

CHAPTER I

Introduction
Editing Early Modern Women
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Writing in 1993, when post-structuralist editorial theories were at the height of their influence, W. Speed Hill suggested provocatively that the recovery and editing of early modern women's writing was at odds with prevailing editorial trends:

feminist scholars are actively engaged in recovering texts by and about women, scaling the very intentionalist mountain the other side of which their male confrères are descending.¹

Hill's striking image encapsulates a number of tensions that could be seen to exist between the elision of the author and authorial intentionality that defined the mainstream editing of early modern texts, and the coterminous publication of important first modern critical editions of sole-authored female texts, such as Josephine A. Roberts's *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* (1983), Susanne Woods's *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer* (1993), and Barbara Lewalski's *The Poems and Polemics of Rachel Speght* (1996). Engaging in a critical dialogue with Hill in a special issue of *Shakespeare Studies* in 1996, Roberts suggested both that editors of male-authored works were also to be found engaged in author- and attribution-centred work, and that the recovery of early modern women's texts was in fact part of a wider attempt to reconstruct a lost manuscript culture.² Hill's mountain, however, has continued to loom over the landscape of editing early modern women.

For much of the twentieth century, revolutionary methodological change in the editing of canonical early modern literature ran along quite different lines to the approach taken to women's texts of the same period. The editorial mainstream shifted sharply in the 1980s from the idealist model of Greg and Bowers's new bibliography, based on the quasi-scientific establishment of a conflated text, to the 'new textualism' of Jerome McGann,

¹ Hill, 'Editing Nondramatic Texts of the English Renaissance', p. 23.

² Roberts, 'Editing the Women Writers of Early Modern England', pp. 69–70.

D. F. McKenzie, and others, which elided the author and authorial intentionality, and emphasized the diplomatic or otherwise less edited text.³ In contrast, and as Hill evokes, the approach to early modern women's writing for the most part continued to be centred on authorial identity. For the editorial endeavours surrounding interventions such as the Brown University Women Writers project and Ashgate's *The Early Modern Englishwoman*, the efficacy of the (usually) sole woman as author was taken for granted. While theorists writing from inside the literary canon, then, were seeking to disestablish the category of the author, the feminist recuperation of previously unknown women writers was deeply invested in that very category.

Eminent editors of early modern women, such as Roberts, have sought to apply a sociology of texts to early modern women's writing, and Ann Hollinshead Hurley and Chanita Goodblatt perceive a clear new textualist trajectory in the more recent editing of women's texts.⁴ Hurley and Goodblatt draw on examples such as Jill Seal Millman and Gillian Wright's *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Poetry* (2005) in which authorship is 'complexly mediated' and copytexts are selected on the basis of specific manuscript contexts.⁵ Certainly much has changed in the editing of early modern women since the late twentieth century; however, in our view there continue to be deep and productive tensions between the decentred treatment of authorship in much mainstream early modern editorial work, and the recovery of authors along with authorship that continues to be one prevailing motivation in much editorial work on early modern women writers. The unique temporalities of feminist and female-centred editing – its burgeoning at a point synchronous with historicist and textualist literary-critical movements; its (arguable) maturation in the age of digital editing – have generated unique challenges as well as unique solutions and methodologies that have the potential to speak back to the editorial mainstream.

Poised at a moment some twenty-five years after that described by Hill, *Editing Early Modern Women* seeks to make explicit the conversation between the editing of early modern women's texts and mainstream editing, and to address a number of questions that relate to both fields.

³ Greg, 'Rationale'; Bowers, 'Greg's Rationale of Copy-Text Revisited'; Leod [sic] (ed.), *Crisis in Editing*. For new textualist approaches to early modern literature see, for example, the collection of articles in *Shakespeare Studies*, 24 (1996); and Marcus, 'Textual Scholarship', pp. 145–9. Hurley and Goodblatt define 'new textualism' in the Preface to *Women Editing / Editing Women*, pp. xi–xviii.

⁴ Hurley and Goodblatt, 'Preface' to *Women Editing / Editing Women*, pp. xi–xviii (p. xii).

⁵ Millman and Wright (eds.), *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Poetry*, p. 2.

How do we edit texts that have no editorial history, or whose editorial histories are concerned with oddity and exemplarity rather than canonicity? How do we edit texts that do not fit easily into conventional taxonomies of 'literature', and what contexts should we present for them? How can textual editing upset conventional hierarchies of literary value, while still finding a readership? And, as the print-based editing of both male- and female-authored texts is increasingly complemented or displaced by the electronic edition, how can digital methods of editing, archiving, and amassing early modern texts facilitate multiple editorial and literary-critical aims?

Early modern women's writing has, from the very beginning, been edited in forms that emphasize a connection between 'life' and 'works', with the biographical exemplarity of the sole female author often as important as the works that substantiated these qualities. Anne Southwell's manuscripts, for example, were compiled by her husband as proof of her 'excellencye' after her death; and the 'Collections' of Elizabeth Egerton, produced in multiple copies, proved her piety for an extended familial audience.⁶ Margaret Ezell has drawn attention, in her pioneering work on women's literary history, to the way that early modern women's writing was transmitted in the eighteenth century through the agency of figures like George Ballard, whose *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain* (1752) was a biographical compendium of authors.⁷ Women writers were celebrated for a literary skill that went hand in hand with their virtue and their achievements of piety and education, in a model that very firmly associated women's writing with biographical exemplarity.

The anthologizing impulse exemplified in Ballard's *Memoirs of Several Ladies* predominated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and, on the whole, most of the work by early modern women that circulated was poetry. Colman and Thornton's *Poems by Eminent Ladies* (1755, 1773, 1780) anthologized poetry by women from the mid seventeenth to mid eighteenth centuries, producing the tradition of largely secular women's poetry that is familiar to us today. There were exceptions, such as the Quaker tradition of keeping Margaret Fell's religious prose alive, but much of the religious writing by women from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries became invisible. There were some notable anthologies in the nineteenth century, especially Alexander Dyce's wide-ranging *Specimens of British Poetesses* (1825), which is a major editorial feat; and Dyce was cannibalized by Frederic Rowton for his considerably more popular compilation,

⁶ Southwell, *The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book*, ed. Klene; for example, Huntington Library MS EL 8376, BL MS Egerton 607.

⁷ Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, chap. 3.

The Female Poets of Great Britain (1848). These anthologies, often overlooked in discussions of the editorial histories of early modern women's writing, were important exercises in recuperation and preservation. At the same time, they provide an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century prehistory to the phenomenon to which Ramona Wray objects in her influential essay on 'Anthologizing the Early Modern Female Voice' (2000): that anthologies of early modern women's writing have focused on poetry and on works that fit a modern feminist agenda.⁸ (In a late-twentieth-century context, 'protofeminism' could be seen to constitute a new kind of female exemplarity.)

For much of the twentieth century, and as Wray later bemoaned, the anthology, biography, and a focus on poetry continued to dominate the representation of early modern women's writing. Foundational second-wave feminist anthologies, such as Betty Travitsky's *The Paradise of Women* (1981), were vital in the processes of (re)discovery, and *Kissing the Rod* (1988), the pioneering anthology edited by Germaine Greer and associates, was instrumental in demonstrating the range of women's poetry within the seventeenth century. These groundbreaking anthologies did continue to favour certain genres and classes of author, and the bases of their engagement with this writing were hidden and complex, as Kate Lilley points out in her provocative essay on the 'critical erotics' of early modern women's writing.⁹ Lilley's account engages a Queer politics of meta-criticism, breaking apart the dichotomy of sameness/difference in the recovery and analysis of women's writing. She offers a Queer alternative to the oscillation between the representative and the exceptional, and endorses the turn to the material conjoined with close reading that the editorial activities we explore in this volume exemplify: 'The highly eroticized material, ideological, and rhetorical contexts of early modern women's writing as a minoritized discourse underlines the need for readers to negotiate the unstable polarities of sex, sexuality, and desire by beginning with material questions of genre and gender, form, and textual transmission.'¹⁰

Lilley's critical intervention comes at what we might now consider to be a late stage in the history of approaches to and representations of early modern women's writing. As more scholarly attention has been paid to women who wrote in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the scale of what was written has been revealed, perhaps to the surprise of those who thought there was nothing left to find. So too has the complexity of its contemporaneous production and transmission, the conditions of

⁸ Wray, 'Anthologizing'. ⁹ Lilley, 'Fruits of Sodom'. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

which are increasingly being understood in terms of *early modern* processes of editing and anthologizing. Throughout the seventeenth century, a number of women were themselves active as ‘editors’ and interpreters. The most notable of these was Mary Sidney, who presided over the edition of her brother’s works and who wrote the bulk of the psalm translations that circulated widely in manuscript, so that, in Patricia Pender’s terms, their authorship becomes ‘a dynamic transference of debt and license’.¹¹ Danielle Clarke’s chapter in this volume extends this model of collaborative authorship, demonstrating how the entangling and disentangling of the relationship between Philip and Mary and the psalms can stand as a paradigm for a reductive model of authorship that the editing of early modern women has at times enforced, but has increasingly challenged.

For in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, women writers were, if not prominent, then certainly visible, and often part of a systematic process of mediated circulation. An excellent example of this is Elizabeth Tyrwhit, as analysed in this volume by Susan Felch. In Felch’s meticulous account, Tyrwhit’s prayerbook, in its 1574 and 1582 versions, testifies to the way that textual transmission and the turn to a material history of the book have become vital tools in the understanding of early modern literature. As Felch argues, early modern women’s writing is a special instance of this process, and one that the editors of writing by men have largely passed by. Felch offers a notion of what we might call (after Clifford Geertz) ‘thick contextualization’ as a necessary requirement for the kind of understanding that has to lie behind the modern editing of early modern women – and of early modern men.¹²

Later in the seventeenth century, a number of women became especially adept at circulating their work through the medium of print, while others exploited what was still a thriving manuscript culture.¹³ The use of print is exemplified by Margaret Cavendish, an obsessive editor and re-editor of her own work. The complex interconnections between manuscript and print circulation are best illustrated by Katherine Philips, who one might say manipulated the aura of manuscript circulation, copying, and recopying for her own ends, and then slipped into print (perhaps inadvertently) with *Poems* (1664) and the monumentalizing folio edition of 1667. Philips, like a number of seventeenth-century women writers (the other notable

¹¹ Pender, *Early Modern Women’s Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty*, p. 100.

¹² See Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

¹³ For the importance of manuscript culture to the circulation of early modern women’s writing see the pioneering work of Ezell in *The Patriarch’s Wife*, followed up by work associated with the Perdita project, for example, Burke and Gibson (eds.), *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Writing*.

example being Aphra Behn), was highly visible in the first half of the eighteenth century.¹⁴ Philips had a collected edition published in 1710 and an edition of her letters in 1705 and 1729, but then her work appeared only in anthologies until the twentieth century. Close critical work on Philips and others in recent years has drawn attention to a longer history of editing and transmission, and has revealed that the ‘production’ of the seventeenth-century woman poet occurred through multiple mediations of editorial collaboration and intervention, and in overlapping practices of manuscript and print publication.¹⁵

Early modern women’s writing has, then, been the site of complex recent work on transmission, the mediation of authorship, and collaborative models of textual production and reproduction; but the fit between the editing of women and textualist and materialist literary-critical agendas has continued to be an uneasy one. Betty Travitsky’s belief that the canon of women’s writing has needed to be edited (implicitly in idealist, life-and-works form) before it could be deconstructed is reflective of ongoing tensions between recovery and textualist editing. So too is Pender and Smith’s converse argument in their chapter in this volume that such a hierarchy of editorial processes should not hold.¹⁶ Leah Marcus’s choices in editing *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (2001) varied markedly from some of the scholarly principles that she espoused in her influential post-structuralist analysis of the early modern literary canon, *Unediting the Renaissance* (1996). Notably, she has retrospectively described that book as targeted at literary-critical scholars rather than editors, drawing attention in doing so to the potential slippage between the two fields, at the same time as they vitally co-enable each other.¹⁷

A similar tension can perhaps be seen between Ramona Wray’s influential essay on ‘Anthologizing the Early Modern Female Voice’ (2000) and her later editing of Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam* for the canonical Arden series of dramatic texts. Wray argued in 2000 for a radical reshaping of the anthology in order to represent the complexity and unconventionality of early modern women’s literary output, but seeks in her edition of *Mariam* (2012) to edit Cary ‘as an early modern dramatist

¹⁴ For an account of their contrasting fortunes see Salzman, *Reading Early Modern Women’s Writing*, chap. 7.

¹⁵ See, for example, Salzman, *Reading Early Modern Women’s Writing*; and Wright, *Producing Women’s Poetry*.

¹⁶ Travitsky and Prescott, ‘Studying and Editing Early Modern Englishwomen’, p. 14; Pender and Smith in this volume, pp. 256–9.

¹⁷ Marcus, ‘Confessions of a Reformed Uneditor (II)’, p. 1072. For ‘the co-enabling role shared between editions and criticism’ see Ramona Wray’s chapter in this volume, p. 62.

rather than as a woman writer', and to explore the ways in which the text is implicated in 'a much broader range of contemporary dramatic activity' than the women's 'closet drama' (pp. 75, 62). The dual desirabilities of 'a new politics of selection' in editing women,¹⁸ and of achieving visibility within mainstream student and scholarly communities continue to play out within the field, even as multiple, different editions of several women's texts are increasingly available.

Similarly, while a number of recent editions of early modern women's writing have moved away from intentionality and biographically determined readings of texts, the unshackling of 'life' from 'works' has a particular set of implications for women's texts. Susan Felch argues, in her chapter in this volume, that biographies still need to be established, not least because of what they potentially can tell us about the conditions of texts' production and reception, and because of the interpretative pitfalls from which a detailed and accurate biography can save us. Mary Ellen Lamb also argues for the value of a biographical focus in her redacted edition of Wroth's *Urania*, and Marcus et al.'s editorial work on Elizabeth I is again of interest. *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* takes a decidedly textualist postmodernist editorial approach to categories of 'author' and of 'text', even as it aims to present the corpus of speeches, letters, and poems associated with Elizabeth I. Marcus and her co-editors include multiple versions of some of Elizabeth I's most important speeches, to account for the vexed questions of authorial attribution and most reliable textual witnesses, even while they assert the value of a 'complete works' edition in bestowing canonicity on the edited texts.¹⁹

Precisely because the fit between defining critical and editorial scholarship and the demands of early modern women's texts has been so uneasy, the editing of early modern women has sharpened the theoretical reflections in the field in a way that offers a complementary narrative to that embraced by scholars who have edited early modern texts by men. This theoretical intervention, or potential intervention – one which we argue has until now gone unrecognized – is evident in the projects described in the chapters of this volume. The interaction between manuscript and print transmission is reflected not simply in a specialist anthology such as the Millman-Wright one, but also in the way that editions have ranged between manuscript and print sources. Similarly, the treatment of manuscript sources has not just revolutionized our sense of the range of writing by women, but also

¹⁸ Wray, 'Anthologizing', p. 57.

¹⁹ See Leah Marcus's chapter in this volume, esp. pp. 145–6, 151; and, for example, Marcus et al. (eds.), *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, pp. 335–46.

brought to bear theoretical questions about the nature of genre, and the way that previously unknown or neglected material needs to be contextualized through the editing process.

Such theoretical cruces are exemplified in Suzanne Trill's replacement, in her chapter in this volume, of a narrow concentration on Anne, Lady Halkett's autobiography with a focus on her extensive manuscript 'archive' of mostly religious work. Trill's archaeological work not only shifts preconceptions about Halkett (including the nature of the so-called autobiography), but also offers a new way of dealing with the sort of material that historians may once have cannibalized as source material, but that literary scholars may now accord full textual authority and editorial intervention. Like so much of the work discussed here, this process has involved a retracing of the transmission process, and a reconceptualization of the nature of authorship and of authors' and texts' editorial prehistories. Trill's sense of the 'archive' is also one that challenges frameworks for editing early modern texts – of any kind and of any authorship – in print and online.

Where, then, does the editing of early modern women now stand in relation to the editorial mainstream? Since the 1990s, mainstream editing has moved in two distinct directions. One is back towards a recovered notion of 'major' authors, as seen in new, 'complete works' editions of writers like Jonson, Donne, and Herrick.²⁰ The other is further towards fragmentation, founded in the desire to 'unedit the Renaissance', and manifest in mainstream editions that present multiple versions of a text alongside each other, such as the Oxford Shakespeare, or the Norton *Doctor Faustus*.²¹ This sense of textual contingency also, most strikingly, informs the growth of online editions that present all textual materials, such as the Internet Shakespeare Editions, or that foreground the sociology of the text, such as the online 'social' edition of the Devonshire Manuscript.²²

While this dual movement in editorial practice is also broadly evident in early modern women's writing, the implications of each form of editing are, as we have shown, unique. We have now, for example, reached a moment when some women's texts are being afforded the full scholarly treatment, such as the Oxford *Works* of Lucy Hutchinson, or Janel Mueller's prize-winning edition of Katherine Parr.²³ The 'complete works' edition has

²⁰ *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. Bevington, Butler, and Donaldson (2012); *The Complete Poems of John Donne*, ed. Robbins (2010); *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. Cain and Connolly (2013).

²¹ *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Greenblatt et al.; Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. Kastan.

²² <http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/>; https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/The_Devonshire_Manuscript.

²³ *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, gen. ed. Norbrook (2011–); *Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence*, ed. Mueller (2011).

lost none of its canonical power, and these editions represent a major – if belated – intervention in the early modern canon. We are also now at the point where there are multiple editions of some women’s texts, from Mary Wroth’s sonnets and her *Urania*, to Elizabeth Cary’s now almost iconic *Tragedy of Mariam*, through to Katherine Austen’s *Book M*. Wroth remains the writer most visible within conventional measurements of canonization, such as the *Norton Anthology of Literature* (8th edition), in which she has ten pages (though these may be contrasted to the fifty of her uncle Philip Sidney). There are authoritative editions of *Urania* and of Wroth’s poetry (including Roberts’s pioneering edition and Salzman’s online edition), and a number of editions of *Love’s Victory*. Yet none of them are truly authoritative. While the editions themselves are invaluable, there remains a sense of provisionality caused in part by them being spread across publishers and formats.

Two prolific and important writers, Aphra Behn and Margaret Cavendish, can illustrate how the process of what might be called editing from the margins has influenced the way that early modern women’s writing has been transmitted in an economy which has valued authoritative editions produced by academic presses, however much that situation is now changing.²⁴ The most telling example is the complex editorial situation of Aphra Behn. Behn was the subject of a pioneering edition by Montague Summers in 1915; and in 1992, under the general editorship of Janet Todd, Pickering and Chatto began to publish a complete edition of Behn’s works, beginning with her poetry. The edition ran to seven volumes and was completed in 1996. While an invaluable resource, this edition cannot be described as an authoritative, scholarly edition in the way that such a category is usually applied to volumes published by university presses. For example, the poetry volume is only partially collated. It is perhaps symbolic of the difference, even in the 1980s and 1990s, between the treatment of early modern women’s writing and writing by men. So at virtually the same time as the Pickering Behn, Oxford University Press published *The Works of Thomas Southerne*, edited with extraordinary attention to detail by Harold Love and Robert Jordan (1987–8). Ironically, Southerne based his most popular play on Behn’s *Oroonoko*. (As an individual work, though, *Oroonoko* has received sustained editorial attention, including an edition for Norton by Joanna Lipking.) So while a selection of Behn’s work is available in editions especially suitable for teaching purposes, including

²⁴ It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that both Behn and Cavendish rejoice in having fully fledged societies: the Margaret Cavendish Society was founded in 1997, the Aphra Behn Society in 1996.

selections of plays and fiction for Penguin and Oxford classics, the dignity now being accorded Lucy Hutchinson by Oxford University Press's edition is not yet present for Behn.²⁵

There is an even patchier history of the editing of Cavendish, a writer who presents special challenges for an editor because of her propensity to revise, not only from one impression to the next, but also by hand in individual copies of her books.²⁶ The editing of Cavendish has also been influenced by the – limited but growing – interest in her as an important figure in the history of science and philosophy. There have been four significant works or groups of works of Cavendish in scholarly editions, as well as the quite generous dissemination of her work through a series of anthologies, especially those published by Broadview Press, and the edition of *The Blazing World* and other writing edited by Kate Lilley for Penguin in 1994. Three of these volumes reflect the scholarly interest in Cavendish within the contexts of the history of philosophy, politics, and science. In 1997 James Fitzmaurice edited *Sociable Letters* for Garland Press. In 2001 Eileen O'Neill edited *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy* as part of the Cambridge 'Texts in the History of Philosophy' series.

O'Neill's edition is a good example of how different disciplines fragment texts to suit their own ends. Cavendish published *Observations* and *The Blazing World* in a single volume, with significant interconnections between the two works, as scholars have begun to point out.²⁷ However, just as those with a literary bent have edited *The Blazing World* without *Observations*, so O'Neill's edition has *Observations* without *The Blazing World*. Cambridge has also published a volume edited by Susan James titled *Political Writings* which reproduces the Lilley text of *The Blazing World* and adds to it *Orations*. Valuable as they are, neither of the Cambridge volumes could be classified as an authoritative, scholarly edition. Only Anne Shaver's 1999 edition of six of Cavendish's plays approaches the kind of editorial information one would obtain from a full, scholarly apparatus, and even here there is only a partial or estimated collation. A complete Cavendish would be a challenging undertaking, but one that would be of great value: Cavendish's substantial body of poetry, to take one example, has a complex and fascinating textual history that asks for the extensive collation only a full scholarly edition could supply.

²⁵ This situation will change with the major new five-volume edition of Behn's complete works, general editor Elaine Hobby, now under contract with Cambridge University Press.

²⁶ On this aspect of Cavendish's revising habits see Fitzmaurice, 'Margaret Cavendish on her Own Writing'; and Salzman, *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing*, pp. 140–4.

²⁷ See, for example, Salzman, 'Narrative Contexts for Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*', pp. 28–48.