

Women Writing the English Republic, 1625–1681

Scholars have fiercely debated the causes of the English Civil Wars and the rise of antimonarchical and republican thought a century before the American Revolution. This ambitious and highly original book is the first to argue that women played a significant role in formulating and enacting English republican precepts. Even as feminists contend that republicanism's division of private from public spheres excludes women from political power, Gillespie demonstrates how seventeenth-century Englishwomen articulated republicanism's key insight: meaningful action, political or otherwise, does and should take place outside the purview of government, in spheres that not only include women, but that women helped construct. Drawing on the works of six women writers of the period, the book examines their writings and explores the key themes and concepts that they build upon.

Katharine Gillespie teaches in the Department of English Literature at Miami University and is a pioneer in studies of seventeenth-century English women writers who participated in religious and political dissent from the Crown and established Church. Gillespie's research demonstrates the need to work across such disciplines as literature, religion, economics, and political philosophy to fully take the measure of early modern women writers' contributions to social movements and intellectual histories.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-107-14912-0 — Women Writing the English Republic, 1625–1681

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Frontmatter

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CAMBRIDGE
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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107149120

DOI: 10.1017/9781316563359

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First published 2017

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-14912-0 Hardback

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*For my mother,
Verna Snouffer Walke*

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Acknowledgments

Do we become our subject matter as we write? Do we seek out subject matter that compels us to more fully inhabit who we are? I'm not sure. But I do know that there were moments when the trauma experienced by many of the women who populate the pages of this book came perilously close to mirroring my own personal struggles, not only as I wrote but as I lived the life that encompassed the writing. And so, although it is conventional to say that this book was a labor of love – and it is true, it was – I feel obligated to confess that it was also at times a labor of anguish, brought into being through numerous acts of seeking sanctuary during a decade of turmoil and loss. Acknowledging those who helped me survive is only part of what I can and still hope to give with deep gratitude in return. My brother Brad, among many instances of fraternal kindness and concern, flew through an ice storm to spend a Christmas with me when my sons and I needed him the most. He also provided much-needed cold, sometimes brutal, clarity. As he informed me that Christmas day, spending a major holiday afternoon drinking cranberry cocktails with your brother in the only hotel bar open in DC is a sure sign that your marriage is on the rocks. After he died two years later, my mother, Verna Snouffer Walke, to whom this book is dedicated, stayed by my side every step of the way, even though, as I had lost a brother, she had lost a son. If anyone could understand at least some of the pain and challenges suffered by Englishwomen in the English Civil Wars, it is her. And yet, throughout it all, she has given me love and laughter, cats and long walks. My father, Jerry Lynn Walke, who died just before my brother, provided me with forms of combat motivation that are comprehensible perhaps only to daughters of fathers who are larger than life, with all the complexity

that entails. Cyraina Johnson-Roullier has been my Phosphorus and my Hesperus, offering light, hope, solace, understanding, guidance, humor, strength, companionship, and intellectual insight at all hours of all days and nights, even staying on the phone with me during moments when I was especially distraught, until she was sure I had fallen asleep. “No way but through” she reminded me over and over again, and she has, of course, been right.

Stephanie Theodorou-Panos has been my Oracle of Delphi, providing the wisdom and timeless mirth of both the gods and the villagers when the revelations acquired through catabasis demanded far more courage than I alone possessed. Somewhere amid a series of moonlit picnics on a back-island beach on the island of Rhodes, she brought me back to myself. Debi Walke-Hanson is my aunt, but she and her family have looked out for me and mine in ways that transcend the labels – aunt, cousin, nephew, brother-in-law – that render us ostensibly less “immediate” to one another than sister, mother, father, brother. Her enduring solidarity and spirit of adventure inform the entire enterprise. Alyssa Chase, Mary Obropta, Robert Rebein, Connie Malone, Kim Clarke, Sally Dowling, Melissa Chase, Robin Vealy, Marcela Sulak, Chris Wellin, and Tom Lax all bolstered and inspired me with their own examples as I traversed an errant path of life that included a rogue book that, like me, was born in Ohio, moved away, and came back again. I have Susan Vallade to thank for teaching me that you can in fact go home again. My first ever personal trainer, Jason Schwartz, cannot go without mention. In every aspect of my life, I will forever draw upon his refrain: “C’mon now.” In that same vein, I want to thank every yoga instructor I have ever had – from those at Tranquil Space Yoga Studio in Chevy Chase, Maryland, to those at Miami University. Namaste. Finally, every possible form of thanks goes to my sons, Jack and Neal Gillespie. Being their mother – getting to watch them invent their own lives as they have gone along – has kept me hanging around this world when my opinion of it was put to the test. They are life itself.

Colleagues know all too well that one cannot separate one’s life from one’s work, neither because of the psychic investments entangled in each nor because of the sometimes enabling, sometimes devastating impact the two can have on each other on any given day. My colleagues have constantly galvanized me, not only with their own scholarship and dedication but also by keeping me in touch with bigger questions when the vicissitudes of circumstance threatened to obscure. I was offered uncommonly generous collegiality by many in the Literature Department at

Acknowledgments

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American University. I received especially salutary support for my book project from Jonathan Loesburg, Madhavi Menon, Anita Sherman, Deborah Payne, and the late Betty Bennet. At Miami, I have been exceptionally fortunate to have received feedback from the Early Modern Studies Collective, including, over the years, Frances Dolan, Britton Harwood, Laura Mandell, Renee Baernstein, Wieste deBoer, Charles Ganelin, Anna Klosawska, Andrew Casper, Cynthia Klestinec, Kaara Peterson, James Bromley, Judith Zissner, Carla Pestana, and the late, one-of-a-kind and sorely missed Andrew Caton.

I have received invaluable support in the form of research and travel monies as well as leave time from Miami's English Department and the College of Arts and Sciences. The undergraduate and graduate students at Miami offered a bottomless wellspring of intellectual fulfillment. I am especially grateful to the students who took my courses on Milton, seventeenth-century English literature, and early modern women writers while I was writing this book. Their intelligence, goodwill, and willingness to explore made teaching an endlessly invigorating endeavor and a surprisingly stable haven.

Colleagues from around the early modern diaspora contributed vital encouragement and indispensable insight. Special mention goes to Richard Gravil, Chris Gair, Mihoko Suzuki, Joanne Wright, Sara Van den Berg, Melissa Mowry, Catharine Gray, Erin Murphy, Megan Matchinske, Vera Camden, Teresa Feroli, Sylvia Brown, and, as always, James Holstun. During the grueling final stretch of the summer of 2015, the 'later' modernist, Michael Valdez Moses, provided much-needed conversation and camaraderie. Eventually, he taught me to embrace the future rather than merely to brace myself for it.

Finally, I am grateful for the help I received from research librarians and other staff at the British Library, the University of Nottingham Special Collections, the Nottingham City Archive, Georgetown University Library, and Miami University Library. Given that Nottingham felt like the Ohio of England, it was not unfitting that two chapters' worth of material landed me in that pleasant place not just once, but twice.