

you, but I want to adopt you [laughing]" (182). York's "epilogue" is aptly entitled: "Giving Each Other the Gears, We Are Still Engaged."

Negative tenure and promotion decisions are evidence, according to York, of the deep suspicion with which humanities divisions of North American universities typically regard collaborative work, yet "any reader of this present study would soon be disabused of the notion that collaboration represents the easy way out" (188). Recently, however, "collaborative" is just as trendy a label as 'interdisciplinary' in academic circles, particularly in government-sponsored academic grant councils" (183), including SSHRC. While the university recognizes and rewards scholarly merit on an individual basis, York's search of the SSHRC website produced 81 hits for "collaborative." One of its richest grant programs is the MCRI, which aims "to promote collaborative research as the central mode of research activity." Consequently, her book concludes with a call for a review of tenure and promotion policies. For initiating this discussion, we owe Lorraine York a debt of gratitude, even if, in her determination neither to reduce the collaborative whole to merely the sum of its parts nor to essentialize women, she retreats from provocatively "lesbianizing authorship" to zany herding cats.

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Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson, eds. *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2000. Pp. 332. \$15.95 paper.

For anyone who has wanted to teach something of Margaret Cavendish's prodigious output, the difficulty has always been in making selections from her vast and varied literary corpus and in securing well-edited, affordable texts. Sara Mendelson and Sylvia Bowerbank have prepared an edition—conceptualized as a "reader"—of Cavendish's writings that will solve these problems for all but the most advanced teaching needs. In little more than 300 pages, they provide the complete texts of three of Cavendish's most discussed works—*A True Relation of my Birth, Breeding, and Life*; *The Convent of Pleasure*; and *The Description of the New World, Called the Blazing World*—a good cross-section of material from her other writings, a number of thematically-related texts by her contemporaries (including Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*), a chronology and bibliography, and an informative and engaging critical introduction. As is to be expected, the choice of

texts and editorial method are open to disagreement, but the edition works beautifully as a handle—for teaching purposes—on an important but until now largely inaccessible literary figure.

Paper Bodies is organized into three clusters of texts, each one focused on a topic that helps to situate Cavendish within a specific critical and historical context. The first cluster, “Birth, Breeding, and Self-Fashioning,” includes Cavendish’s autobiography, selections from her *CCXI Sociable Letters*, the preface to her *Orations of Divers Sorts*, and a letter of Mary Evelyn’s describing first-hand Cavendish’s self-promotional rhetoric. Together these texts build up a picture of Cavendish as a woman of her own making, someone who shaped her social and literary identity both in dialogue and in tension with contemporary ideologies. As the corresponding section of the introduction explains, this cluster is meant to complicate our understanding of Cavendish’s writing as self-reflexive, a complication that is vital to a critical reading of an author who writes almost exclusively about her own thoughts and experiences. One could imagine adding to this cluster a section from Stephen Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (which is surprisingly absent from the bibliography) to encourage some theoretical reflection on the relationship between literature and identity more generally.

The second cluster, “Gender and Serious Play,” is less effective. The core text is Cavendish’s most popular play, *The Convent of Pleasure*, accompanied by the preface to the reader from *The Worlds Olio* and selected *Female Orations* from *Orations of Divers Sorts*. The selection of materials to accompany the play, and the interpretive framework set up in the introduction, focus exclusively on Cavendish’s representation of gender politics. Although some attention is given to matters of genre, particularly in relation to Cavendish’s use of masque in the play, the emphasis in the supporting materials is on her ideas about women’s social and political identities. It is difficult, in such a setting, to approach the play in any of the other contexts in which it has recently been studied, namely as a mid-century closet drama or as a play written in the tradition of pre-Civil War commercial theatre. Selections from Cavendish’s writing about her own reading of Jacobean and Caroline dramatists (including Shakespeare), or about her reasons for writing closet as opposed to performance drama, or even complementary selections from her earliest commentators would help position the play in a broader dramatic and theatrical context. As it stands, this section really only engages the reader in the play’s gender politics, limiting its usefulness to those who would wish to teach *The Convent of Pleasure* in the history of early modern drama.

In the third cluster, Mendelson and Bowerbank have really hit the mark: “Women and the New Science” pairs complete texts of Cavendish’s much-studied utopian fiction *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* with Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis*, and includes in the supplementary materials several of Cavendish’s poems on scientific subjects, selected laudatory letters about her philosophical opinions from the posthumously published *Letters and Poems in Honour of... Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle*, and Aphra Behn’s preface to her translation of Fontenelle’s *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*. There is a wealth of material here not only for teaching Cavendish in the context of seventeenth-century scientific culture, but for teaching the gendered nature of scientific discourse in a more general sense. The focus on new-world writing will also be useful in courses treating the literature of discovery, as well as courses in science fiction, fantasy writing, and the history of science. Serving as it will such a variety of pedagogical needs, this third cluster seems to me a model of the intertextual dialogue that a selective edition of this kind can accomplish.

Bowerbank and Mendelson are not explicit about their intended audience, but their editorial methodology—a verbatim reproduction of unspecified “primary printed sources”—will preclude this becoming in any way an authoritative text. This is not an outright criticism, though, for the simple transcription from one copy of Cavendish’s works produces a clean and accessible text while preserving some of her stylistic and technical idiosyncrasies. And the transcriptions are practically flawless. But without any information about Cavendish’s printers, about the (non-)existence of press variants, about the authorial manuscript corrections and other kinds of textual manipulations Cavendish exercised on selected printed copies of her works, students will be unable to read “through” this edition to anything like a textual history. One could argue that undergraduate students needn’t engage in such complexities, but in Cavendish’s case what has been obscured is vital to her uniqueness as a woman writer of the seventeenth century: her well-developed sense of her works *as* texts, and her critics’ consequent scorn for her repeated and unabashed incursions into the domain of *print*. Ironically, Cavendish’s sensitivity to the workings of print culture is alluded to in the very title of this collection, “paper bodies” being her phrase for the manuscripts she burned as soon as her works were securely—and in her mind more permanently—embodied in print. *Paper Bodies* doesn’t follow through on these important facets of Cavendish’s work, but in every other respect is an informative and imaginative edition.

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