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# “Virtue’s Commonwealth”: Gendering the Royalist Cultural Rebellion in the English Interregnum (1649-1660)

Catherine COUSSENS<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Historians and literary critics have acknowledged the ways in which royalism during the English civil war period came to be associated with the “feminisation” of Stuart court culture, and of the king’s cause as a whole. However, they have failed to attend adequately to the deliberate focus on women and female cultural authority within the literature associated with the “royalist cultural rebellion” (the movement that sought to preserve and recall the ethos and identity of the banished Stuart court). While male poets adopted a self-mocking tone when advertising their artistic dependence on female patrons, alluding self-consciously to their own “feminised” retirement, women’s active role in commissioning, preserving, disseminating and composing royalist literature suggests that their cultural importance was enhanced by the conditions of the Interregnum. Both royalist and parliamentary propagandists exploited anti-feminist satire to condemn what they saw as illegitimate forms of government. However, royalist traditionalists overtly connected elite royalist women with the ethos and situation of the eclipsed Stuart monarchy, and sought to address a burgeoning female readership by stressing women’s advantages under the Crown. Royalist women in turn responded to these cultural constructions of royalism and femininity, creating powerful authorial identities that would remain potent after the Restoration in 1660.

**Key words:** *royalism, cultural rebellion, retirement, femininity, Social status, preservation*

## 1. Gendering Royalism after 1649

In 1649 King Charles I lost his fight against his Parliament’s armies, and subsequently his life on the scaffold outside his famous Banqueting House at Whitehall.

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From this date until the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, the royalist movement went underground, with royalists articulating a range of responses to the new regimes (the rule of the Army, the Commonwealth government and, from 1653, Oliver Cromwell's Protectoral government) from quiet resignation to defiant resistance. Charles I's long captivity, his capricious attempts to save himself by forming unstable and superficial political alliances, and his notorious dependence on his queen, Henrietta Maria, stimulated his enemies to mock his political and personal emasculation: for example, in *Eikonoklastes* (1650), John Milton dismissed the king as "govern'd by a Woman" (Potter 183).

The prominence of women within the royal courts (both before 1642 and during the first Civil War, when the court decamped to Oxford), and within the artistic culture associated with the Stuarts, encouraged the king's opponents to ridicule the royalists' lack of masculine vigour. For these commentators, the 'woman-pleasing' literary enterprises associated with the Caroline courtiers reflected the effeminacy and moral weakness of the monarch, enslaved by his desire for his French Catholic queen. In a satire written in 1645, *The Great Assises Holden in Parnassus*, the parliamentary poet, George Wither, suggested that the feminocentric atmosphere of the Caroline court was a phenomenon that could now be ridiculed rather than feared:

...the gentle Mr. Cary [Thomas Carew] did refuse,  
Who pleas'd faire Ladies with his courtly muse:  
He said, that he by his luxurious penne  
Deserv'd had better the Trophonian Denne,  
Then many now which stood to be arraign'd,  
For he the Thespian Fountaine had distain'd,  
With foule conceits, and made their waters bright,  
Imoure, like those of the Hermaphrodite,  
He said, that he in verse more loose had bin,  
Then old Chaerephanes, or Aretine,  
In obscaene portraitures: and that this fellow  
In Helicon had reard the first Burdello,  
That he had chang'd the chaste Castalian spring,  
Into a Carian Well, whose waters bring  
Effeminate desires, and thoughts uncleane,  
To minds that earst were pure, and most serene. (Dunlap, *The Poems of Thomas Carew* xlviii)

For the king's enemies the royalists' military failures, and the subsequent series of laws designed to drive royalists out of public life and into forms of retirement and domestic confinement, reinforced the associations between royalism and effeminacy. After the execution of Charles I, royalist literary propaganda shifted its emphasis from violent military propaganda to an exploration of the political and artistic implications of the 'retired life'. The Restoration author, Thomas Fuller, implied that just as the royalists of the 1640s and 1650s became declassed, their poetry became de-gendered. Therefore, while the royalist poet, John Cleveland, might be celebrated for the "masculinity" of his verse, the other cavalier poets, "indeavouring to imitate his Masculine Stile, could never go beyond the *Hermaphrodite*, still betraying the weaker Sex in their deficient conceits" (Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*: 135-36). Fuller went further, to suggest that male royalists had temporarily compromised their masculinity by committing themselves to a passive literary, as well as political, response to defeat:

Be it imputed to the Royal party, at that juncture of time generally in restraint, so that their fancies may seem in some sort to sympathize with the confining of their person, and both in due season may be enlarged. (Fuller 135-36)

Some male writers (albeit with coy irony) allowed the comparison between the "private", domestic voice of the de-politicized male, who was legally forced to remain 'within bounds', and that of the traditionally domesticated upper class female. The manuscript enterprises undertaken by male royalist writers during the Interregnum frequently demonstrate an ironic engagement with this perception. Dedicating his verse to prominent royalist women exiles, the Catholic royalist poet, Patrick Cary, deliberately stresses the "trivial" and recreational nature of his projects, entitling one autograph manuscript volume of verse composed in 1651: *Poems: Trivial Poems and Triolets. Written in obedience to Mrs Tomkin's Commands*. Another of Cary's exilic manuscripts, *Ballades dedicated to the Lady Victoria Uvedale* (1652-3), consisting mainly of simple, sometimes bawdy lyrics on amatory themes, bears the inscription: "Ballades composed, and transcribed by John-Patricke Carey, when Hee had little else to doe" (Leeds University Library, Brotherton Collection, MS Lt 68). Royalist writers' self-identification with women's cultural and material agency was rooted in the court networks within which women had been active before the civil wars. Another Catholic royalist exile, Richard Crashaw, dedicated his collection of verses, *Carmen Deo Nostro* (Paris, 1652) to Susanna Feilding, Countess of Denbigh, one of Queen Henrietta Maria's closest attendants (Gardner 215-17).

Modern historians and literary critics have tended to "read" the "feminisation" of Interregnum royalist culture as an unintended by-product of the disempowerment of the

king. Lois Potter has suggested that while iconic royalist texts such as *Eikon Basilike* ('the image of the king', a testament apparently written by the king during his captivity on the Isle of Wight, but probably authored by John Gauden), certainly gained sympathy for the royalist cause, specifically by drawing a parallel between the captive king and the passively suffering Christ, they simultaneously reinforced public perceptions of a powerless, and by association feminised, monarchy, creating tensions within royalist discourse (Potter 208-11). James Loxley has suggested that, while at the beginning of the wars the royalist party deliberately promoted a masculine military ideal to counter accusations of courtly effiteness, the shift in royalist modes of expression after 1649 from active military engagement ('the drawn sword') to passive and covert forms of resistance could be associated with cultural assumptions about royalism and femaleness (Loxley 75-6). Despite acknowledging the process of the 'gendering' of royalism in the Interregnum, however, critics have failed to attend adequately to royalist writers' positive and strategic exploitation of the connections between royalism and certain kinds of female cultural authority. In fact, women as readers, writers and cultural actors became central to the royalist project of restoring and rehabilitating the idea of the monarchy within the national memory. Furthermore, these associations in turn fostered women's own authorial assertiveness, much as Parliament's early strategic focus on women's grievances under the Crown in turn fostered verbal and literary assertiveness amongst its own female supporters.

As Timothy Raylor has emphasised, royalist literary culture was imported into the medium of popular print from the intimate manuscript coterie associated with the court, university and inns of court (Raylor 188-90). With the royalists' gradual exclusion from these traditionally male-dominated institutions, and the formation of exiled royalist communities on the continent, a space opened up for women to adopt a more assertive role in the production and dissemination of royalist literary culture. Women's role in responding to and preserving testaments to the royalist cultural rebellion is demonstrated by a playful rhyming inscription at the back of Patrick Cary's *Ballades* by a later female reader: "Mary Harper is my name/ and wits my pen's Ricorse..." (12 March 1660).

Elite women who remained in England were also implicated in preserving literary testaments of the "royalist cultural rebellion". The discovery of two manuscript copies of Abraham Cowley's unpublished royalist epic, *The Civil War*, composed during the first Civil War, amongst the private papers of Sarah, Lady Cowper, can be connected to women's active agency in assisting the survival of loyalist literary culture. In 1679 the publisher, Langley Curtis, brought out a version of the first book of *The Civil War*,

which he had found in manuscript. The two subsequent books remained undiscovered until the twentieth century, when they were found copied into Sarah Cowper's commonplace books (personal manuscript compilations of poetry and other material). Sarah Cowper has added an inscription to one of these notebooks: "If in the Dayes of my Youth, I had not diverted my Thoughts with such stuff as this Book Contains; the unhappy Accidents of my Life, had been more than enough to ha' made me Madd" (Hertford County Record Office, Panshanger MS D/EP/F.37; Pritchard 3-8). Sarah Cowper's preservation of the text is significant, since *The Civil War* was suppressed by Cowley in the wake of royalist defeat, and was not included in the published editions of his poetry.<sup>1</sup>

Women also participated in the print publication of literary texts which recalled and celebrated Stuart court culture. Frances, Countess of Dorset, has been suggested as the original force behind the publication of Sir John Suckling's poetry in the 1640s. Lady Dorset had boasted of her friendship with Suckling, and subsequently collected and preserved his poetry. The royalist publisher, Humphrey Moseley, advertised this collection, *Fragmenta Aurea* (or 'golden pieces') in 1646, as "published by a Friend to perpetuate [Suckling's] memory" (Clayton xxxix-xl, lxxxiii-lxxxv).

## 2. Women in the Conservative Propaganda of the Interregnum

The architects of the royalist cultural rebellion during the civil wars and Interregnum deliberately drew upon the 'cavalier' literary traditions which had long celebrated women's status and cultural activities. However, within the more serious printed texts which sought to reinscribe the centrality of the monarchy within the national memory, conceptions of elite women's cultural authority were also central. Royalist authors drew on the history of the Stuart regime to construct a highly selective form of 'feminism' which consistently celebrated royalist women in order to emphasise the importance of tradition, order and hierarchy. Therefore, the comic condemnation of "upstart" parliamentary women in royalist propaganda can be connected to a serious preoccupation with notions of "sacrilege", and in particular, the usurpation of the symbolic and physical expressions of the privileges of the monarchy and aristocracy. In August, the royalist newsbook *Mercurius Aulicus* reported that the Tower of London was occupied by the "pretended" Mayor of London and his family: "And certainly it was an Order full of health and safety, not only to the City, but the Common-wealth. For Mistris Majoresse could not choose but be much offended, that Mistris Venn should govern in the Castle of Windsor, and she not have dominion in a Palace of as great esteeme..." (*Mercurius Aulicus* 22 August 1643, 34: 460). Similarly, the mock-

dialogue between "Queen Fairfax" and "Madam Cromwell", which forms the post-script to the anti-Parliament satire, *The Cuckoo's-nest at Westminster* (1648) anticipates the displacement and debasement not only of the king, but of the entire royal line, by dramatising Oliver Cromwell's wife and the wife of Parliament's Lord Fairfax in an unseemly squabble for the Crown. This text suggests that Parliament has unwittingly brought up the "cuckoos" (the Army, represented by Cromwell) who will destroy it. Since Madam Cromwell was the daughter of a city brewer, and Lady Fairfax a member of the landed gentry, the dialogue also represents a social and political wrangle between the radical Army and the more traditional Parliament on the eve of the triumph of the former and the abolition of the monarchy. For royalist critics, therefore, anger at the "lower sort's" usurpation of the privileges of the nobility legitimised anti-feminist attacks on prominent parliamentary women. However, noblewomen associated with the old court culture also became targets for political humorists: since the draconian censorship laws imposed by Charles I had collapsed, the elite could be vilified openly in print. Henry Nevile's anti-feminist satire, *Newes from the Newe Exchange* (1649) describes a world turned upside down within which women are in the ascendant. The revolutionary events of 1648/9 (the collapse of the monarchy and the ascendancy of army radicalism over moderates and Presbyterians in Parliament) are associated with women's revolt against male government. Therefore, the confined wife, condemned to domestic oblivion, is equated with the English subject languishing under the oppressive Stuart regime:

There was a time in England, when men wore the Breeches, and debar'd women of their Liberty; which brought many grievances and oppressions upon the weaker vessels, for, they were constrained to converse only with their homes and closets, and now and then with the Gentleman-usher, or the Footman (when they could catch him) for variety. (1)

Within the text, noblewomen's appropriation of sexual freedom is associated with political rebellion:

...the Ladies Rampant of the times, in their last Parliament, knowing themselves to be a part of the free people of this Nation, unanimously resolved to assert their own freedoms; and casting off the intolerable yoke of the Lords and Husbands, have voted themselves the Supreme Authority both at home and abroad, and settled themselves in the posture of a Free-State, as may appeare by their Practices. (2)

Here, the 'Exchange' represents an arena in which sexual and political transactions have become blurred, and elite women have become grotesquely visible. These kinds of comic anti-feminist satires are politically ambivalent, representing both critiques of the repressive conservatism associated with Charles I's 'Personal Rule' (the eleven years during which he ruled without the aid of Parliament), and, conversely, the revolutionary impulses that had displaced traditional social and gender hierarchies during the civil wars. The text is noteworthy for its specific naming of a number of prominent aristocratic women who had been active at court before the war, but the significance of the women is not obvious. The connection of two of them, the Countesses of Kent and Exeter, with love-intrigues, may allude to their pre-war court careers, especially since the love poems of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, addressed to these ladies and others, were fairly well-known. Another, the Countess of Carlisle, was known as a "double agent", allying herself with both royalists and parliamentarians. The mockery of women's military and sexual assertiveness may also be associated with Parliament's fear that informal social gatherings in London could act as a mask for political organisation, especially during the unstable period after the regicide and abolition of the monarchy, when royalist conspiracies and risings were especially feared.

While the examples above can be connected to the old "Querelle des Femmes" tradition, brought into the service of the civil war pamphlet wars, the indignant responses to Nevile's text demonstrate the importance royalists attributed to the protection elite women had enjoyed under the Crown. *New News from the Old Exchange: or, The Commonwealth of Vertuous Laides* [sic], published soon after the regicide, on 16 March 1649, emphasises traditionalists' perceptions of the relationship between respect for women's social status under the "old" order and the collapse of the codes of deference by which the nobility had formerly been protected. The author reads Nevile's text as a sign of the inversion of social and sexual decorum: "Good God! what an unexpected exchange of all things doe we live to see? Time was when an honourable and strict account was made after all Varlots, as cast but the least Odium or Opprobrium upon any noble person" (2). The author promotes the ultra-conservative doctrine that social status is a sign of inner nobility, just as in divine right theory, the monarch is essentially "chosen" by God. The slandered noblewoman, like the dethroned king, represents a powerful, if passive, response to criticism, which "can no way penetrate" her superior status, which will, "like the Radiant Sun" obscured by cloud, inevitably reassert itself. Like the monarch, the aristocratic lady is an illegitimate subject for political critique, since she is attributed with a transcendent, visible virtue that bypasses the mundane perceptions of her detractors and, like the virtue of the monarch, has no need for self-justification or self-assertion.



The author identifies the personal reputations of individual noblewomen with the archival foundation of patriarchal social organisation as a whole, associating Nevile's social and sexual stigmatisation of noblewomen with the Commonwealth government's deliberate attempts to undermine the rights of hereditary privilege. The libeller has 'bastardized' his subjects, by annihilating the honours achieved not only by themselves, but by (and for) their ancestors and descendants. The author develops this idea further by placing noblewomen's virtuous agency at the centre of royalist conceptions of Christian doctrine. The libeller's project is described as "hellish", and his New Exchange "diabolical", so that his corruption of the social order is associated with Satan's deliberate corruption of man. The author asserts that "I write this Old Exchange" in order to restore 'good' Christian order, since Satan corrupted a world which was originally created perfect (7-8). The old social and political order associated with monarchy and decorum is therefore depicted as a pre-lapsarian world, within which virtue preceded evil, as nobility naturally precedes the "lower sort".

Royalist propagandists' chivalrous defenses of women accord easily with the project of promoting the conservative and hierarchical doctrine of patriarchalism, and the construction of a backward-looking royalist cultural identity. However, these conservative texts also placed women at the centre of the newly democratic arena of popular print. Ironically, while the chivalrous defender of these noblewomen expresses an almost superstitious anxiety about the consequences of publishing the names of great ladies in the pamphlet literature of the civil wars (an "unheard-of liberty"), his text reinforces women's presence within the public sphere, drawing attention to their new importance as cultural and political actors.

Matthew Carter's *Honor Redivivus or An analysis of Honor and Armoury* (1655) is also noteworthy for drawing attention to the potential for women within a monarchy to achieve personal prestige and advancement, while focusing attention on a growing Interregnum female readership. In making the mysteries of heraldry and the intricate structure of the English nobility accessible to those who were formerly excluded from such knowledge, Carter both promotes and adapts "high" culture for the purposes of the royalist cultural rebellion. The Interregnum saw a growing hunger for "etiquette" literature, which promoted the cultural ideals of the submerged court and tapped into the public's increasing nostalgia for the old order. Carter's text seeks to reverse the social transformation associated with the Protectorate by recovering the submerged ethos of the complex systems that once upheld monarchic and aristocratic privilege: "The unhappy causes of the present neglect of this most noble knowledge, are of so high

nature, as will not endure to be named...In this declining condition of Honor, nothing is more requisite then the means of its preservation” (sig. A3r).

By including a separate chapter dealing with women’s rights and privileges under monarchic government, Carter places women at the centre of his project to restore the monarchy within England’s cultural and political memory. He stresses that hereditary monarchy is especially significant for women, since it is one form of government in which women have been able to participate on equal terms with men:

This power, dignity, and state hath been enjoyed by the female sex, as heirs descending by the common right of Inheritance...Besides, for an addition to the honor of a King, there is the same state allowed to a Queen, during the life of her husband, as to a Queen absolute almost, and is allowed a Crown. (67-68)

Carter acknowledges the masculine bias inherent in patriarchy (specifically, the mirroring of the notion of prerogative government within the family, with the husband/father as ‘absolute’ governor, the law of primogeniture and the rules of social precedence). However, he takes pains to cite ways in which women could achieve special forms of advancement under monarchy: “although they are not allowed to sit in Parliament, [they] doe enjoy almost all privileges due to the other sex”. Carter lists positive aspects of elite women’s experience under the monarchy, such as the right to be ennobled in their own right, to inherit property, and occasionally, the “high” offices of the kingdom, should no male heir be available (74-77). Carter therefore emphasises that elite women may acquire parallel benefits to men under a monarchic government. The number of women who could benefit from this system had always been limited to a narrow elite, and the chapter dedicated to women represents a minor aspect of the text’s agenda. However, its inclusion suggests a deliberate attempt to recall the conspicuousness of women within the networks of courtly privilege dominating social and cultural life before the civil wars, as well as the royalist party’s desire to acknowledge a growing female readership receptive to conservative and nostalgic discourses.

### **3. Women Writers and the Royalist Cultural Rebellion**

As I have already suggested, women themselves responded to royalist writers’ strategy of placing feminine decorum at the centre of their nostalgic project. The ambitious manuscript volume of poetry composed by Lady Hester Ley Pulter between 1645 and 1670 demonstrates her deliberate desire to present her poetry as a monument to both the monarchy and her own social identity. Pulter deliberately alludes to her gendered status, presenting herself as an exemplar of virtuous female forbearance and

retirement, and thereby aligning herself with the dispossessed monarchy and its marginalised supporters. Throughout the text, she alludes to her sense of isolation, failing strength and domestic confinement. However, she also affirms her active commitment to royalism by celebrating her role as representative of the 'old order' in the classless Interregnum. Hester Pulter was strongly connected to the Stuart monarchy's system of reward and favour: her father, James Ley, first Earl of Marlborough (1550-1629) had been a favourite of James I, and was knighted in 1603. He possessed a string of important legal offices, and was specifically implicated in James I's policies in Ireland, becoming Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland in 1604, and a Commissioner of the Great Seal at Dublin in 1605. By 1621 he had become a baronet, and Lord Chief Justice. His marriage to this niece of King James's favourite, the Duke of Buckingham, assisted his rise under the Stuarts (Stephen and Lee 33: 205-07).

Throughout Pulter's verse, the feminine and the courtly function as ideals of virtue and order to oppose the political corruption and chaos associated with the Commonwealth and Protectorate. In recalling courtly lyrics and iconography, Hester Pulter's political poems draw attention to the speaker's noble status, as well as the Parliament's sacrilegious treatment of the monarchy. Pulter also uses her verse to affirm and inscribe the ancient truths of the Anglican Church, deliberately associating her work, through careful allusion and parallels, with that of the authors of other "sacred" Anglican verse, such as George Herbert, Robert Herrick, Henry King and Henry Vaughan. Her elegy, 'On the Horrid Murther of that incomparable Prince, King Charles the ffirst' appears to be a response to Henry King's 'Elegy upon the most Incomparable King Charls the First', in which King claims that "Our Story...through time's vast Kalendar/Must stand without Example or Repair" (Raylor 189-90). Although King's poem was not published until much later, like Cowley's *Civil War* it is likely to have been widely circulated in manuscript amongst the royalist community. Pulter's elegy parallels her own 'private' and circumscribed poetic voice with the silencing of the king. She strategically distances herself from the 'public' grief of the common people, configuring her poetic persona within the terms of the monarch's remoteness – like him, she is above and beyond the people:

Let none presume to weep tears are to weak  
Such an unparreld loss as this to speak  
Poor village Girles doe soe express their grief  
And in that sad expression find relief  
When such a Prince in such a manner Dies  
Let us (ay mee) noe more drop teares but Eyes  
Nor let none dare to sigh or strike their breast

To shew a grief that soe transcends the rest  
 Plebeians soe each vulgar loss deplore  
 Wee doe too little if wee doe noe more  
 When such a king in such a manner dies  
 Let us suspire our soules, weep out o:r eyes (*Poems Breath'd Forth by the Noble  
 Hadassus*, Leeds Brotherton Collection, MS Lt q 32, f. 34r)

In constructing a specifically aristocratic and gendered response, by placing herself above the “poor village girls”, and stressing her own feminine humility and silence, the poet inscribes the uniqueness of both the tragedy and her private identity as an aristocratic woman.

Furthermore, by inscribing herself “the noble Hadassus” on the title page of her work, Hester Pulter also demonstrates her desire to construct a potent, and specifically gendered literary and political disguise. The name alludes to her own identity (‘Hester’ is a derivative of ‘Esther’), and also that of the Old Testament’s Queen Esther. In *The Book of Esther*, Queen Esther fights the oppression of her people, the Jews, by disguising her religion and identity when she is commanded to join the king in his palace. She works covertly to expose the corruption of the king’s evil counsellors and rescue her family and people from tyranny. The name “Hadassus” refers to the spiritually purified and empowered identity adopted by Esther once she reveals her true identity. Since Esther succeeded in restoring good government by using her wit and tact, the Esther paradigm represented a fruitful and flexible model of virtuous female agency for both royalist and anti-royalist commentators. Queen Henrietta Maria had twice been urged by the Pope to become the ‘Esther’ of her people, the Roman Catholics in England.<sup>2</sup> Esther had also been cited by radical women seeking to critique first the Stuart regime, and later, the Commonwealth and Protectoral governments (for example, in the women’s petition presented to Parliament on behalf of John Lilbourne in 1653, *The humble Representation of divers afflicted Women-Petitioners*). Hester Pulter recuperates the Esther topos for royalist poets, to compensate for their experience of marginalisation and oppression, and their ostensible reconciliation to the status quo (their passive retirement) during the Interregnum.

An awareness of women’s importance within the royalist cultural rebellion also informs women’s published writing. After the Restoration, the royalist noblewoman, Margaret Cavendish, suggests that the positive ‘gendering’ of royalist discourse has given her confidence to become her family’s historian and biographer. Towards the end of *Sociable Letters* (1664), one character suggests that, since male learning and prestige has failed to recover from being despised and banished in the Interregnum, a space has

been created which may be filled by a new kind of public historian. Cavendish was preparing the reading public for her published biography of her husband, the royalist general, William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle. She asserts that the civil wars have taught that personal experience and loyalty should be prioritised over conventional scholarly credentials. Therefore, in both *Sociable Letters* and her subsequent biography of Newcastle, *The Life of...William Cavendish, Duke, Marquess, and Earl of Newcastle* (1667), she justifies her plan to write the life of her husband (an apparently subversive act for a woman), by suggesting that women writers may create a more immediate, authentic, and personal version of "history" (CCXI *Sociable Letters* 351; *The Life of...William Cavendish*, Cr-Dv).

Ros Ballaster has referred to the "paradoxical limbo in which aristocratic women with royalist sympathies found themselves during the Interregnum. As royalists they wished to see the 'restoration' of an aristocratic culture as the centre of power; yet, as women they had experienced new agency and power in the Commonwealth years" (Ballaster 274). Like many critics of seventeenth-century women's writing, Ballaster interprets the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 as a return to cultural and political values that marginalised women. However, throughout the royalist cultural rebellion, male and female authors appear to have perceived the relationship between women's cultural meaning, literary practice and status as essentially coherent and positive. Royalist women came to stand for the survival and resilience of court culture during the Interregnum, maintaining conservative ideals that would be recovered at the Restoration. Moreover, men's literary celebrations of, and collaborations with, women suggest that, rather than resenting the increasing parity of experience between men and women, they frequently both relied on women's support, and inscribed women's cultural presence within the heart of royalist resistance.

## NOTES

1. Cowley had served as secretary to Queen Henrietta Maria at the French court in exile. On his return to England in 1654 he was imprisoned by Cromwell's government. In the preface to the 1656 edition of his collected verse he expressed a conciliatory attitude towards the Protectoral government, stating that he had destroyed his poem, *The Civil War*, in the spirit of reconciliation. Cowley's betrayal of his royalist principles angered Prince Charles and his chief advisor, Edward Hyde, and this preface was suppressed by Cowley in post-Restoration editions of his verse.
2. In 1624, before her marriage to King Charles, and then in 1642, on her request for financial aid for the king at the beginning of the first Civil War (*Dictionary of National Biography*, 25 (1891): 429-36).

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