over again he comments upon the "neatness" and "cleanliness" of the poor charity recipients, the children, the ladies, their garments, and the grounds. Cleanliness is emphasized to suggest their moral purity as well as their class superiority. Those of inferior birth, and as is often implied, inferior morals, are perceived as dirty, unclean. Scott's women and girls are morally and physically "pure," whatever their class rank because they live by the Christian principles of benevolence and self-discipline. Scott also accepts that modesty, humility, honesty, and industrious housekeeping

are the provinces of female activity. *Millenium Hall* appears to have been sanitized for Sir George's protection, or rather as I will argue, sanitized for Scott's protection.

In addition to the emphasis on cleanliness, the ladies' garments are described as "plain and neat" (116). In fact, the eighth rule for admission regards dress, which should be ordinary rather than flamboyant (116). A conventional complaint of women is that they dress lavishly and thus, deplete a man's wealth, but of course, the lavish dress of a woman also displays her husband's wealth. Despite this contradiction, women rather than men became associated with materialism. As Brown states, "it was believed to be immoral to spend too much attention on clothing, yet this attention was necessary to demonstrate good taste and to show off one's assets (34). Middle-class women were judged as the worst offenders. Their taste for upper-class style was interpreted as presumptuous social climbing, and the tastes of the commercial class were described in the terms of effeminacy, "as the work of weak, unregulated passions, womanly craving after fripperies" (K. Jones 5). Because the women at *Millenium Hall* were from middle and upper-class backgrounds and were involved in commercial enterprise, Scott stresses that they are

unaffected by materialism. Their material success is distributed charitably rather than for personal luxury, which is also a critique of gentry capitalism.

The goal of the eighteenth-century conduct books was to describe an appropriate domestic wife whose duties were confined to managing the home. Unlike later nineteenth century constructions of domesticity which allowed upper-class women to extend their moralizing influence to charitable work, philanthropic organizations in the mid-eighteenth century were run by men, often with the goal of containing unruly women such as prostitutes and unmarried women and dependent children. Elliott describes the management of these organizations:

charitable institutions and societies were managed like commercial enterprises, with a director, a body of governors, and weekly committees. The language of the market-place was even employed by clergymen . . . noting that money 'invested' in charity would bring 'a dividend in the improved happiness and morality of the poor.'" (535)

Scott exploits this blurred boundary between commercial enterprise and Christian duty to show that women have a moral obligation to engage in charity work..

Surprisingly to us, the developing ideology of domesticity threatened to make women's participation in these newer businesslike charities seem inappropriate and improper. As Elliott states, "excluded from the leadership of these new charitable projects, women faced the potential loss of the opportunity that philanthropy had offered them --opportunity not only for useful public activity, but also for an alternative vocation to marriage" (536). Scott adheres to the conventional codes of conduct governing the domestic woman, but translates them to the now masculine business of philanthropy. She is, thus, able to negotiate the boundaries of virtuous conduct for women and to give them an alternative to marriage that both incorporates and resists narrow prescriptions of female behavior.

Furthermore, since philanthropy was perceived as a commercial institution, Scott shows that women are capable of engaging in such "business." Not only are they capable of the business of charity, but they run and operate the profit-driven commercial business of manufacturing carpets and managing an estate. In doing so they apply attributes ascribed to women to reform the commercial enterprise. For instance, those who are employed at Millenium Hall are hired out of compassion and a desire to nurture individuals who have been turned out of the labor force. The

housekeeper has a deformed hand; the cook is lame; the kitchen maid only has sight in one eye; the dairy maid is deaf; and the house maid has only one hand (168-169). Scott justifies female activity in these commercial enterprises by appropriating the moral behavior prescribed by the conduct book. She translates domestic virtue to mean a duty to charity instead of a duty to one's family.

Many philanthropic institutions originated in the mid-eighteenth century: "the Foundling Hospital, the Lock Hospital (which treated women for venereal disease), the Magdalen Asylum for penitent prostitutes, and the Female Orphan Asylum all aimed to prevent prostitution or deal with its consequences" (Elliott 539). During the 1740s and 50s there was much concern about the ill health and moral depravity of the laboring classes, and these social anxieties were often translated into fears about women's ungoverned sexuality and its consequences. The goal of these philanthropic organizations was to reincorporate unruly and independent women into family-like institutions and eventually into actual families. Scott, however, does not assume that the women in these circumstances are morally depraved. The assumption Scott makes is that women often do not have control of their bodies or their economic security, so her utopian estate is one that provides them

with an alternative way of life, rather than perpetuating their economic dependence. At Millenium Hall all the women and girls are productive members of their community who choose to be there and to teach others.

Prostitutes, however, were only one type of unruly woman that these institutions sought to contain. Elliott states:

the anxiety aroused by the figure of the spinster was almost as strong as that provoked by the prostitutes, and it was generally less sympathetic the 'old maid' attracted such opprobrium, because, like the poor, she was both too dependent and too independent. (540)

If unmarried, such women were a drain on family resources, or if poor, they were a burden to parish rate-payers, but if of age, they were also legally independent (540).

Economic dependence and threatening legal independence make the unmarried female a source of cultural anxiety. Elliott argues that Scott offers a "feminized version of male-run philanthropic institutions as a solution to the 'problem' of unmarried and sexualized women," but in doing so she assuages cultural anxiety by de-sexualizing the women of Millenium Hall. While I agree with Elliott that Scott incorporates conventional codes of morality and domesticity

in order to recoup for women the opportunities that philanthropic organizations provide, the question of whether Scott strips her female characters of their sexuality in order to do so is debatable.

While it is clear that the ladies of Millenium Hall have retired from the world of marriage, the circumstances of their histories indicate that this was a deliberate choice based upon their experiences of victimization in the marriage market, and not because they are sexless and opposed to heterosexual relationships. Should the young girls who are cared for and educated by the ladies choose to marry, a suitable dowry is given to them so that they may contribute to the provision of their future families (163). In fact, Sir George expresses surprise "to find so great encouragement given to matrimony by persons, whose choice shewed them little inclined in its favour" (163). The ladies of Millenium Hall are not opposed to the idea of marriage per se, but they do advocate women's choice. However, after the reader has become acquainted with each of their personal histories--histories which include the spousal abuse of Mrs. Morgan, the designs of Miss Mancel's guardian to make her a mistress, the attempted seduction of Lady Mary by a married man, and the fate of Miss Emilia who had an illegitimate child--it becomes readily apparent why

the ladies "would not change [their] present happy situation for the uncertainties of wedlock" (210). While Scott's utopia does not solve the problems of control and lack of autonomy within marriage, she does provide a warning and an alternative to marriage. Scott subtly avoids the issue of women's sexual desire, refiguring it as female friendship, which is depicted as preferable to male dominance. Mrs. Morgan's arranged marriage was disastrous from the start and made more miserable because she was not allowed to see her friend, Miss Mancel.

Scott's message is not one of de-sexualization or a stripping of unruly desire, but a refusal of the goods to go to market. The ladies have chosen to participate no longer in a marriage market that makes of them "in some measure voluntary slaves" either as dependent spouses, or as single, dependent, family servants (115). Although Mrs. Melvyn states, "we consider matrimony as absolutely necessary to the good of society," their stories are cautionary tales of the sacrifices that the individual woman may make for that societal good. Women are needed to perpetuate the species, to transfer property from man to man, to produce heirs to inherit property, and yet their worth is measure by their beauty, the size of their dowries, and their obedience to their husbands. However,

if women refused to participate in the marriage market, their value as women could possibly increase. Scott's utopia provides a woman with choice and thus, negotiating power to enter or to refuse marriage on her terms, rather than competing for a husband.

If the personal histories of the ladies are handled too delicately to convince the reader of the perils of marriage and the oppression of marginalized people, a more striking analogy is made with the "monsters" who live on the estate. These unfortunate people, both male and female, have been exploited because of some aberration in their physical bodies: some are giants, some are dwarfs, and some suffer from crippling deformities. At Milleniumn Hall they "find refuge from the tyranny of those wretches, who seem to think that being two or three feet taller gives them a right to make them a property, and expose their unhappy forms to the contemptuous curiosity of the unthinking multitude" (72). Could this be an apter description of the marriage market? These unfortunate people are described as property, their bodies are put on display for public view, and they are scorned by people who find "that anything less than themselves can speak, or appear like intelligent beings" (72).

The socially sanctioned exploitation of these people is similar to the exploitation of women put on display and contracted to the highest bidder in the marriage market. If the reader does not immediately draw a parallel between the ladies and the "monsters," the analogy is reinforced when we learn that Miss Mancel, who is renowned for her extraordinary beauty, stops attending church because people come from all around the county to stare at her--as if she were a "monster." Similarly, gallery accommodations are made for the "monsters" of Millenium Hall so that they can now participate in church services without subjecting themselves to public stares and derision (73). Lady Mary Jones's face is disfigured by small pox, and she counts it as a blessing because it allows her to keep away from society.

As Felicity Nussbaum observes, deformity in literature which she terms "feminotopia" is often redefined as a positive characteristic. She states, "Deformity is not the opposite of beauty but the 'absence of the *compleat, common form*,'" according to Edmund Burke, an observation particularly relevant to our discussion of women, since the more perfect is the more masculine" (159). Therefore, to valorize the deformed, as do the inhabitants of Millenium Hall, is to valorize a body type that is the opposite of

the masculine body. Most of the household staff, both male and female, the musicians, and other laborers on the estate have some kind of deformity and are unable to procure a livelihood outside of Millenium Hall. The housekeeper who has a crippled hand tells Sir George, "I am sure I have reason to value these distorted fingers, more than ever any one did the handsomest hands that ever nature made" (168). Her maimed hand disqualified her from any kind of service outside of the Hall, but it is redefined as an advantage within the Hall, which secures her both compassion and a livelihood.

The other advantage to be gained from deformity, as illustrated by Lady Mary's approbation of her smallpox scars, is that it takes one out of the marriage market so that she is not longer on public display. Miss Mancel's uncommon beauty made her a spectacle before she came to Millenium Hall, and it threatened her economic survival because it prevented her from gaining employment as a maid (86). According to Nussbaum, "beauty is an impediment, and deformity is meritorious in the terms of *Millenium Hall*" (159). By society's standards, a woman's beauty is a desirable attribute; it makes her a more saleable commodity. But the absence of beauty can also be coded as a virtue because it can signify a lack of vanity and the

erroneous presumption of chastity. The rhetorical strategy of redefining the term "beauty" as it is conventionally applied to women both appropriates conventional morality and serves the more subversive function of challenging existing cultural values by making beauty synonymous with victimization.

On the surface, Scott's *Millenium Hall* may look like a socially sanctioned, conservative, and limited vision for women instead of a radical feminist text. Unlike Mary Astell's polemic, Scott's fictional strategies made her text acceptable to a much wider audience. *Millenium Hall* was quite popular; it was published in four editions, the last in 1778 (Kelly 26). Unlike Cary and Cavendish who must argue for the legitimacy of their publishing activities and seek male authorization of their texts, Scott creates a male narrator and then undermines his authority. Sir George encodes the values of the patriarchal system that Scott critiques. However, Scott is able to do this because women had established themselves as authors by the time that she writes. Even though publishing is no longer considered an "unchaste" activity, the emphasis on a Christian education, domesticity, and physical and moral cleanliness, demonstrates that virtue is

still an issue for the female author even as she attempts to broaden its definition.

For Scott, female virtue is an active rather than passive quality. By appropriating the prescribed conduct for women, Scott transforms the domestic sphere to include active participation in philanthropic enterprise as an alternative to marriage and a state of financial and social dependence. Although her text does not seem utopian in the sense of realizing unlimited possibilities for female happiness, her utopia can be replicated. In *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766), the sequel to *Millenium Hall*, Sir George sets up an estate based upon the management and economy he observed at Millenium Hall. Scott negotiates the boundaries of female activity, exposes the problems of women in a patriarchal system, and challenges the values inherent in a system which treats women as commodities. By accepting and then transforming traditional codes of conduct prescribed to women, Scott demonstrates that a marginalized person can use the dominant discourse to advocate reform from within an oppressive system.

Conclusion

*A map which doesn't contain utopia is not
worth reading.* Oscar Wilde

In this study I hoped to demonstrate that utopian writing by early modern women should not be dismissed or overlooked. Not only does this writing express what these women envisioned as ideal sets of conditions under which to live, but it also illustrates much about the constraints under which they wrote. For the seventeenth-century woman, speech and greater female agency in public affairs were the dominant themes, while in the eighteenth century, economic independence and a separatist community were desired by women because female speech was no longer unacceptable. The issue of patriarchal control of women's bodies and speech gradually shifts to control of their bodies and purses. Although class and gender greatly influenced the kind of societies described by these women, one thing both seventeenth and eighteenth utopian writers shared in common was a revisioning of women's roles from their limited social and biological functions. In none of the utopias I examined did the role of motherhood appear, which indicates that these women did not want to be defined by their

biological function alone. Motherhood was not only dangerous, but it prohibited women from pursuing other activity. Scott makes clear that greater female autonomy meant choice about marriage (which implies motherhood), and most importantly, economic independence.

Unlike their male counterparts, seventeenth-century women were transgressing gender barriers simply by writing and publishing their works. In doing so, they had to create a rationale for their speech that would be acceptable to their audience. Cavendish does this by redefining chastity so that it does not include speech. She also accepts and then transforms the language associated with the feminine, making feminine "fancy" a virtue and a license for writing. Cary, on the other hand, calls herself a female prophet and redefines the conventional understanding of the term. Both women work within the system, yet push its boundaries to legitimize their activities.

Although Hilda Smith calls seventeenth-century women like Cavendish the first feminists, the freedoms she advocated were for upper-class women like herself in talent, wealth, and politics. I am not implying that Cavendish was not a feminist, but that her feminism was a product of class privilege and did not extend to lower-

class women. Cavendish, a royalist, preserves class hierarchy, seemingly oblivious to the plight of poor women and whatever potential talent they might possess that could distinguish them. The activities of radical sectarian women at this time could also be described as feminist because they too worked to expand the socially acceptable roles of women. But since their political position was in opposition to the monarchy, their writings were not preserved and have only recently been recovered for study.

Social class is still an issue in the mid-eighteenth century female utopia, but Scott is concerned about extending educational opportunities and job skills to young girls of the servant class. Scott keeps class order intact by making genteel women the directors of the estate. They provide the initial funding of Millenium Hall with the money they have inherited, run the estate, and make the rules for membership. Unlike the utopias of Cavendish and Cary, Scott's utopia is a separatist community set within England and is governed by its founding members, rather than an Empress or King Jesus. Scott's model for utopia seems to be influenced by Locke's idea of social contract, rather than monarchy.

After the restoration of Charles to the throne, more women were writing, and they were even allowed access to

the stage. Female speech was no longer synonymous with female chastity. The problems that plagued the women of Scott's *Millenium Hall* were the dangers of marriage and economic dependence. Each of the women who founded the estate was victimized by male sexual predators or forced into a loveless marriage that isolated them within the home. Having no income of their own, they must seek a place beneath their station, or rely upon the benevolence of wealthy widows, or wait until they become widows themselves in order to have some control over their future and their fortunes. Furthermore, Scott demonstrates that left to their own devices these women are able to manage an estate, make a profit in a commercial enterprise, and contribute to their community.

Scott's work also critiques the culture that has caused women and other marginalized groups to suffer. She demonstrates that male domination of women's bodies in marriage and the lack of female professional occupations make women economically dependent on men. Women and other marginalized groups are at the mercy of the men who marry and/or employ them. *Millenium Hall* is a refuge from sexual and economic exploitation.

Cary, a middling class woman, is the only writer who calls class categories into question and envisions the poor

being raised from their lowly state and sharing in the bounty of the earth. The only class distinction Cary makes is that between believers and non-believers. Cary links the king to the Pope, whom she calls the anti-Christ, so there's little likelihood of royalists or Catholics enjoying the New Jerusalem. Even though male and female saints in the New Jerusalem are spiritually and materially equal, this cannot occur until Christ returns to earth as its ruler. However, Cary insists that women as well as men have active religious and political roles to play in bringing about the new millennium.

All three writers, however, neglect to include motherhood in their texts. Rather than falsely romanticizing it, they chose to abandon it altogether. Instead of being pregnant, in confinement, and a slave to family, the women depicted in the utopian communities of Cary, Cavendish, and Scott are active participants in their societies. Motherhood would have confined them to the home, and each of these writers is attempting to negotiate greater female activity outside of the home. Male domination of women depends on their control of women's bodies and reproductive function. This control is exerted socially by defining women as either chaste or unchaste; it is exerted politically by making women legally and

economically dependent on men; and it is exerted culturally by marriage custom, lack of educational opportunities, and restrictions on appropriate female behavior. Cary and Cavendish recognized that female speech was an important first step in gaining greater female autonomy. Scott's vision, however, is a bit more radical in that she can only imagine conditions improving for women if they remain unmarried and live in a separatist community away from men.

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CONFERENCES

“Capitalizing on Domesticity in Mary Scott’s *Millenium Hall*.” Presented at the Kentucky Philological Association (KPA) March 2004. Morehead, Ky.

“Mary Cary: Expanding the Role of the Female Prophet.” Presented at the Carnegie Mellon Graduate Student Colloquium March 2001. Pittsburgh, Pa.

“‘Encroaching Upon the Male Perogative’: Cavendish and the Construction of a Female Author.” Presented at KPA March 2000. Owensboro, Ky.

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