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Women, the Republic of Letters, and the Public Sphere in the Mid-Seventeenth Century

THE PERIOD OF THE mid-seventeenth century has particular importance for two different kinds of critique of Habermas's narrative of the early modern public sphere. For some scholars, this narrative is empirically flawed because its presentation of the political public sphere as emerging in the last decade of the seventeenth century misses critical developments at the time of the English Revolution.[1] Insofar as this is the case, some explanations, if not necessarily excuses, are readily to hand. Habermas's panoptic view of the span from emergent to what then seemed late capitalism was necessarily limited in its source materials. The book first appeared in 1962, when Christopher Hill's massive corpus of studies of the midcentury "bourgeois revolution" was only starting to appear, and Habermas's presentation of Protestantism as a fundamentally inward-looking movement was not informed by an understanding of the Puritans' civic activism.[2] And though he was strongly influenced by Hannah Arendt's reworking of classical republican theory as an alternative to a narrowly privatized liberalism, he was writing before the wave of interest in early modern republicanism that has further transformed our understanding of the Revolution.[3] His model, if it has any continuing validity, ought to be able to accommodate new empirical data, and arguably can do so. And it is also arguable that the model is in any case valuable precisely as encouraging a move beyond the rather narrow empiricism and localism of some tendencies in current British historiography. As Habermas's own more recent work has indicated, there is a utopian dimension in his historical analysis, and the question of why there was not a public sphere at a given period may in itself throw light on aspects of a culture that are neglected if we take for granted a limited set of conceptual horizons. His model has a heuristic value in offering a framework against which we may interrogate the norms of public discussion at particular historical moments.

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This utopian aspect, however, is open to criticisms from a different direction. A significant body of feminist scholarship has contested precisely whether a public sphere (or ideal speech situation) as described by Habermas ever could be a good idea, whether the concept is freighted with masculinist assumptions.[4] And that critique of one form of utopianism has in turn fed back into historical analysis, for which the English Revolution and its aftermath are crucial. Many historians, following on from the pioneering work of Alice Clarke and Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, have seen the seventeenth century as a period of particularly sharp exclusion of women from the worlds of work and civic activity: it was, wrote Stopes, the period of "the long ebb."[5] Changed conceptions of the public have figured largely in this counternarrative. It has been argued that a renewed emphasis on republican valorization of the public, and identification of the world of the court with the private and feminized, gave a distinctively masculinist character to the republican theory that became current in the 1640s and 1650s. Hilda L. Smith has accused both seventeenth-century political thought and its later historians of using a falsely universal terminology that implies inclusivity where women are in practice excluded. Carole Pateman has argued that the liberal theory which emerged in the later seventeenth century instituted a "fraternal social contract" that offered a new principle of relegating women to an unrepresented, private sphere.[6]

These critiques raise important issues; but they are often pitched at a very abstract level and fail to take account of the agency of particular women. As Amanda Vickery has pointed out, such historical narratives have a tendency to be replayed for successive periods from the seventeenth century onward, with each period seen as one where women begin with a public role and end up by being banished into domesticity.[7] The evidentiary basis for such claims is often suspect; and they do end up by creating the historical problem of how modern political and other liberties for women could ever have emerged from political cultures whose traditions apparently paralyzed women's agency to a degree unprecedented in any previous society. Insofar as attempts were made to push women into a private realm, many women resisted the process. In a response to his critics, Habermas argued that unlike its predecessors, the bourgeois public sphere did base its "universalistic discourses" on "self-referential premises," acknowledging the openness of its norms to public dialogue rather than refusing dialogue with hierarchical inferiors.[8] As idealized as this picture may appear, Habermas's universalizing and comparative approach can serve as a useful counter to the excessive concentration in recent work on questions of identity, whether national or gendered. Some women in the seventeenth century did indeed assume that certain spheres of discourse were universal, rather than specifically masculine, and hence vigorously claimed inclusion. I want briefly to compare two women, Margaret Cavendish and Anna Maria van Schurman, who claimed access to the European "republic of letters."

To a certain degree, this imagined international community corresponds to what Habermas describes as the "literary public sphere" that preceded its political equivalent. As its self-description indicates, this *respublica litteraria* emphasized its public face. But if the term "republic" had a potentially seditious ring, the "literary" qualifier helped to defuse such connotations—without, however, entirely repudiating them. Precisely because it was literary, a world cut off from everyday life, this republic did not threaten the monarchical orders under which so many scholars lived.[9] And yet the ideals of the republic of letters, which privileged universality, independence, and free exchange of ideas and information, did gain a certain coloring from the republican political principles of antiquity. If Habermas's public sphere and his ideal speech situation can be seen as reworkings of the classical forum, still more was this the case with the idealized discursive space of early modern humanists. The ways in which this space interacted with local political structures, however, varied significantly between England, the France of Margaret Cavendish's exile, and the Netherlands.

Cavendish's husband, William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, firmly agreed with his friend Thomas Hobbes that humanist studies were a Trojan horse that could lead inexorably to political subversion. For them, the outbreak of civil war in England in 1642 only confirmed fears they already held that an appetite for the critical scrutiny of political and ecclesiastical authority had passed well beyond the academic world and was infecting the unruly masses. "When most were unlettered," reflected Cavendish, "it was a much better world."[10] His wife had her own reasons to accept this analysis. In July 1642, Margaret Lucas's house had been attacked by rioters who were acting in response to urgent calls in the pro-Parliament press to forestall an anticipated royalist plot in which her eldest brother, Sir John Lucas, was allegedly involved. Then or at a later date, her family tombs were vandalized. These incidents fall in with David Zaret's thesis that the early years of the Civil War marked a major shift toward a political public sphere, with active intervention in public affairs being claimed as a right rather than petitioned for as a grace.[11] Zaret explains this shift in terms of the new technology of print culture; but it is hard to see how technology would have sufficed without ideological motivations. John Walter's study of Colchester in the period indicates that the crisis of 1642 needs to be set in a longer time frame. Sir John Lucas's strong insistence on his own honor was intensified by the fact that his family's social status was relatively recent, and he belonged to a group of socially anxious gentry who feared eclipse by the puritanical town leaders and were discussing restrictions in Parliamentary franchise to hold at bay a wider political public sphere. In 1638, when the queen's mother, Marie de Medici, had arrived on a visit to England that aroused fears of an international pro-Spanish conspiracy, Sir John entertained her at his home.[12] He was appointed to Prince Charles's

Privy Chamber in 1638, the year in which the Earl of Newcastle became the prince's guardian. When Margaret Lucas married Newcastle in 1645, as a member of Henrietta Maria's court, the couple would have already shared a common ideological background, as part of a royalist avant-garde deeply anxious about emergent tendencies to sedition and ready to resort to unconstitutional measures to suppress further danger.[13]

Cavendish went on to produce a remarkable series of works in which she proclaimed her intellectual independence as a woman. Here, then, is one instance of a phenomenon that has attracted much attention: a "Tory feminism" in which strong claims for female autonomy are linked with deep suspicion of puritanism and republicanism. Like Cavendish, Aphra Behn and Mary Astell championed women's status and bitterly attacked the English Revolution. And yet Cavendish constantly proclaimed her singularity, and if she is still in important senses representative, it is of the complex and often contradictory development of the public sphere in different parts of Europe in the mid-seventeenth century.

The Paris to which Margaret Cavendish was exiled was a center of the salons (an anachronistic but serviceable term), in which, as Habermas noted, women often played a significant intellectual role. For Habermas, however, the public aspect of the salons belonged to a pre-bourgeois, aristocratic order, with women's presence reflecting a blurring of the later much sharper boundary between public and private realms. It was "still impossible, in the prevailing climate of *honnêteté,* for reason to shed its dependence on the authority of the aristocratic noble hosts and to acquire that autonomy that turns conversation into criticism and *bons mots* into arguments."[14] That judgment may be too sweeping; but a distinction can certainly be drawn between the salons and the academies, in which humanist scholars debated the urgent concerns of the republic of letters. This distinction was to a considerable extent a gendered one, with the salons encouraging a female participation rarely granted in the academies.[15]

But at the time Cavendish arrived in Paris there were reminders of different models for women's intellectual agency. The year 1645 saw the death of Marie de Gournay, the editor of Montaigne and a vigorous champion of women's learning, who had managed to hold her own with male humanists and who disliked salon discourse as too insipid. If it is true that to some extent the masculine republic of letters was edging out women and trying to move them into the salons, figures like Gournay strongly resisted. Later histories of women's writing, however, consistently downplay the extent to which women did have a foothold in the republic of letters. A series of vast encyclopedias of women writers from antiquity to modernity appeared in the seventeenth century, but since many were composed in Latin they tend to be passed over in

today's literary histories with their focus on national identity and vernacular languages.[16]

On Gournay's death, the baton effectively passed to the Dutch humanist Anna Maria van Schurman, who had praised and corresponded with her.[17] The Protestant Netherlands was emerging as the center of the republic of letters because of its press's relative openness; and that openness extended to welcoming women into print. Van Schurman was published by the enormously influential house of Elzevier.[18] She had written an inaugural poem for the new university of Utrecht and had been allowed to attend lectures there, albeit in a specially enclosed space. And in a celebrated exchange of letters with the humanist André Rivet, which appeared in a French translation in 1646, we can see her vigorously claiming inclusion in the republic of letters. Knowledge, she insists on Aristotle's authority, should be open to all humans, "omnibus hominibus." Van Schurman can perhaps be seen as profiting by the less explicitly gendered status of the Latin *homo* as opposed to *vir.*[19] The exchange does, however, show the edginess often found in letters between male and female humanists, in which the male is driven by his normal professions of universality to invent strained principles of exclusion while reflecting an uneasy awareness of affinity.[20] For example, van Schurman argues that women can learn a lot from reading history, a study traditionally seen as a preparation for the prudence or *phronesis* that is essential for public life, and hence as inappropriate for women. Rivet responds with the rather desperate assertion that "practical civic knowledge ought to be as different as possible from that of women" ("civilem prudentiam ut plurimum aliam esse debere à muliebri").[21] Van Schurman, however, insists on a public aspect even to private virtues: "that state in the end will flourish most which is inhabited by many subjects obedient not so much to laws as to wisdom." She cites Ulpian's declaration that under civil law women were banned from all civil or public office. "By what justice this was decreed," van Schurman writes, "I will not now laboriously inquire."[22] She thus hints at the need to scrutinize such laws critically, and believes herself to be upholding the values of the republic of letters in doing so. She affirms her admiration for Gournay, which she also expressed in an epigram.

It is more remarkable than critics have acknowledged that Cavendish never mentions either Gournay or van Schurman. These were the two major women intellectuals on the landscape in the time of her Continental exile, and it is inconceivable that she was unaware of their existence: the poet Constantijn Huygens mentions both Cavendish and van Schurman in a letter sharing news about his friends with a mutual English friend, Utricia Ogle.[23] Cavendish perhaps feared that aligning her particularly outspoken feminism with an active tradition of women intellectuals might alienate the masculine world of learning, whose approval she was anxious to gain. But these women's

public personae constituted precedents against which she had to define herself. Aspects of her writings perhaps bear van Schurman's imprint. In *The Contract* the heroine is brought by her guardian to listen to university lectures, a decidedly rare event. In *The Female Academy,* the women engage in their debates behind a grille, a parallel to van Schurman's cloistered position within the lecture hall. When Cavendish had a Latin index provided for the books she had presented to Leiden University Library, she was trying to occupy terrain in which van Schurman had already staked her claim.[24]

Cavendish's need to provide the index, however, itself indicates the large differences in the two women's intellectual profiles. Van Schurman was a prodigy of linguistic skills. Cavendish enthusiastically embraced the "modern" challenge to the centrality of the *litterae humaniores,* the shift to an emphasis on *res* rather than *verba*—not least, perhaps, because it legitimized her own lack of a linguistic education. Unfortunately, while this change in principle made it easier to conduct intellectual debates in the vernacular, the dominant language of philosophy that displaced Latin was French, in which Descartes could address women readers but in which Cavendish was unable to write; by publishing in her native tongue she was cutting herself off from the Continental intellectual community.

The second main contrast concerns the two women's religious and political tempers. Despite recent critical interest in Cavendish's years of exile as forming her mentality, remarkably little attention has been paid to the possible ideological implications of her husband's choice of Antwerp in the Spanish Netherlands for his exile.[25] Cavendish's account of their stay in Antwerp is uniformly complimentary to the pro-Spanish regime and its allies, but this would not have been every visitor's response. English Protestants were used to idealizing the struggle of the United Provinces as a beacon of liberty against Spanish tyranny. Though the regime in the Catholic part of the Netherlands enjoyed a degree of autonomy, it lacked the religious toleration and the vigorous, pamphleteering public sphere of the United Provinces.[26] The prolonged warfare between the southern and northern Netherlands had recently ended with the Treaty of Westphalia, when Spain at last recognized the Dutch Republic. This settlement had brought about new political openings, and William Cavendish certainly kept in contact with the Dutch and exiled English courts at The Hague. But it is interesting that he should have chosen not only to settle in the non-Protestant part of the Netherlands but to rent the house that Rubens had built for himself. The foremost exponent of northern Counter-Reformation art, Rubens had also been a champion of the Stuarts. He had painted the ceiling for the Whitehall Banqueting House, where masques had been performed and through which, in a pointed gesture, Charles I was made to pass on the way to his execution. The Cavendishes were affirming their loyalty to a strongly anti-Protestant court culture. This formed a striking contrast

to the world of van Schurman, who was deeply imbued in a Calvinist orthodoxy that was to take on sectarian overtones. Her main interests were in linguistic scholarship that could illuminate biblical tongues. Though she championed women's right to inform themselves about the new science, and corresponded with Gassendi, she did not share Cavendish's intense interest in the subject.[27]

Cavendish's intellectual interests have more in common with Marie de Gournay's milieu than with van Schurman's. Gournay had indeed rebuked her Dutch correspondent for devoting too much attention to languages, behind which there perhaps lay a more general censure of her orthodox piety. Gournay had derived from Montaigne a skepticism that might be accompanied by outward deference to religious and political institutions but which constantly provoked critical scrutiny of custom. In Catholic France, the kind of independent lay scrutiny of Scripture in which Englishwomen were becoming versed was harder to pursue, and women writers often gravitated more exclusively to secular themes and in some cases to implicit challenges to religious orthodoxy.[28] By the 1640s such challenges were being reinforced by a new wave of Epicurean science and philosophy.

Though Cavendish's lack of French and Latin made her unable to participate in the little academy her husband organized for figures like Descartes, Hobbes, and Gassendi, she took a keen interest in the issues. Her early encounters with political puritanism in action made her the readier to speculate far outside confessional confines. One reason she would have appeared so strange and singular to her English contemporaries is her enthusiastic embrace of positions that could be interpreted without much strain as atheistic. Her first publication, *Poems and Fancies* (1653), opened with Lucretian versifications of atomic theory, just four years after Michel de Marolles had published the first translation of the worryingly ungodly Lucretius into any vernacular. Cavendish's discussions of Nature leave very little space for a creating God, and here as in most of her later works she speaks much more of the gods than of God, while her vocabulary is strikingly free of any register of Protestant spirituality. Conal Condren has argued that Cavendish's husband's political Machiavellianism involved a strong degree of skepticism about existing customs in church and state as well as a pragmatic reaffirmation of their political value, and this radical conservatism can be found in Margaret Cavendish's writings too.[29] There is a distinctive vein of Machiavellianism in such comments by her "She anchoret" (in *Natures Pictures*) as that "that Kingdom, is happiest, that lives under a Tyrant Prince, for when the people are afraid of their Prince, there is Peace, but where the Prince is afraid of the people, there is War; and there is no miserie like a Civill War." Threatened with abduction by a rival prince, the "She anchoret" commits suicide, and while the state sets "up her Statue of brasse, for her courage and love to her Countrey,

the Church Deified her a Saint." The religious terminology here is as unorthodox as the unqualified praise for suicide, in a story to which Cavendish draws attention in her preface as one of her most "solid and edifying."[30] Another heroine in the same volume, faced with a comparable threat, simply takes out her pistol and shoots her assaulter, then flees in masculine disguise, "finding opportunity to take Time by the fore-lock." When we are told that the gods favour her for her "virtue," it seems that they are using that term in a Machiavellian rather than Christian sense.[31] Cavendish is appropriating Machiavellian *virtù* as a female as well as male quality.[32]

This is certainly in one sense a feminist move; but it also has very distinct ideological inflections, of a largely secular, individual pursuit of glory, radically different from the Christianized Machiavellianism of contemporary English republicans, and also from the values of communality and collective work characteristic of the republic of letters. The very fact that Cavendish makes no mention of her celebrated contemporary women writers itself indicates a rather rigorous practice of a cult of individual glory. And the fact that her writings met a mixed reception in England, normally put down to patriarchal hostility to writing by women, surely has to take into account her radical departure from the expected conventions of religious discourse. Her insistence in the preface to *Poems and Fancies* that the book's "harmlesse Fancies" were distinctively female could be taken less as an expression of female alterity than as a strategic camouflage.[33] It is true that one contemporary praised her specifically for her ethics, describing her plays as "filled throughout with more and truer Idea's of Virtue and Honour than any Book of morality I have read"; but since the individual in question was Thomas Hobbes, this would not necessarily have been found reassuring.[34] That women like Dorothy Osborne and Mary Evelyn were uncomplimentary about Cavendish's works may reflect a resistance to having a rather idiosyncratic intellectual profile put forward as quintessentially feminine. What is most new about her writings is not her gender per se but her synthesis of the profiles of Continental, and especially French, intellectual women for projection into the very different conditions of Puritan England.

Insofar as Habermas identifies the values of the bourgeois public sphere with those of Enlightenment rationality, then, it would appear that France in this period was more advanced than England. The contrast, however, draws attention rather to the extreme unevennesses in the realization of the Habermasian model. On both sides of the Channel, the midcentury saw not a smooth onward march toward a bourgeois public sphere but extreme oscillations between different communicative forms. For much of the century in France license might be given to bold philosophical speculation, but there was no current equivalent of the English Parliament, and Richelieu had exercised extremely tight censorship on directly political debate.[35] The republic of let-

ters, one might very broadly say, could speculate freely by abstaining from public involvement. When Louis XIV ascended the throne as a minor in 1643, however, various forms of political discontent led up to the Fronde, with an outburst of pamphleteering in some ways parallel to the English Revolution—and though there have been comparative studies, we may wonder whether there is not more to say about this comparison.[36] The salons had contributed to the ferment, and aristocratic women played a significant role in the Fronde and in the literature surrounding it. The regent, Anne of Austria, who took a leading role in defending the crown, had been the dedicatee of Gournay's essay on the equality of the sexes; among the rebels, a regiment was commanded by the Duchess of Montpensier, dedicatee of van Schurman's French translation.[37] The leaders of the Fronde were ready to make common cause with civic leaders against absolutism, and in taking refuge in Antwerp from the disorders that were besetting Paris, the Cavendishes were reenacting the exile from a turbulent public sphere that had already taken them from England. Nonetheless, Margaret Cavendish's sympathies were in part with the rebels, but only to the extent that their underlying values were far more aristocratic than democratic. The Spanish Netherlands had long provided a congenial milieu for such aristocratic rebels, and Cavendish befriended some of them in her exile.[38] Cavendish's portrayal of Amazonian women in works like *Bell in Campo* reflects these contacts.[39] At least as she portrays them, however, the underlying ideology of these women still belonged to a world of what Habermas terms "representative publicness," of honor transmitted from above, rather than of any attempt to connect with a bourgeois public sphere.[40] Insofar as Cavendish does reflect the intellectual innovativeness of the salons, it is in her representation of the quest for glory as a purely individual one, not necessarily depending on sanctions from traditional religious or political institutions: on singularity as opposed either to legitimacy or universality.[41]

In England, the currents of innovation ran in different directions. The major political struggles centered on rival interpretations of a Scripture whose fundamental authority was unchallenged. As Zaret has argued, Habermas's model of modernizing rationality finds it hard to take account of the confessional politics of the 1640s and 1650s; and yet these struggles were intensely involved with new and more democratic forms of communication.[42] And in this context, van Schurman was more readily assimilable as a woman writer than was Cavendish. She was strongly admired in the very Parliamentarian circles which are often assumed to have been inimical to female learning. Too often Milton's skeptical view of female education is taken as absolutely representative of the mentality of Parliamentarians in general, but in many ways he was behind his contemporaries in the international republic of letters. It is among English Parliamentarians that we find the earliest reception of van Schurman's writings. Notoriously, Milton excluded women from the ideal

academy in *Of Education,* but this tract was written at the behest of the Hartlib circle, which was generally far more sympathetic to women's education. Tantalizingly, in the same year as the 1645 *Poems,* William Marshall, engraver of the frontispiece portrait of Milton, made a very similar engraving of the educationalist Bathsua Makin, and it may be that she was preparing a reply placing more emphasis on women.[43] Van Schurman was a correspondent and admirer of Makin, under whose auspices there appeared an English translation of part of van Schurman's correspondence with Rivet, a year before the French version.[44] Van Schurman also corresponded with Dorothy Moore, a Puritan who advocated women's preaching and who was to marry John Dury, a leading member of the Hartlib circle. Writing in 1645 to Makin's friend Sir Simonds D'Ewes, a noted Parliamentarian, van Schurman asks him "please to communicate unto us (partakers of the same cause) whatsoever shall be achieved by your Honourable Assemblie either in Peace or Warre."[45] Explicitly political statements played a limited role in van Schurman's correspondence, and this sense of sharing a common cause with the Parliamentarians seems to be something she takes for granted as not worth laboring.

But how would van Schurman have read such manifestations of a burgeoning public sphere as the Colchester riots? There is an interesting index of a response from her circle in Sir Simonds D'Ewes's account of a contested election in Suffolk in 1640, which Stopes first brought to light. Large numbers of women there and elsewhere turned up at the polls and demanded to vote; and in a number of places their votes were accepted. D'Ewes, however, observed that this was through "ignorance" and accepted that it was "a matter very unworthy of any gentleman and most dishonourable in such an election although they might in law have been allowed."[46] Though his friendship with Makin, which dated back to his school days, would have exposed him to advanced ideas about women's education, he was clearly no more ready than Rivet to have women cross what seemed a very clear line between private and public spheres. It is interesting, however, that he makes the case in terms of propriety rather than legality. At this crucial moment in the development of the public sphere, it was not unambiguously clear to the authorities that women could not form part of this new public. During the 1640s and 1650s, many women engaged in petitions and other agitation for political and religious reforms; and many of them took the great public oaths with which Parliament tried to marshal support for its cause, including the Engagement to support the republic in 1650.[47] Women had frequent occasion to put across their views: in a survey of printed books by women in the later seventeenth century, Maureen Bell has noted "a definite peak in women-authored texts in the 1650s."[48]

Agitation by women did not, however, include a demand for female suffrage, and the Levelers called at most for household suffrage in which women

would be represented through their husbands. We can see the failure to cross this particular public/private line as a moment at which an expanding public sphere excludes women; and indeed measures were increasingly taken to formalize that exclusion from different forms of public office.[49] It can also be argued, however, that the strongly religious agenda of English politics, which does not exactly fit the Habermasian model, inevitably led women to place their main pressure for inclusion elsewhere, notably in religious sects. In the 1640s and 1650s we find many women prophets campaigning to have their voice heard. And it is interesting that van Schurman should have been invoked as their champion. In his preface to Mary Cary's apocalyptic *The Little Horns Doom and Downfall,* the radical Puritan Hugh Peters praised van Schurman, "the glory of her sexe in Holland," as a parallel to Cary.[50] Such praise might at this stage have disconcerted van Schurman, who remained faithful to the orthodox Dutch church, but in her later years she broke with the church and became effectively second in command to the sect of Jean de Labadie, which built up connections with English Protestants, including Anne Conway, and after Labadie's death van Schurman considered leading her group to England. She was in correspondence with the Congregationalist leader John Owen, through whom she may have heard of that significant republican writer—and translator of Lucretius—Lucy Hutchinson.[51] We find the exiled Edmund Ludlow, as representative a case as could be imagined of republican ideology at its most militant, praising "Mrs Schurman that eminent p[er]son for piety, learning and humillity."[52] Somewhere between an invisible church and a republic of letters, there was a significant international community of women intellectuals whose extent still needs better mapping.

But if religious ideologies could lead to a strong sense of female participation in public issues, is it not still the case that the specifically secular constitutional revolution of the mid-seventeenth century, the establishment of a republic, was strongly marked in gender terms? The republic of 1649 did not in practice mark an expansion of the public sphere in England—in many ways it actually functioned to shrink it—but it powerfully established an ideology of universality and the common good against the particular interests of monarchy, and to this extent translated the values of the republic of letters into the public world. John Milton celebrated this concordance in his vigorous Latin defenses of the new republic against Salmasius; and again and again he celebrated republican virility against royalist effeminacy. Milton paralleled Charles's subordination to Henrietta Maria with repeated claims that Salmasius was writing at the behest of his monarchist wife: "naturally you want to force royal tyranny on others after being used to suffer so slavishly a woman's tyranny at home."[53] Salmasius was an early champion and close friend of van Schurman's, so here the political issues seem to follow a clear gender demarcation. Right at the end of her 1648 *Opuscula* she published warm letters to

both husband and wife. In successive editions no later letters appeared, so these stand as her last word on Salmasius, a testimony to friendship in the republic of letters but not necessarily to political agreement.

But the evidence suggests that van Schurman would have been at least divided in her sympathies over the political debate. Salmasius was widely seen in the republic of letters as having betrayed his own earlier principles of intellectual independence by becoming too servilely and effusively monarchist. When earlier in the 1640s Salmasius had turned down an offer of a position at the French court from Richelieu, van Schurman had written a poem greeting his return to the Netherlands as a return to the true independence of the republic of letters from the narrow ties of courtly or even national dependence.[54] While Salmasius's male critics readily resorted to stock misogynist stereotypes in polemic, many of them were in principle sympathetic to female learning, as embodied, for example, in the patronage of Queen Christina of Sweden—to whom Milton would later address fulsome praise. The Dutch scholar Daniel Heinsius, who would have helped van Schurman negotiate publication of her books with the Elzevier press, was one of Salmasius's most bitter critics and relished Milton's demolition of his foe.[55] In England the task of answering Salmasius had first been offered to Milton's friend John Selden, who was enthusiastic about women's public role (Stopes felt able to cite him in an epigraph).[56]

The political sympathies of the republic of letters, then, did not fall into any simple divisions on gender grounds. Van Schurman's position demonstrates how misleading it can be to take Milton's masculinist republicanism and Cavendish's Tory feminism as clearly aligned alternatives. It remains true that her variety of "feminism" was a lot more cautious than Cavendish's lavishly utopian imaginings, and thus constituted less of a direct challenge to the males in the republic of letters. But putting Cavendish in the context of the public sphere arguably brings out aspects of her originality that have been lost by readings focusing very specifically on identity politics. A comparative perspective helps to bring out the uneven development both of a political public sphere and of conceptions of gendered privacy. The political volatility of this period in many parts of Europe—in what used to be termed the "general crisis of the seventeenth century"—complicates but does not necessarily invalidate the project of producing a larger narrative of European public spheres. If by some implausible symbiosis we could combine Cavendish and van Schurman we would have something like the rational, enlightened citizen of Habermas's model. By the turn of the century, that citizen was emerging in a more uniform pattern throughout Europe, though of course in a male form only. And yet women continued to use newer forms of publicness to press for intervention in important affairs of state. Habermas's model, if flexibly applied, has the great merit of pushing us to analyze both past and present in terms that criticize illegitimate restrictions of democratic participation, without needing

to follow a simple pattern of progress or decline. In 1649 Queen Christina made Stockholm the center of a realm of female intellectual patronage; only in the new millennium was the first doctorate in philosophy awarded to a woman by the University of Stockholm, more than three centuries after the University of Padua awarded a doctorate to Elena Lucretia Cornaro-Piscopia. Narratives of seventeenth-century women's disappearing into a private sphere do draw our attention to important constraints, but they run the risk of patronizing a period of extraordinary energy and creativity—and of making us a little too satisfied that the work is now done.

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Notes

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1. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989). In an incisive critique, Joad Raymond, "The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century," in *News, Newspaper, and Society in Early Modern Britain,* ed. Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 109–40, both argues for the 1640s rather than 1695 as the crucial watershed and rejects Habermas's general model as over-idealizing. Habermas himself, however, has remained unpersuaded by such antedatings: Jürgen Habermas, "Concluding Remarks," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere,* ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 465.
2. Habermas claims that "as a result of the Reformation . . . religion . . . became a private matter." *Structural Transformation,* 11.
3. For Habermas on Arendt, see Jürgen Habermas, "Hannah Arendt: On the Concept of Power," in *Philosophico-Political Profiles,* trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (London: Heinemann, 1983), 171–87, and cf. Joan B. Landes, "The Public and the Private Sphere: A Feminist Reconsideration," in *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse,* ed. and intro. Johanna Meehan (New York: Routledge, 1995), 91–116 (199–101). For all Habermas's republican pedigree, however, a leading historian of republicanism, Quentin Skinner, has identified in his utopianism a quintessentially Protestant note, tartly observing that reading him "is extraordinarily like reading Luther, except that the latter wrote such wonderful prose." Skinner, "Habermas's Reformation," *New York Review of Books,* October 7, 1982, 38.
4. Marie Fleming, *Emancipation and Illusion: Rationality and Gender in Habermas's Theory of Modernity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Johanna Meehan, ed., *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

5. Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, *British Freewomen: Their Historical Privilege* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1894), chap. 7.
6. Hilda L. Smith, *All Men and Both Sexes: Gender, Politics, and the False Universal in England, 1640–1832* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988); for various often critical accounts of the public-sphere model in relation to gender in a later period, see Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Clíona Ó Gallchoir, and Penny Warburton, eds., *Women, Writing, and the Public Sphere, 1700–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). On France, cf. Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).
7. Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *Historical Journal* 36 (1993): 383–414. Cf. Judith M. Bennett, "Medieval Women, Modern Women: Across the Great Divide," in *Culture and History, 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities, and Writing,* ed. David Aers (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 47–76.
8. Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," in Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere,* 429.
9. Hans Bots and Françoise Waquet, *La république des lettres* (Paris: Belin, 1997), 18–21, 95–96. Noel Malcolm, "Hobbes and the European Republic of Letters," in *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 457–545 (539–45), cautions against anachronism in turning the republic of letters into a Habermasian public sphere. While this caution is appropriate, it can also be argued that the whole modern discourse of "civic humanism" is to a degree anachronistic, born of twentieth-century political concerns; but with that taken into account it has still proved heuristically valuable, quite apart from what might be defended as a utopian dimension.
10. Gloria Italiano Anzilotti, *An English Prince: Newcastle's Machiavellian Guide to Charles II* (Pisa: Giardini, 1988), 180.
11. David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
12. On the circumstances of Marie de Medici's arrival in England, see Caroline Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 85–88.
13. Sir John would already have been in touch with Newcastle through their common positions in the service of the Prince of Wales: on his politics, see John Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 141 ff. and passim. Hilda L. Smith, "'A General War amongst the Men . . . but None amongst the Women': Political Differences between Margaret and William Cavendish," in *Politics and the Political Imagination in Later Stuart Britain: Essays Presented to Lois Green Schwoerer,* ed. Howard Nenner (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1997), 143–60, argues that Cavendish did not necessarily share her husband's political views; her own plays and dialogues present a range of different opinions that she

did not endorse explicitly. The couple share at the least with each other and with Hobbes an aggressively "modern" standpoint.

14. Habermas, *Structural Transformation,* 31.
15. Erica Harth, "Gender and Discursive Space(s) in the Seventeenth Century," in *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 15–33.
16. See, e.g., Johannes Sauerbrei, *Diatriben academicam de foeminarum eruditione* (Leipzig, 1671); Gilles Ménage, *Historia mulierum philosopharum* (Paris, 1690), trans. as *The History of Women Philosophers,* trans. Beatrice H. Zedler (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984); and in the vernacular, with fulsome praise of van Schurman, Jan van Beverwyck, *Van der Uitnemenhyt des Vrouwlicken Geslachts* (Dordrecht, 1639). On women's Latin writing, see Jane Stevenson, "Female Authority and Authorization Strategies in Early Modern England," in *"This Double Voice": Gendered Writing in Early Modern England,* ed. Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), 16–40, and "Women Latin Poets in Britain in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *The Seventeenth Century* 16 (2001): 1–36.
17. Citations in the text are from Anna Maria van Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should be Educated and Other Writings,* ed. Joyce L. Irwin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). For further information, see Pieta van Beek, "Alpha Virginum: Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678)," in *Women Writing Latin: From Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Europe,* vol. 3, *Early Modern Women Writing Latin,* ed. Laurie J. Churchill, Phyllis R. Brown, and Jane E. Jeffrey (New York: Routledge, 2002), 271–93.
18. David W. Davies, *The World of the Elzeviers, 1580–1672* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954).
19. Van Schurman, *Opuscula* (Utrecht, 1652), in *Whether a Christian Woman Should be Educated,* 45. On the significance of this distinction, see Michèle Le Doeuff, *Le sexe du savoir* (Paris: Aubier, 1998), 243 ff.; on the limits of van Schurman's feminism, 53–87.
20. Lisa Jardine, "Women Humanists: Education for What?" in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies,* ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford, 1999), 48–81, also in Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1986). For a fuller analysis of the correspondence see David Norbrook, "Autonomy and the Republic of Letters: Michèle Le Doeuff, Anna Maria van Schurman, and the History of Women Intellectuals," *Australian Journal of French Studies* 40 (2003): 275–87.
21. Van Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should be Educated,* 49; *Opuscula,* 66.
22. Van Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should be Educated,* 42–43.
23. *De Briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens (1608–1687),* ed. J. A. Worp, 6 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1911–17), 5:186–87; van Schurman, *Opuscula,* 213, cited by Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Royalist, Writer and Romantic?* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2002), 121. Kathleen Jones, *A Glorious Fame: The Life of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of*

Newcastle, 1623–1673 (London: Bloomsbury, 1988), 57, suggests that Gournay's religious skepticism is echoed in *The Worlds Olio*.

24. Margaret Cavendish, *Natures Pictures* (London, 1655), 187; Margaret Cavendish, *Plays* (London, 1662), 653; Douglas Grant, *Margaret the First: A Biography of Margaret Cavendish Duchess of Newcastle, 1623–1673* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), 218
25. Anna Maria Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998); Emma L. E. Rees, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).
26. Pieter Geyl, *The Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century,* 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: Ernest Benn, 1961), 1:115.
27. For the correspondence with Gassendi, see van Schurman, *Opuscula* (Utrecht, 1652), 206–8.
28. Linda Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture (1598–1715) de saint François de Sales à la Marquise de Lambert,* Bibliothèque de la Renaissance Série 3 tome 25 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1993), 703 ff.
29. Conal Condren, "Casuistry to Newcastle: 'The Prince' in the World of the Book," in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain,* ed. Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 164–86. Charles Kay Smith, "French Philosophy and English Politics in Interregnum Poetry," in *The Stuart Court and Europe,* ed. R. Malcolm Smuts (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 177–209, discusses Cavendish in relation to other exiled royalists. The recent edition of Cavendish's *Political Writings,* ed. Susan James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), is usefully annotated but the selection is regrettably confined to *The Blazing World* and *Orations of Divers Sorts*.
30. Cavendish, *Natures Pictures,* 327, 356, sig. c4v. Cavendish elsewhere condemned the suicides of Cato and Portia: James Fitzmaurice, "Margaret Cavendish's *Life of William,* Plutarch, and Mixed Genre," in *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writings of Margaret Cavendish,* ed. Line Cottegnies and Nancy Weitz (Madison, N.Y., and London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press and Associated University Presses, 2003), 80–102 (88–89). In these cases, however, Cavendish's animus against republicans was in play.
31. Cavendish, "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity," in *Natures Pictures,* 223, 229, 230.
32. For a study of the gendering of *occasione* in Machiavelli, see Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); for contemporary Puritan appropriations, from a very different angle from Cavendish's, see David Norbrook, "Republican Occasions in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes,*" *Milton Studies* 42 (2003): 122–48. Machiavelli is one of the only moderns allowed into Cavendish's "Heavens Library" (*Natures Pictures,* 357); though as he is in the company of Achitophel there is no doubt a degree of irony.
33. Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (London, 1653), sig. A3v.
34. *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes,* ed. Noel Malcolm, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 2:524. Hobbes's praise is clearly double-edged. For an illuminating discussion of Cavendish's relations with Hobbes, see Battigelli, *Margaret*

Cavendish, chap. 4, though I would take Cavendish as being rather more positive in tone than Battigelli allows. On Cavendish's politics see also David Norbrook, "Margaret Cavendish and Lucy Hutchinson: Identity, Ideology, and Politics," *In-Between* 9, nos. 1–2 (2000): 179–203.

35. Jeffrey K. Sawyer, *Printed Poison: Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics, and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 136.
36. For differing views of how politically radical the literature of the Fronde was, see Christian Jouhaud, *Mazarinades: la Fronde des mots* (Paris: Aubier, 1985), and Hubert Carrier, *La presse de la Fronde, 1648–1653: les Mazarinades* (Geneva: Droz, 1989).
37. Siep Stuurman, "Social Cartesianism: François Poulain de la Barre and the Origins of the Enlightenment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 (1997): 617–40 (634).
38. On her friendship with the Duchess of Lorraine, whose husband led Spanish forces against the French government, see Whitaker, *Mad Madge,* 122–24.
39. James Grantham Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics, and Literary Culture, 1630–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), reads Lady Victoria's raising of a difficult siege as "an *à clef* version of Anne de Montpensier's successful campaigns during the Fronde" (110).
40. Habermas, *Structural Transformation,* 5–12.
41. Cf. Elaine Hobby, "'Delight in a Singularity': Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, in 1671," *In-Between* 9, nos. 1–2 (2000): 41–62.
42. On the other hand, Zaret himself sees the shift to a more rationalistic religion in the later seventeenth century as a crucial factor in the emergence of liberal political philosophies (*Origins of Democratic Culture,* 270–75), which, as Lloyd Kramer has pointed out, brings him closer to Habermas than he sometimes acknowledges: Kramer, "Habermas, History, and Critical Theory," in Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere,* 236–58 (245–47).
43. Frances Teague, *Bathsua Makin, Woman of Learning* (Lewisburg and London: Bucknell University Press and Associated University Presses, 1998), 24, 99–102, 157 n. 5; Elizabeth Skerpan-Wheeler, "Authorship and Authority: John Milton, William Marshall, and the Two Frontispieces of *Poems* 1645," *Milton Quarterly* 33 (1999): 105–14 (107).
44. Samuel Torshell, *The Womans Glorie* (London, 1645), 34–72, translating van Schurman's letter of November 6, 1637; this book was dedicated to Charles I's daughter Elizabeth, whose education had been entrusted to Makin. On the correspondence, see Pieta Van Beek, "One Tongue Is Enough for a Woman: The Correspondence in Greek between Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678) and Bathsua Makin (1600–167?)," *Dutch Crossing* 19 (1995): 24–48.
45. Anna Maria van Schurman, *The Learned Maid; or, Whether a Maid may be a Scholar . . . With some Epistles to the famous Gassendus and others,* trans. C[lement]. B[arksdale]. (London, 1659); reprinted in Betty S. Travitsky and Patrick Cullen, eds., *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works. Part 1. Printed Writings, 1641–1700, Volume 5, Educational and Vocational Books* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 49–50.

46. This case was first discussed by Stopes, *British Freewomen,* 107; see also Derek Hirst, *The Representative of the People? Voters and Voting in England under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 18–19; Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 396 ff.
47. I am indebted here to work in progress by Stephanie Fitz of the University of Maryland.
48. Maureen Bell, “Women Writing and Women Written,” in the *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain,* vol. 4, *1557–1695,* ed. John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie with the assistance of Maureen Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 439.
49. Hilda L. Smith, “Women as Sextons and Electors: King’s Bench and Precedents for Women’s Citizenship,” in *Women Writers and the Early Modern British Political Tradition,* ed. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 324–42.
50. Mary Cary, *The Little Horns Doom and Downfall* (London, 1651), sig. A2v.
51. T. J. Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem: Jean de Labadie and the Labadists, 1610–1744* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1987), 375, 231. At an earlier stage in his career Labadie had considered accepting an invitation from Milton to come to England: G. F. Nuttall, “Milton’s Churchmanship in 1659: His Letter to Jean de Labadie,” *Milton Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2001): 227–31.
52. Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. hist. c. 487, fol. 1301.
53. *Complete Prose Works of John Milton,* ed. Don M. Wolfe et al., 8 vols. in 10 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953–83), 4:1, 386.
54. Anna Maria van Schurman, “D. Claudio Salmasio Felicem è Galliis reditum,” in *Opuscula* (1652), 308.
55. Cf. Davies, *The World of the Elzeviers,* 68, 71, 144.
56. Stopes, *British Freewomen,* 181 n. 6 and title page.