

KAMILLE STONE STANTON

---

**'An Amazonian Heroickess': The Military Leadership of Queen  
Henrietta Maria in Margaret Cavendish's *Bell in Campo* (1662)**

Scholarly debate on the page-plays of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, lends itself to contradictory and yet equally well evidenced readings both of women's advocacy and women's capitulation. Critics have found that at times Cavendish's writings 'endorse the forms of conventional society', while at others they 'identify Margaret Cavendish as one of the most radical feminists of her time'.<sup>1</sup> The feminist recovery of texts by early modern women writers has located moments throughout Cavendish's body of works that are usually interpreted as 'attempts to refute traditional and customary conceptions of women's nature and capacities'.<sup>2</sup> When considered in the context of the Stuart restoration to the English throne in 1660, however, Cavendish's plays also highlight many contemporary political and social concerns for stability. Scholars often assume about this male-dominated period in the history of drama that:

The work of the Restoration was to restore order, and for the royalist that meant that money and property had to be restored to men, and so did discourse and wit. ... [T]he suppression of women was part of the returning royalists['] accommodation with the indigenous power structure.<sup>3</sup>

If drama is meant to endorse the restoration, then in accordance with the royalist patriarchal ideology, it must re-enact the restoration of post-civil war men and women to their respective roles inhabited before the world turned upside down. Working from feminist scholars' identification of outstanding episodes of female agency in Cavendish's work, however, this essay will demonstrate that, as counter-intuitive as it may seem, Cavendish's restoration writings both celebrated feminist potential and demonstrated total commitment to the Stuart restoration, especially its patriarchal underpinnings and masculine literary traditions.

In *Bell in Campo* (1662) Margaret Cavendish's concerns for women and her constant re-working of women's roles were channelled into her creation of a particular type of heroine who stands as a model charismatic female leader. Paula Backscheider, in her study, 'The Cavalier Woman', traces the development, by playwrights with royalist interests, of a female character type who shares with the male cavalier the traits of heroism that make up his cult figure: loyalty, elegance, courage, well-mannered charisma, as well as self-reliance, endurance and good-humouredness. Originating in the civil war, the cavalier woman begins as a triumphant character, who, despite diminishing at the restoration, is soon restored to her glory by Aphra Behn.<sup>4</sup> Backscheider's concept of the cavalier woman is picked up by Cavendish's biographer, Anna Battigelli, who offers a portrait of the author assembled from various contemporary diaries. Battigelli reveals a self-consciously constructed public persona in line with the first incarnation of the cavalier woman, finding Cavendish in men's apparel, accoutred in cavalier accessories and bowing, rather than curtsying, to her peers at social events.<sup>5</sup>

Several candidates compete for the position of the original public cavalier woman. Backscheider designates Barbara Palmer, Lady Castlemaine, as one perpetuator of cavalier trends for women with her 'cavalier hat' and her 'dashing appearance' that caught Pepys's attention as she ran to help a child hit by a cart at the royal entrée of Queen Catherine of Braganza in 1662; indeed, Catherine herself is also deemed a founder of the new style, with John Evelyn's description of her 'Cavaliers riding habite, hat & feather & horsemans Coate, going to take the aire' in 1666.<sup>6</sup> Backscheider's recognition of the cavalier woman in literature is, I think, crucial to understanding how women were written at this time; however, I would like to suggest another possible founder of the fashion. Surely the originator and quintessential embodiment of the cavalier woman must be Queen Henrietta Maria, consort of Charles I, who publicly undertook her own military adventures on behalf of her husband during the English civil war. The queen's active involvement in her husband's, and thereby her party's, defence served as both a model and mirror for royalist women across the country. Some women were left alone to take defensive measures on the home front, as in the case of Charlotte Stanley, the Countess of Derby, who defended Lathom House on the crown's behalf during a three-month siege in 1644, while other women participated in more organized offensive fronts, such as the women of Mary Bankes's household at Corfe, who hurled stones and hot ashes over the stockades at storming parliamentary soldiers.<sup>7</sup> Queen Henrietta Maria's public example of female

heroics during the civil war put her at the head of a scattered league of women privately taking action in defence of their homes and towns and in support of their husbands.

Michelle Anne White's recent work explores the important role played by Henrietta Maria and the extent of her involvement in diplomatic, political, and military matters during the period from 1642 to 1649. White finds Henrietta Maria's various forms of support directly responsible for royalist victories at Manchester, Seacroft Moor, Stratton, Burton-upon-Trent, and Bristol, as well as for the taking of Tadcaster and Scarborough. In addition to examining the evidence of Henrietta Maria's extensive involvement in and leadership of all manner of defensive and offensive initiatives, White's study also consolidates and discusses a sizeable array of news documents that are, for the most part, parliamentary in alignment in an attempt to offer conclusions on 'how she was regarded by the public'; however, the nuanced focus on the queen's critics and the prolific news machine of the parliament lead White finally to interpret the queen's heartfelt, if theatrical and persistent, participation in the war as a wife's 'interference' and 'presumption'.<sup>8</sup> The author ultimately finds truth in the words of the commonwealth's most eloquent propagandist, John Milton, who condemned Stuart rule over Britain as a 'feminine usurpation'.<sup>9</sup> In the wake of this important yet, I would argue, potentially misleading recent scholarship on Henrietta Maria, this essay endeavors to broaden our understanding of the queen's participation in the civil war and the public's reception of those efforts through the literary representation of the queen in the writings of Margaret Cavendish. First, the essay will examine the queen's correspondence to find what I argue is the queen's energetic presentation of herself as a true and willing cavalier woman, and second, this study will discuss how that public image and the fundamental royalist political philosophy of divine patriarchalism are endorsed, rehearsed and revised in Margaret Cavendish's *Bell in Campo*.

In a published letter to the king from Henrietta Maria in Holland securing funds, money, and troops, she details her work in selecting the most 'well experienced and serviceable souldiers, such as shall bee forward with courageous affections to maintain Your Princely affairs'.<sup>10</sup> She continues:

[A]nd out of these deserving men, I have chosen stout Commanders, who will bee alwaies readie to doe you<sup>t</sup> Majestie[s] service in your Armie, and that I might further supply and serve your present occasions, I have caused 400. barrels of Powder, and 10. pieces of ordnance, to be conveyed to your Majesty, besides good store

of all other Ammunition, necessary upon all warlike occasions. ... I am to certify your Majestie, that the Jewels of your Crown are for present receipts engaged to some certain Jewes of Amsterdam.

In the course of offering such extensive details on what she is able to achieve in Holland, Henrietta Maria displays a willingness not only to work alongside men in the tasks required to defend the monarchy against rebels, but also to take a leadership role by co-ordinating their efforts and resources. At this early point in the civil war, when royalist war activities were still undertaken with optimism, documenting her actions by publishing evidence of her heroism mythologized the queen's participation, thereby setting a standard for all subjects, male and female. Such was the belief in her abilities that her return to England was anticipated by some with hopeful expectations that she might intervene positively as a 'mediatrix of peace'.<sup>11</sup>

Henrietta Maria's correspondence further reveals that her martial glory extended beyond managing and organizing resources to coming under gunfire herself. Upon arriving in Bridlington from Holland as she prepared with William Cavendish to lead her ladies and newly gained soldiers down to Oxford, they were besieged by four parliamentary ships before even leaving the coastal town. A letter to Charles written by Henrietta Maria that evening details the events of the day:

[T]he balls were singing round us in fine style, and a serjeant was killed twenty paces from me. We placed ourselves then under this shelter, during two hours that they were firing upon us, and the balls passing always over our heads, and sometimes covering us with dust.<sup>12</sup>

While this incident shows her active participation in the war, it also suggests a self-conscious posturing, a publicity-savvy management of her popular image. If Henrietta Maria's account of events is to be believed, we can see that her engagement in military activities put her life in danger. And yet from within that danger, Henrietta Maria was able to organize her narrative in a manner that places her at the centre of a heroic tale, casting herself in the recognizable role of the royalist adventurer. The scene of carnage, itself, is described theatrically, with the tragic finality of death lurking at only twenty paces from the queen. With a chorus of gunfire 'singing round us in fine style', the cavalier woman identifies herself as part of a cast of 'us' and 'we', around which events are choreographed. The 'us' and 'we' validates her experience of shared

peril, as she conveys the excitement of living through a dangerous event that becomes glorious in its re-telling.

Not only could news of her bravery reach a large audience via print, but additionally, many would have been witness to her resilience as she then spent several months directly involved in war strategies in the North before marching south to meet the king in Oxford.<sup>13</sup> When she later recounted her procession across the country, Henrietta Maria likened herself to Alexander the Great, always on horseback at the head of her troops and living among the soldiers, 'treating them like brothers, and ... they had all loved her in return'.<sup>14</sup> Even in this vignette of potential hazards to the queen, she is able to evoke that fundamental sense of family so crucial to this royal family's public image, with her husband as the father of the noble cause and the men in his majesty's service doubling as loving brothers.

It was in the summer of 1643, at the conclusion of this fifteen-month adventure, that Margaret Lucas, later Margaret Cavendish, witnessed the triumphant entry of Henrietta Maria and Charles I into Oxford, at which time Lucas decided to become a maid of honour to the queen.<sup>15</sup> Significantly, around the time Henrietta Maria was participating in military exploits, gaining the legendary status of an Amazonian woman warrior and creating a family out of her nation's troops, twenty-year old Margaret Lucas remained unable to act on her own behalf as her family home in Colchester was attacked by a 'rioting mob' of local people, who, it is thought, opposed her brother's storage of arms and hiding of soldiers in the house under the protection of the Lucas family in anticipation of joining the king's war effort.<sup>16</sup> She and her family were jailed as their property was plundered, and upon release the family was scattered until they finally reassembled in Oxford, which was crowded at this time with royalist supporters.<sup>17</sup> Margaret Lucas chose to enter the service of Henrietta Maria when the queen was at the centre of controversy, accused of high treason and impeached by parliament for her martial glories, and this experience would be reworked repeatedly in Cavendish's literary imagination.<sup>18</sup>

In the page-play *Bell in Campo*, Cavendish offers what may be her most direct representation of Henrietta Maria's time as 'Generalissima'.<sup>19</sup> All of Margaret Cavendish's plays are part of the genre often called 'closet' drama, a category meant to encompass dramatic works believed to have been authored in the private domestic space for an audience of readers, as opposed to public stage plays written by commercially engaged authors for an audience of paying spectators. This oppositional structure, however, has been revised

by scholars and critics who argue that page-plays were actually less limited in audience and more performance-oriented in their conception than readers previously believed.<sup>20</sup> The prior understanding of closet drama as a private and limited genre is further complicated by the new status of those works produced after the parliament's closing of the theatres in 1642, instigating a performance ban that would last until the restoration of the Stuarts. The outlawing of public theater between 1642 and 1660 necessitated that any dramatic composition take the form a page-play, and because the prohibition did not in any way extend to printed plays, their use as a vehicle for political, commentary, discussion, and debate became more explicit.<sup>21</sup> So even though the exact composition dates of Cavendish play's are unknown, her choice of genre encourages a political reading and should in no way hinder a performance-oriented reading that imagines action where action is described.

Within the imaginary context of war between the Kingdom of Reformation and the Kingdom of Faction, there are clear references to published accounts of Henrietta Maria's participation in the civil war effort. With the opening scenes between the Lord General and his wife Lady Victoria, Cavendish establishes that her play will examine the popularized notion of a wife's heroic potential. Lady Victoria announces that she would like to follow him into battle, but he warns that 'when you hear the Bullets fly about you, you will wish your self at home, and repent your rash adventure'.<sup>22</sup> The General's informed caution is presented within the domestic framework of husbandly duty of care, thus creating a marital (later martial) challenge between partners that foreshadows the gendered sense of competition that will develop between their respective armies. The image of a wife 'hear[ing] the Bullets' is reminiscent of the queen's operatic account to her husband of bullets 'singing round us in fine style', thus cueing Cavendish's contemporary reader to wonder if the events of the play will support or undermine the queen's sensational example.<sup>23</sup>

Henrietta Maria is invoked again soon after this when a gossiping gentleman warns that a woman in battle is likely to lose her pet dog and demand that the army search for it. It would not be lost on Cavendish's contemporary reader that this remark is a direct reference to the queen's march from Bridlington Bay, during which she realized that she had left her dog asleep in her bed of the previous night's accommodation. While Henrietta Maria and her army should have been escaping their assailants, the queen returned to the village to retrieve her dog, slowing down the troops and thereby endangering herself and others.<sup>24</sup> Cavendish makes a similar jibe at the queen's expense

when one wife of a soldier refuses to follow Lady Victoria into battle. Madam Ruffell demands, '[D]o you think I mean to follow your Generals Lady as a common Trooper doth a Commander, to feed upon her reversions, to wait for her favour to watch for a smile[?]' (585). As Madam Ruffell refuses to pay court to the whims of her betters, there can be no mistake about the implied reference here, especially when she goes on to claim and domesticate the name 'Generalissima' for herself, concluding emphatically, 'no, no I will be Generalissimo my self at home' (585).

If, however, the text of this play taps into the same popular ridicule of Henrietta Maria as that on which recent scholarship has focused, I would argue that this jesting is outweighed by the frequency and extensive development of the figures emulating the queen in the play. Explicit tribute is paid to the ceremonial spectacle of the queen upon her entrance with Charles I into Oxford, a procession deemed 'magnificent' in the news.<sup>25</sup> Lady Victoria's fantastical entry after a course of proving herself in battle not only emblemizes many of the play's concerns, but also grandly re-writes Henrietta Maria's own triumphal entry into Oxford following her extended period as an adventuress. On the heels of royalist victories at Adwalton Moor, Lansdown, and Roundway Down, Henrietta Maria's long procession into Oxford on 13 July 1643 encountered crowds of spectators, accompanied by the ringing of church and college bells and the blaring of trumpets; the day's significance was celebrated with the striking of a silver commemorative medal, the publication of a book of poems from the students of Oxford, and a sack of gold from the town clerk.<sup>26</sup>

Margaret Lucas witnessed the Oxford pageantry from amongst the great crowds, who were so eager to see the royal couple that armed soldiers lined the streets in order to contain the masses. Cavendish elaborately re-imagined this event in one of the most detailed sets of stage instructions to be found in her plays.<sup>27</sup> Not only is the order of the parade prescribed in *Bell in Campo*, with prisoners first, two by two, the exhibition of 'Conquered spoils', and Lady Victoria in a gilded chariot pulled by eight white horses wearing cloth of gold and feathers on their heads, but the attire of 'Our Generaless' is exactly prescribed as well (631, 596). To meet and be publicly commended by the king, Lady Victoria arrives in

a Coat ... all imbrodered with silver and gold, which Coat reach'd no further than the Calfs of her leggs, and her leggs and feet she had Buskins and Sandals imbroidered suitable to her Coat; on her head she had a Wreath or Garland of Lawrel, and

her hair curl'd and loosely flowing; in her hand a Crystall Bolt headed with gold at each end. (631)

The presentation of the female army and its leader exemplifies several broader concerns in this and other plays by Cavendish. Here, Lady Victoria and her train are cloaked in rich fabrics providing a recognizable emblem of courtly status. In the same way, Lady Victoria's crystal and gold bolt, like a majestic scepter, serves as an outward symbol of the brilliance of her willingness to lead others and her embodiment of queenly qualities. Then the shortness of her coat is specified in order to ensure the sight of her buskins, perhaps a gesture toward Henrietta Maria's theatrical pursuits at court. Lady Victoria's buskins hint that she is gendering herself masculine, but any gender ambiguity might be softened in this instance by her 'loosley flowing' curly hair. This traditional element of femininity within an ensemble of otherwise masculine apparel and accoutrement is a manifestation of this play's overall drive to demonstrate a challenge to gender roles while simultaneously seeking the approval of masculine power.

While role of the female military leader in this play, like that of Henrietta Maria during the war, serves practical functions that prove crucial to the winning of battles, the extended and ultimately triumphant example of female authority also serves ideological functions that converse with contemporary debates on the human potential of women and, as this essay shortly will discuss, royalist political philosophy's gendered understanding of the hierarchy of public and private authority.<sup>28</sup> In order to better carry out the war's goal of suppressing the rebellion of the Kingdom of Faction, Lady Victoria establishes strict rules. Women are to wear their arms at all times, in order to adjust to their new heavier bodyweight. They always are to be 'employed in some Masculine action', such as 'throwing the Bar, Tripping, Wrestling, Running, Vaulting, Riding, and the like'. Learning military strategy is equally important; so commanders are to study errors of previous wars and deliver 'Sermons' explaining them. A sense of purpose is to be maintained by the singing of 'heroical actions done in former times by heroical women'. And finally the soldiers are to see themselves as working not only on behalf of the kingdom, but specifically on behalf of their sex. The rule states that 'none of this Effeminate Army admits the Company of men ... not so much as to exchange words' (593). The transgression of this final order, as with all the rules, will result in death. The reasoning behind the utter exclusion of men from this project is explained in the rules:



[M]en are apt to corrupt the noble minds of women, and to alter their gallant, worthy, and wise resolutions, with their flattering words, and pleasing and subtil insinuations, and if they have any Authority over them as Husbands, Fathers, Brothers, or the like, they are apt to fright them with threats into a slavish obedience[.] (593)

Although clearly the male and female armies have a common enemy, the males themselves are also always a potential threat. Lady Victoria slides easily between identifying her women with and against the men. The female army's exclusive identity is reiterated with varying terms of self-definition. They are, in turns, 'the Female Army', '*her* Amazons', the 'Effeminate Army', the '*Amazonian* Army', and 'Noble Heroickesses' (596, 593, 595, 588). Already composed of five to six thousand women, their leader envisages an even greater number, as they are joined by 'those women that will adhere to our party, either out of private and home discontents, or for honour and fame, or for the love of change, and as it were a new course of life' (594). Reminiscent of July 1643, when the women of Newark petitioned Henrietta Maria, who was in town but mid-campaign, to continue her stay there with them, Lady Victoria's female recruits identify her as their leader, as they exclaim in a unified voice, 'You shall be our Generalless, our Instructeress, Ruler and Commanderess' (589).<sup>29</sup> Lady Victoria's efforts are also defined in gendered terms by gossiping men, who predict that she will only annoy her husband with her presence in battle. She will 'be a Clog at his heels, a Chain to his hands, an Incumbrance in his march, obstruction in his way'; thus male opposition defines her task to demonstrate women's usefulness (582). But what begins as Lady Victoria's idea to prove that her troops can be an asset in battle becomes an endeavour to uplift women as a sex worthy of fame and the admiration of their former oppressors.

Lady Victoria is very much the charismatic leader with an ideology to spread, which she accomplishes with a great deal of rhetoric designed to unsettle and stimulate her women. In one of her frequent motivational addresses to the female army, she describes the lowly status of their sex and shares her vision of how this can improve:

[I]f we are both weak and fearfull as they [men] imagine us to be, yet custome which is a second Nature will encourage the one and strengthen the other, and had our educations been answerable to theirs, we might have proved as good Souldiers and Privy Counsellors, Rulers and Commanders and Architects, and

as learned S[c]holars both in Arts and Sciences as men are... .[W]herefore if we would but accustome our selves we may do such actions, as may gain us such a reputation, as men might change their opinions, in somuch as to believe we are fit to be Copartners in their Government, and to help to rule the World, where we are kept as Slaves forced to obey; wherefore let us make our selves free, either by force, merit or love. (588–9)

Describing their disadvantageous position within the current state of gender dynamics serves to demonstrate how much they stand to gain by their endeavours. Their objective then becomes not just concern for the immediate future, but a global enterprise for their eventual acceptance in government. The grandeur of the army's motives expands Lady Victoria's role as military leader, and simultaneously opens up the potential for long-term social change. When many husbands, brothers, and fathers are killed, she urges the women to action. When the male army refuses to acknowledge the female army's contribution, she rallies their spirits to more heroics. And while the men are composing a wooing letter to win back the women, the female army is busy laying siege to the enemy kingdom's most important city. Such relentless efforts on the part of the women bring the war to their own kingdom's advantage, whereas the male army proves to be 'weak and decrepid, fitter for an Hospital than a Field of War' (612).

Lady Victoria's leadership results in the greatest of all imaginable personal gains in Cavendish's terms, immortality through a new multi-valenced celebrity status. We know this to be an important gain in the work because Lady Victoria designates fame from the beginning as the thing that 'makes us like the Gods, to live for ever' (587). She is given military distinction, as her arms are put in the king's armory; civic honor, as her figure is made into a statue to be erected in the city; social prominence, as she is given preferment on a level with the king's children; feminist (if almost tyrannical) veneration, as all women will be required by law to follow her exemplary behavior. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, she will be triply inscribed in the intellectual culture of her kingdom: she is to be the subject of great poetry by '*all Poets*', she is to always wear a Laurel garland (a symbol not only of victory, but of literary prowess), and her '*gallant acts*' are to be recorded in national history to be kept in the nation's premier library (632). Unlike many women writers in the seventeenth century, Cavendish made no apologies about her own drives for fame: 'That my ambition of extraordinary Fame, is restless, and not ordinary, I cannot deny: and since all Heroic Actions, Publick Employments, as well

Civil as Military, and Eloquent Pleadings, are deni'd my Sex in this Age, I may be excused for writing so much'.<sup>30</sup> So we see in this character a female leader granted iconic status for her charismatic ability to rally women. Whatever the outcome may be for the rest of the play's female characters, the organizer of women receives the greatest of all rewards, public acknowledgement.

Recent scholarly treatment of *Bell in Campo* has formed a consensus on one aspect of understanding this play: despite the imaginative gains made by women throughout the work, the heroine, and thereby the author, concludes these achievements by orchestrating the apparent re-submission of all women to their male oppressors. The final gains made by Lady Victoria and her female army on behalf of all women in the kingdom are believed by scholars to be 'petty', 'deflationary and recuperative', to 'backtrack pathetically', to 'succumb ... to patriarchal pressures' and to leave women with 'no inversion of society's gendered structure'.<sup>31</sup> Some elements of the text, I think, support the idea that this play's conclusion is a capitulation of sorts. After all, the women's military triumphs result in seemingly inconsequential changes; such as, 'They shall wear what fashioned Clothes they will' and 'They shall eat when they will' (631). However, I would like to take a closer look at the gains made by women at the conclusion of this play from within their ideological context, because I suspect that if we consider the work alongside contemporary political philosophy, the depths of its subversive potential are the more remarkable. Considered in context, all their grand demonstrations of military prowess are for the purpose of drawing the private woman into the public sector, and in this endeavour the conclusion does not disappoint. Rather, it points to a limitless future.

From circa 1630, a description of the basis of England's patriarchal structure could be found in Robert Filmer's widely read work, *Patriarcha: The Natural Power of Kings Defended against the Unnatural Liberty of the People*, which was published in parts between 1647 and 1652, before being published in full in 1680. Patriarchalism was a widely understood political philosophy before the civil war and frequently rehearsed in response to the recently developed ideas about sovereign power resting in the people governed.<sup>32</sup> Filmer's explanation of patriarchal government naturalizes the social hierarchy by describing kings as the 'next heirs to those first progenitors who were at first the natural parents of the whole people'.<sup>33</sup> Connecting the monarchy to Adam and Eve, of course, lends credibility to the king's right to power. Additionally, as the argument develops, it not only validates the order of divine right, but also naturalizes gendered domestic hierarchies. Filmer argues:

If we compare the Natural Rights of a Father with those of a King, we find them all one, without any difference at all, but only in the Latitude or Extent of them: as the Father over one Family, so the King as Father over many Families extends his care to preserve, feed, cloth, instruct and defend the whole Commonwealth.<sup>34</sup>

In seeking to justify the monarchical government, Filmer details the expected and natural duties of the father with the unmentioned female acting as one of the assumed recipients of those actions. While the father is performing his duties of care, the woman is preserved, fed, clothed, instructed and defended. Her conspicuous absence from the argument continues when Filmer explains: ‘The Father of a Family Governs by no other Law than by his own Will; not by the Laws and Wills of his Sons or Servants. There is no Nation that allows Children any Action or Remedy for being unjustly Governed’.<sup>35</sup> The female role seems to fall somewhere vaguely under the terms of ‘Sons’, ‘Servants’, and ‘Children’. One certainly would not argue that Filmer is envisaging a social structure in which women are wholly absent, and yet such is their non-status that there is no specific need to include them in his detailed justification of the status quo.

Conceivably, omitting women whose unruliness is a contemporary concern would create a more coherent argument. One need only consider the wanton ringlets of Milton’s Eve to realize that the seventeenth-century female is perceived as an ever-variable force. She refuses adherence to Filmer’s reason or logic and therefore must be omitted entirely, lest she betray the argument’s weakness, as John Locke would at the end of the century when he declared that Filmer ‘place[s] the Power of Parents over their Children wholly in the Father, as if the Mother had no share in it’.<sup>36</sup> But Locke’s acknowledgment of the presence of the female role in the domestic hierarchy does not mean that Filmer’s omission is purely for his argument’s sake. Cavendish revisits the female’s non-status and makes it overt, when she concludes ‘we are not made Citizens of the Commonwealth’ and therefore ‘we are no subjects’.<sup>37</sup> So we see here an overlapping between the deliberate omission of women from Filmer’s political agenda and Cavendish’s corresponding, self-conscious acknowledgment of that omission in her feminist complaints. If we take this understanding of the intersection between gender politics and political philosophy back to *Bell in Campo*, I believe we can discover revolutionary potential in the play’s apparently meagre resolution.

Following Lady Victoria’s ceremonial entrance into the kingdom to meet publicly and receive the favour of the King, it is declared that ‘an act [is] to be

made and granted to all your Sex’ (631). As critics have rehearsed regretfully, this liberating act seems to be concerned solely with the domestic status of women. All women are to be ‘Mistress in their own Houses and Families’, ‘shall sit at the upper end of the Table above their Husbands’, ‘shall keep the purse’, and ‘shall order their Servants’. Also, ‘[a]ll the Jewels, Plate, and Household Furniture they shall claim as their own’, ‘[t]hey shall go abroad when they will’ and finally, ‘[t]hey shall be of their Husbands Counsel’. So we see that the result of their actions outside the home is a domestic revolution, in which all women become the heads of household in all matters. However, I contend that just as Filmer’s hierarchy within the home is powerful enough to stand as an analogy for the divine nature of universal social stratification, so this play’s reversal of the domestic hierarchy is an analogy for the previously named long-term goal of co-partnership in world government. Cavendish sought to update and expand the utility value of Filmer’s royalist public/private analogy by incorporating it into her pro-woman writings. In doing so, she brought royalist justifications for authority into the same social movement for the re-evaluation of gender status that would occupy the mind of Tory feminist Mary Astell (1668–1731) in the 1690s. For the women within the play who followed Lady Victoria, the social ladder is re-codified to move each female up a rung, while their husbands are to remain in the same position.

The conclusion for the private woman, then, is a reversal of the traditional power structure, with the implication that greater gains are to be had by all women exceeding the temporal bounds of the play. Cavendish invites the reader to imagine a future in which a magnetic, Amazonian icon exists as a shining example of female potential, the domestic power base of a kingdom is governed by women and the gendered hierarchy is rendered fluid enough to allow the mobility of women within it. The timeliness of the publication of *Bell in Campo* during the first part of the restoration highlights the re-emergence of public efforts to mythologize the Stuart public image, an endeavor that had been forced largely underground upon the beheading of King Charles I in 1649. Working from within royalist political philosophy of the day, what *Bell in Campo* offers its women characters by its end is immediate elevation within the private sphere and a limitless potential for power in the public, and in doing so, the page-play captures the optimistic spirit of England’s limitless potential at the restoration of the Stuarts in 1660.

## Notes

This essay is indebted to Vivien Jones, Michael Brennan, and Ros Ballaster for their helpful comments and encouragement; to the Brotherton Library in England for providing me with resources and ‘a room of one’s own’ so that I may research the works and lives of early modern women writers; and to the helpful staff of the Asa H. Gordon Library at Savannah State University.

- 1 Jacqueline Pearson, “‘Women may discourse . . . as well as men’: Speaking and Silent Women in the Plays of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle’, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 4:1 (1985), 33–45; 36, and Kathleen Jones, *A Glorious Fame: The Life of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, 1623–1673* (London, 1988), 131.
- 2 Jones, *A Glorious Fame*, 131.
- 3 Paula R. Backscheider, ‘The Cavalier Woman’, in Carla H. Hay and Syndy M. Conger (eds), *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 24 (Baltimore and London, 1995), 3–27; 17.
- 4 *Ibid*, 18.
- 5 *Ibid*, 6.
- 6 *Ibid*, 5.
- 7 See Alison Plowden, *Women All on Fire: The Women of the English Civil War* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, 2000).
- 8 Michelle Anne White, *Henrietta Maria and the English Civil Wars* (Burlington, VT, 2006), 189.
- 9 *Ibid* 191, quoting John Milton, *Eikonoklastes. In Answer to a Book Intitl’d Eikon Basilike, the Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in his Solitude and Sufferings* (London, 1650), 64.
- 10 Henrietta Maria, *The Queens letter from Holland: Directed to the Kings Most Excellent Majesty*. (London, 1643), 2.
- 11 Quoted in Alice Plowden, *Henrietta Maria: Charles I’s Indomitable Queen* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, 2001), 179.
- 12 *Ibid* 179, quoting Henrietta Maria’s letter. The same incident is detailed in a contemporary biography, John Dauncey, *The History of the Thrice Illustrious Princess Henrietta Maria de Bourbon, Queen of England* (London, 1660), in which the author quotes, or claims to quote, a letter from the queen to the king, but with some interesting differences. In this case, ‘Bullets whistled’, the queen was forced to take shelter in ‘a Ditch (like that of *New-market*)’ and ‘a Serpent was killed within twenty paces of me’ 52. See also Anthony van Dyke’s portrait of the queen with Sir Jeffrey Hudson, 1633, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. Against a classical landscape, Hen-

- rietta Maria is in a walking dress and hat with the court dwarf and a monkey, thereby presenting herself as a physically active and even playful woman.
- 13 See Plowden, *Henrietta Maria*, 'Chapter Eight: Generalissima', 180–205, which offers a detailed account of the queen's activities during this time.
  - 14 Ibid, 186.
  - 15 Sophie Tomlinson, 'My Brain the Stage': Margaret Cavendish and the Fantasy of Female Performance', in *Women, Texts & Histories: 1575–1760* (London and New York, 1992), 134–63; 138–9; Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Lexington, 1998), 2; Jones, *A Glorious Fame*, 23; Jones, 23; Emma L E Rees, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile* (Manchester and New York, 2003), 3.
  - 16 Jones, *A Glorious Fame*, 18; Rees, *Margaret Cavendish*, 2.
  - 17 Jones, *A Glorious Fame*, 21.
  - 18 Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind*, 11; Tomlinson, 'She that Plays the King: Henrietta Maria and the Threat of the Actress in Caroline Culture', in Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope (eds), *The Politics of Tragicomedy* (London and New York, 1992), 189–207; 202. This article is also reprinted in S.P.Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (eds), *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594–1998* (London and New York, 1998), 272–92.
  - 19 Dauncey, *The History of the Thrice Illustrious Princess Henrietta Maria*, 99.
  - 20 See Alison Findlay, Gweno Williams and Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, 'The Play is ready to be Acted': Women and Dramatic Production, 1570–1670', *Women's Writing* 6 (1999): 129–48.
  - 21 See Marta Straznicki, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550–1700* (New York, 2004).
  - 22 Margaret Cavendish, *Bell in Campo* in *Playes Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious and Excellent Princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London, 1662), 578–633. All quotations are to this edition of the play, and cited parenthetically by page in the body of the essay.
  - 23 Plowden, *Henrietta Maria*, 179.
  - 24 See Tomlinson, 'She that Plays the King', 149.
  - 25 Jones, *A Glorious Fame*, 22.
  - 26 See White, *Henrietta Maria*, 124.
  - 27 See also Tomlinson, 'She that Plays the King', 202.
  - 28 The literary tradition of the *querelle des femmes*, for example, is a series of works beginning in the late middle ages and continuing throughout the Renaissance defending and attacking women in turns with grand rhetoric and authoritative lists of excellent or villainous female figures taken from ancient and classical history and the Bible. See Ekaterina V. Haskins, 'A Woman's Inventive Response to the seventeenth-

- century *Querelle des Femmes*', in Molly Meijer Wertheimer (ed.), *Listening to their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women* (Columbia, 1997), 288–301.
- 29 See Eliot Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers*, 3 vols (London, 1849), 2.220, and White, *Henrietta Maria*, 86.
- 30 Margaret Cavendish, *Nature's Pictures drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life* (London, 1656), C4.
- 31 Susan Wiseman, 'Gender and Status in Dramatic Discourse: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle', in Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (eds), *Women, Writing History: 1640–1740* (London, 1998), 164; Tomlinson, 'My Brain the Stage', 149; Erin Lang Bonin, 'Margaret Cavendish's Dramatic Utopias and the Politics of Gender', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 40.2 (2000), 340; Oddvar Holmesland, 'Fighting the Kingdom of Faction in *Bell in Campo*', *Early Modern Literary Studies Special Issue* 14 (May, 2004), 5.1–25 <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/si-14/holmfigh.html>>: 5.23 (accessed March 30, 2006).
- 32 Johann P. Sommerville (ed.), *Patriarch and Other Writings* (New York, 1991), xviii.
- 33 Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha: The Natural Power of Kings Defended against the Unnatural Liberty of the People* (London, 1680), 19.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 24.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 78.
- 36 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Governments* (London, 1690), 271.
- 37 Margaret Cavendish, *Sociable Letters* (London, 1664), 27.