REPUBLIC OF WOMEN

Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century

Republic of Women recaptures a lost chapter in the narrative of intellectual history. It tells the story of a transnational network of female scholars who were active members of the seventeenth-century republic of letters, and demonstrates that this intellectual commonwealth was a much more eclectic and diverse assemblage than has been assumed. These seven scholars – Anna Maria van Schurman, Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Marie de Gournay, Marie du Moulin, Dorothy Moore, Bathsua Makin, and Katherine Jones, Lady Ranelagh – were philosophers, schoolteachers, reformers, and mathematicians. They hailed from England, Ireland, Germany, France, and the Netherlands. And together with their male colleagues – men like Descartes, Huygens, Hartlib, and Montaigne – they represented the spectrum of contemporary approaches to science, faith, politics, and the advancement of learning. Carol Pal uses their collective biography to reconfigure the intellectual biography of early modern Europe, offering a new, expanded analysis of the seventeenth-century community of ideas.

CAROL PAL is an Assistant Professor of History at Bennington College. She received her Ph.D. in 2007 from Stanford University, where her dissertation won the Elizabeth Spilman Rosenfield Dissertation Prize. She has held a number of library fellowships, including a Francis Bacon Foundation fellowship from the Huntington Library, and an Ahmanson-Getty Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Clark Library, UCLA; she has also won research fellowships from the Mellon Foundation, Woodrow Wilson Foundation, American Association of University Women, and Jacob K. Javits program. The focus of her current research is a reconsideration of the History of the Book, using case studies highlighting the phenomenon of corporate scribal publication.

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RETHINKING THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

CAROL PAL

Bennington College

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This book is dedicated to my son, Noah.
I am so proud of you.

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Acknowledgments

The process of researching and writing this book has been a long and wonderful journey, as what began with my senior thesis on one female scholar became a full-fledged obsession with early modern cultures of learning. I found that in uncovering a seventeenth-century intellectual community, I had also entered its present-day equivalent, a modern republic of letters whose citizens were as remarkable for their generosity as they were for their intellect. The process has therefore been a great joy to me – and among those joys is the fact that I can now thank those who have supported and sustained me as I stumbled through.

First and foremost on this list is my graduate mentor, Paul Seaver. Paul has not only shown me how he does history, but also how he inhabits the persona of historian. His kind encouragement continues to sustain me; and, throughout my career, I know I will always be attempting to live up to his example of integrity, intelligence, and insight. But even before working with Paul, I had the amazing good fortune to work with an undergraduate mentor who literally changed my life. Kathleen Noonan saw the historian in me long before I knew that person was there, and gently guided me toward my vocation. She is a wonderful historian, a dear friend, and the teacher I hope to be.

Since this book focuses on female scholars of the early modern era, I am also particularly fortunate in having been mentored and befriended by so many female scholars in the here and now. At Stanford, I had two powerful models of female scholarship in the field: Paula Findlen, a Renaissance woman in every possible way, read multiple versions of each chapter, crucially insisting throughout that I keep refining the questions that I brought to my evidence; and Carolyn Lougee Chappell, scholar of early modern France, kept pushing me to look beyond the obvious. Outside the traditional academic setting, I found fellowship and guidance in two other models of female scholarship: Susan Groag Bell, whose pathbreaking work in women's history helped forge the field in which

I now work and study; and the historian Kirsten Seaver, a keen judge of the difference between fact and fiction. I cannot thank these scholars enough for their kindness, their critiques, and the ways in which they have inspired me.

As the research progressed, I entered further into this republic of letters, benefitting from conversation and correspondence with a community of generous minds. Joyce Irwin was willing to share her work on Anna Maria van Schurman with me while I was still an undergraduate – how lovely is that? It's a story I will tell to my students as long as I live. Lynette Hunter was also extremely generous in agreeing to let me rave at her about Dorothy Moore when we met at the British Library; she then very kindly granted me access to her work on Moore's biography and correspondence during the early stages of my research. Betsey Taylor shared her calendar of Lady Ranelagh's correspondence with an entire gang of scholars working on that "incomparable" woman – a group that happily included me – while Michael Hunter generously shared his expertise on Ranelagh's little brother, Robert Boyle. Mirjam de Baar took an afternoon to show me the places where Anna Maria van Schurman had lived and worked in Utrecht, while Deborah Harkness wisely insisted that I leave the British Library's manuscript room at lunchtime to experience the joys of Pizza Express. And Anne Goldgar was just as generous with her insider knowledge of Amsterdam as she was with her deep knowledge of the republic of letters.

When it came time to turn my mass of files, photocopies, and transcriptions into something readable and coherent, I was again lucky to be surrounded by generous friends and colleagues. At Stanford, my time was graced by the camaraderie of Matthew Booker, Rachel Jean-Baptiste, Shelley Lee, and Lise Sedrez; I will treasure them forever. The same is true of Stacy Clarke and Jackie Fitzpatrick, my fellow travellers from Kathleen Noonan's history seminar at Mills College. Kristin Rebien, Claire Sufrin, and Karen Gover kindly provided me with help in translating documents in German, Hebrew, and Greek; any errors in the final product are entirely my own. Lisa Shapiro, in true republic of letters fashion, shared her translations of the correspondence between Princess Elisabeth and René Descartes in advance of their publication. Then, at Bennington, I was amazingly lucky to make two friends on my very first day as a new faculty member. Barbara Alfano and Valerie Imbruce, I don't know what I would have done without you!

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Writing a book still requires that one deal with practicalities first – a situation that has changed very little since Virginia Woolf first pointed out that one needs a room of one's own and 500 pounds a year. In San Francisco, that room was provided by Corie Tripoli, who went from being my next-door neighbour to being my refuge, roommate, and friend; in London, that room became a second home, as I joined the household presided over by the fabulous Ingrid Brodie. The requisite 500 pounds a year has, of course, mushroomed considerably; thus it would not have been possible to complete this journey without generous institutional funding and support. I would like to thank the History Department and the program in the History and Philosophy of Science at Stanford University, the American Association of University Women, the Mellon Foundation, the Jacob Javits Scholarship Foundation, the Oakfords, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and the Stanford Institute for Research on Women and Gender. Completing the manuscript was made possible by an Ahmanson-Getty fellowship at the Clark Library, UCLA, and a Francis Bacon fellowship at the Huntington Library.

And in order to write a book of history, of course, one needs more than just space and money – one needs libraries and archives first, or there will be no book to write. I therefore wish to thank the librarians, archivists, and staff of the following for their time and their deeply informed assistance: In England, the British Library; the Bodleian Library, Oxford University; Cambridge University Library; the archives of the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth House; the University of Sheffield; the London

Metropolitan Archives; Petworth House, Sussex; the Royal College of Physicians; the Royal Society; the Huguenot Library; and the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum. In the Netherlands, the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague; the University of Amsterdam; the University of Leiden; and the University of Utrecht. In the United States, the Huntington Library; the Folger Shakespeare Library; the Whitney Medical Library at Yale University; and the Clark Library at the University of California, Los Angeles. Most recently, great thanks are due to Oceana Wilson and Kathy Williams, the goddesses of Crossett Library at Bennington College.

Finally, when it came time to turn my behemoth of a manuscript into a real book, I benefitted enormously from the knowledgeable guidance of Richard Fisher, my editor at Cambridge University Press. It was Richard's insistence on clarity, through many drafts, that enabled me to eventually tame the monster. I am also grateful for the valuable comments and suggestions I received from the anonymous readers of the Press.

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Some very important people in my life shared the beginning of this journey, but did not live to see its end. Gertrud Pacheco, Netty Alegria, and my beloved Rosie were an enormous part of my life. I miss them every day, and I remember them here.

Definitions and conventions

TRANSLATIONS

All translations from Latin, French, and Dutch sources, unless otherwise indicated, are my own. For translations from German, Greek, and Hebrew sources, I am grateful to Kristin Rebien, Karen Gover, and Claire Sufrin.

TRANSCRIPTIONS

Sources in English are cited in their original, unmodernized spelling. Exception is made in substituting "j" for "I," "v" for "u," and "the" for "ye." I have also expanded early modern contractions; for instance, "w^{ch}" and "y^{r} Ma^{ty}" are expanded to "which" and "Your Majesty."

SOURCES IN PRINT

Unless otherwise indicated, I cite from manuscript sources. However, some of this correspondence is now available in English translation. Joyce Irwin has published an excellent translation of a selection of Anna Maria van Schurman's letters, along with her *Dissertatio* and some excerpts from *Eukleria*, in Anna Maria van Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated: and other writings from her intellectual circle* (Chicago, 1998); and much of Dorothy Moore's correspondence has been published by Lynette Hunter in *The Letters of Dorothy Moore, 1612–64: The Friendships, Marriage, and Intellectual Life of a Seventeenth-Century Woman* (Aldershot, 2004). In those instances where printed English translations or transcriptions are available, this fact will be mentioned in the footnotes.

ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library (London)
CSPD	Calendar of State Papers, Domestic
CSPV	Calendar of State Papers, Venetian

CSPI	Calendar of State Papers for Ireland
HDC	George Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury, and Comenius*
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
KB	Koninklijke Bibliotheek (The Hague)
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Prologue

Around 1742, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu received a letter from Anna Maria van Schurman. Montagu was a well-known writer and scholar manqué, while van Schurman was a celebrated Dutch intellectual. Thus their correspondence could be considered a fairly unremarkable exchange between two learned women – but there was just one problem. Van Schurman, by this date, had been dead for over sixty years.

During her lifetime, van Schurman had been a scholarly celebrity – an intellectual prodigy, and the center of an international network of female scholars. Now, however, it seemed she had triumphed even over death. And the apparently indestructible van Schurman, pausing amid the joys of her Elysian intellectual circle, was still managing to find the time to correspond with other female scholars.

Montagu then returned the empyrean favor. She wrote back to say that she was flattered van Schurman would find her worthy of her time and attention, and she applauded the improvement in her correspondent's posthumous literary style. Montagu also thought the departed scholar would like to know that there were now modern, politicized arguments to support women's access to higher learning and participation in the republic of letters. Montagu was proud of her new century. But there were tradeoffs; and perhaps the seventeenth century had given female scholars something that Montagu could only dream of.

The dream was one of belonging to a female scholarly community. Thus Montagu concluded her letter to Heaven with a plaintive postscript:

> I am so charmed by your coterie that if you promise to admit me immediately I shall throw myself into the Rhône to seek you, half through desire of seeing you, and half from boredom with all those whom I do see.[1]

[1] The letter is undated, but the location of Avignon places it sometime between 1742 and 1746. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Essays and Poems, and 'Simplicity, a Comedy'*, ed. Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy (Oxford, 1993), 165–7, 392–3. I am indebted to Paula Findlen for this reference.

Van Schurman's "coterie" had not been a coterie at all, but rather an international network of learned women; and, like van Schurman herself, it had ceased to exist. But Montagu clearly wanted more than what her century could offer her. The eighteenth century could offer her a level of inclusion in the abstract intellectual community known as the republic of letters. But what Montagu wanted as well was to be included in a community of female scholars – a Republic of Women.

Republic of Women tells the story of a multinational network of female scholars in the seventeenth century, and reinserts their forgotten history into the narrative of early modern intellectual culture. Together with their male colleagues, these women worked to help further the advancement of learning. Thus in documenting a vital, yet previously unexplored identity – that of the collegial female scholar – the book also documents a surprisingly inclusive, heterogeneous, and dually gendered republic of letters in the middle of the seventeenth century. It is there that this story begins.