Women Editing/Editing Women
Women Editing/Editing Women: Early Modern Women Writers and the New Textualism

Edited by

Ann Hollinshead Hurley and Chanita Goodblatt
To my mother: Jean Wells Hollinshead, M.D.

Ann

To my grandmothers: Devorah-Rivkah Lichtenshtein Goodblatt
and Devorah Fineroff Brown

Chanita
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Preface

Ann Hurley and Chanita Goodblatt

This book began as a problem: the problem of editing early modern women writers for whom there was little biographical data. As all of us who work in this period well know, the records of early modern women’s daily lives, relative to those of their male counterparts, are scant, and records of their intellectual and emotional lives are even rarer. Consequently, editing the works of early modern women is particularly challenging, given that the standard format of “works and life” is problematical from the start.

A second problem, related but slightly different, also exists. Although we know that there were women who edited, we know little about them as well. Often in the early modern period, their activities that we now describe as editing were subsumed under other categories, as widows running a husband’s printing business, for example, and thus relying on his name to carry on the endeavor. Later in the centuries the work of women editors continued to be carried on either in tandem with a male editor or, again, as completing work that would otherwise have been discontinued after he died. Because women were denied academic appointments until late in the 19th century, or because when they did hold these appointments, they were forced out of them if they married, they lacked the status of male editors even when they were essentially doing the same work. This kind of forced obscurity makes it difficult to trace their influence and their contributions.

Problems do have solutions, however, and one such solution provides the context for a set of essays in this volume that traces the history of the editing practice known as “the new textualism.” Rather than emphasizing an author’s life as a context for editing her manuscript or providing arguments for authorial intention, the new textualism focuses on the material properties of the manuscript or book, its print or performance history, and records of its dissemination. At the same time, the new textualism also seeks to retrieve the sociology of texts; that is, the culture in which they were originally situated, which provides a different kind of agency behind the text. By emphasizing the social, political, economic, class, gender and cultural positioning of a text, this approach resituates its
author as only one among the many ways through which a text is constituted as it interacts with its social and cultural locations. Authorial agency, the new textualism argues, is diffused, and recognition of this fact gives us a fuller picture of the origins and directions of a given text.

Thus what our whole collection of essays seeks to provide is a fusion of the research field of retrieving early modern women writers with the practices of new textualist editing. The first set of essays has been selected as seminal in the field of editing from a new textualist position. They include essays that made the original arguments for the necessity for a new approach to editing women: those by Josephine Roberts, Suzanne Gossett and Gary Waller. They also include representative essays that establish the parameters of this new approach and provide a detailed overview of it: by Jerome McGann and Leah Marcus, respectively. Finally, they include two essays, by Wendy Wall and Zachery Lesser, that apply new textualist methods to topics other than the works of single authors. These two essays thus provide illustrative examples of what can be achieved in the field of editing when this new approach to texts is put into practice.

In some obvious ways, and particularly with reference to the early modern period, our fusion of the research field of early modern women writers with the editing field of the new textualism thus makes sense. Again, the women writers of that period, unless they were unusually assertive members of the aristocracy, led such anonymous lives that often nothing is known of them other than a name. Thus editorial practices that accentuate resources other than those that are authorial based are methodologically useful. Equally pertinently, the conventional binary mode of looking at literary production as an engagement between author and reader is now giving way to a third area of textual agency—editing. Although our focus here is on editing women, quite obviously, we are also arguing for an awareness of the greater agency of the editor, since editors along with authors and readers are also responsible for the ways in which we receive texts. Hence, while the concerns of this collection are addressed to one particular period, the early modern, its approach is not limited to that one period, but can be extended to all areas of editing that concern women. Lastly, too frequently essays focused on women can be too narrowly focused on gender issues and become a little like laments about victimization. We see this collection as a departure point from this phase of thinking to a series of meditations on what the linking of women and editing can add to current scholarship on our understanding of the nature of the reception of texts and the power of the written word. Thus we hope that our collection will open the door to new and productive
Our collection of essays begins, most appropriately, with a retrospective look by Betty Travitsky and Anne Prescott, entitled "Studying and Editing Early Modern Englishwomen." Having been general editors of the Ashgate Press series of early modern texts (by or concerning women) as well as co-editing the anthology *Female and Male Voices in Early Modern England*, they build on their ongoing professional and scholarly relationship to provide a fascinating window into the development of the new scholarship on women. The interweaving of their respective personal and scholarly journeys from the late 1960s onwards reverberates with the revelations—the "coming to my senses"—of a generation of scholars in tension with the prevailing schema of canons, conventions and agendas. Taking as their goal the "sounding [of] silent voices," Travitsky and Prescott do a valuable service in reminding us of the challenges in the editorial reconceiving of the literary text written by early modern women, as well as the varied circumstances of its creation and dissemination.

The first set of essays, that group that provides context for the thinking of the second set, is led by “Editing the Women Writers of Early Modern England,” by Josephine Roberts. Her essay is one of the first to point out the usefulness of the social history of the text as a corrective to the assumption that because we could not initially locate women's lives, we were thus rather circumscribed in retrieving and editing their work. She argues here that “the social history of women’s writing is often crucial to its interpretation” and summarizes some of the editions then in press that use that approach. While at the time that she was writing (not so very long ago, in the 1990s) the process of preparing scholarly editions of women’s writing was, as she acknowledges, “only at a beginning stage” nonetheless, the series of questions she raises and the particular editions that she cites to substantiate the argument she is making, make this essay a particularly provocative starting point for any number of discussions on the related topics of women writers and editing.

Suzanne Gossett’s essay, “Why Should a Woman Edit a Man,” is notable for her discussion of the “significant differences” that editing done by women editors can make. At the same time, however, she points out how an earlier generation of women editors not only edited texts by men but also edited texts like men. That is, starting from the, possibly unconscious, assumptions that there were no “women” editors other than themselves, they often commissioned only men to edit volumes in a series over which they themselves were the general editors. Gossett, like other
writers in our collection, calls attention to the areas in which the gender of a particular editor might make a difference. Her essay concludes with a series of suggestive examples of such differences and with the insightful point that most frequently these differences are not necessarily corrections but important additions to our understanding of particular texts.

Gary Waller’s discussion of a “Gendered Reading” of Mary Sidney’s works also engages the question of male vs. female editing, but from the point of view of the man editing the works of a woman. He argues that there are few studies, which take sufficient notice of how a gender-specific awareness of the production of Sidney’s writing, coupled with a similar awareness of the gender-specific biases of her readers, work together to construct the meaning of her texts. “Both text and readers are situated within history,” he stresses, and both are in turn “appropriations from the general and literary ideology” of their respective societies and ideologies. We can “avoid the essentialism” of reading “as a man” or “as a woman,” he concludes, not through a formalist suppression of that essentialism, but only by acknowledging that gender, like the larger ideology of which it is a part, has also “produced what we are as readers.”

The essay by Jerome McGann, “The Monk and the Giants: Textual and Bibliographical Studies and the Interpretation of Literary Works,” was selected from his many works as the one most frequently cited in discussions of McGann’s role in establishing what has come to be called the “new textualism.” Here he provides an extensive review of the work of the previous generation of editors that the new textualists to some extent position themselves against, while at the same time making a strong case for the point that textual and bibliographical studies are essential to literary interpretation. While that point may no longer be as radical as it seemed to the earlier generation, McGann’s careful documentation of how that revision in thinking came about is the essential foundation to any study of contemporary editing. As he argues in his conclusion, “the rich analytic resources of textual and bibliographical analysis” are potentially fruitful for literary criticism and are only waiting to be used. That so many of our essays here begin by citing McGann makes it clear that this generation of editing scholars have taken up his challenge.

Leah Marcus’s essay on “Textual Scholarship” is also essential to our understanding of the development and potential in the “new textualism.” Here she states explicitly the fundamental premise of that approach to editing, that “textual scholarship is itself a form of interpretation,” a premise that provides the departure point for all of the essays in this collection. Her essay complements McGann’s in its careful explication of the new textualism and of the recent effort, led by McGann and Donald
McKenzie, to rehistoricize editorial practices. Her essay adds to McGann’s in her discussion of the ways in which feminist scholarship has interacted with such editorial practices, and she also provides a discussion of the wide array of textual presentations, from facsimiles to hypertext, that are now available to readers. Her survey of how electronic influences have shaped our editing of literary texts is also a helpful contribution to any discussion of current aspects of editing.

The last two essays in the first section of our collection, those by Wendy Wall and Zachary Lesser, are included as persuasive and detailed examples of new textualist approaches in which a reader’s attention is directed toward the production and dissemination of literary texts rather than to the lives of authors or authorial intentions. Wall, for example, in her chapter titled “To Be ‘a Man in Print,,” looks at early modern conceptions of authorship as they emerged from the social controversies surrounding print. More specifically, she looks at the numerous prefaces, dedications and commendatory poems of the period to see how the developing concept of authorship became “masculinized,” noting how specific genres, strategies, and gestures combined to produce a sense of authorship that was not inevitably male but became so. In calling our attention to the social construction of print, she points to many of the same conditions of contingency, historicity and instability that new textualist editing practices also acknowledge and attempt to come to terms with.

Zachery Lesser, in his essay, “From Text to Book,” also widens the frame of our thinking about the intersection of editors and literary texts by looking at the publishers, rather than authors, of early modern drama. He argues that these publishers, in thinking about plays as commodities, may have changed our thinking about the ways in which we read these plays. His essay, the opening chapter of his book on the “politics” of publishing early modern drama, thus extends our frame of reference to the awareness that publication is not simply a neutral mode of textual transmission but that techniques of presentation and marketing also influenced the reading of these texts by contemporaries and, eventually, by ourselves. Hence he too, like Wendy Wall, enlarges our field of reference beyond the familiar author-reader transmission to include editorial decisions of a wide variety of kinds and effects.

The next set of essays begins with two essays that turn their respective attention to the issues of editing texts by unpublished and/or anonymous early modern women. In their essay, "Editing Perdita," Jonathan Gibson and Gillian Wright take care to set out the structure and content of their anthology, Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Poetry. Each of their fourteen sections is based on a single manuscript by a named woman poet,
providing an extensive selection of poems as well as both textual and explanatory notes. The authors explain that this organization integrates feminist and bibliographical imperatives, engaging as well with two principal trends of modern editorial theory: the author-centered approach of the "new bibliography" (proposed by Greg and Bowers) and McGann's "social approach." Finally, Gibson and Wright provide an intriguing look at how their anthology adumbrates the area of electronic publication, in the shared foregrounding of materiality, the visibility of editorial process and the granting of access to heretofore unavailable texts.

Erin Henriksen obtained her first experience in editing texts by women under the auspices of Travitsky's and Prescott's Ashgate Press series, most specifically by working on "Fiction of Questionable Attribution." In her essay, "Editing Anonymous," she therefore focuses on texts that are examples of "gender-specific anonymity," in other words that are marked as written "by a young lady" or "by a woman of quality." As editor, Henriksen consequently reconceives the issue of authorial anonymity within a focus on the process of composition and the relationship between the work and its text(s). She thereby fore-fronts what Josephine Roberts has discussed as "the debate over gender relations"—in this instance, the tensions between the notions of disguise and duplicity, and those of liberty and counterargument.

The essays by Ann Hurley, and by Michal Michelson and William Kolbrener, move us from a concern with the problematic of anthologies and textual series, to a focus on editing specific authors. Ann Hurley, in her essay entitled "Editing the Unknown," discusses the difficulties of writing an introduction to the works of a named, but highly elusive dramatist, Elizabeth Polwhele, acknowledged author of two extant Restoration plays. Hurley proposes that the solution to this biographical crux lies in positioning her editorial process within the context of the "new textualism," thereby turning to focus instead on the "social, cultural and political location of a given text." Taking advantage of these various aspects offers Hurley the rich opportunity to re-evaluate Polwhele's status as dramatist. Thus she discusses Polwhele's professionalism, as well as ability, to utilize the specific nature of early Restoration drama—its elaborate scenery and staging innovations, and its incorporation of female actresses. Hurley's discussion of this single instance illuminates, on a more general level, how female playwrights negotiated the various cultural constraints and liberating forces of late 17th-century England.

In the essay entitled "The Canonized Mary Astell," Michelson and Kolbrener focus on their editorial conceptualization of their recent volume of essays—Mary Astell: Reason, Gender, Faith—as an attempt to rectify
“the prevalent compartmentalization into distinct and consequently isolated categories and readerships.” Michelson and Kolbrener demonstrate how editing such a volume must necessarily discuss Astell's responses to a broad range of contemporary audiences (e.g., political, philosophical, educational, gender). What is more, they obliquely edit Astell's texts in two primary ways: through the organization of the volume’s essays into a chronological discussion of these works, thereby providing "a schematic treatment of her intellectual development"; and by elucidating the very debates, which engendered Astell's written responses. In doing so, Michelson and Kolbrener provide a unique way of addressing the issue of editing an early modern woman.

The final two essays in this volume extend the previous discussions by addressing particular instances of women editing. In her essay, "By No Means in a Liberal Style,” Judith Jennings examines Mary Morris Knowles's resolute attempt to gain (and maintain) an advantage, both in her 1778 dispute with Samuel Johnson and in the subsequent struggle over its printed account – a struggle begun with James Boswell and continuing well into the 21st-century. Jennings provides her own detailed biographical, historical and bibliographical account of Knowles, particularly positioning her regarding the major controversies in England over Quakerism, slavery and the French revolution. Furthermore, Jennings uses her discussion to raise crucial points involved in a woman's insistence upon her "right of self-representation": the gendered struggle for editorial control; reception by contemporary readers; and the tension between a canonized and marginalized text. The essay concludes with a reprinting of Knowles's first published account of her dialogue with Johnson.

Chanita Goodblatt's essay, entitled "The University is a Paradise," completes this set by examining the case of Evelyn Simpson, co-editor with George Potter of the University of California edition of John Donne's Sermons. She demonstrates that the details of Simpson's life align with significant changes transpiring in contemporary English academic life and English Renaissance studies. Tracing out the different venues of Simpson's life—Cambridge, London, World War I hospitals and battle fronts, Oxford—Goodblatt proposes that we should view this career in terms of Simpson's continuous engagement with the transformation of women's roles in the academic and scholarly worlds: beginning with the first generations of women's colleges in England, and enveloping the struggle for positions, grants and editorial authority in the 20th-century re-conceptualization of the early modern English canon. What is more, Goodblatt forefronts the complicated dynamics of this struggle,
which cross both familial, collegial and gender lines. The essay also provides a complete bibliography of works by Evelyn Simpson.
The following essay is, in effect, a dialogue, the reminiscence by a pioneer and the confession of a self-described convert. The two wrote their parts separately and then, because they are co-editors of an anthology, Female and Male Voices in Early Modern England: A Renaissance Anthology (Columbia University Press, 2000) and of two series for Ashgate of texts by or relevant to women, they thought it might be fitting to merge what they remember of how they came to this field: what it was like for Betty to help initiate the later twentieth century’s interest in recovering lost or unheard women’s voices and what it was like for Anne to realize, belatedly, the value of such a recovery. We have identified each of their voices by initials.
—The Editors

B.S.T. “A bore is a man, who, when you ask him how he is, tells you.” With that bit of folk wisdom in mind, I found the remit for this essay tricky: to produce “a narrative, recalling the struggles in getting the larger academic community to see the value of early modern women’s writing, in getting publishers . . . interested in investing in such writing, and in juggling your own academic interests with your increasing involvement with women’s writing and with the evolution of interest in early modern women’s writing and with editing and publishing that.” In trying to provide a pertinent narrative without narcissistic overindulgence, I hope that I’ve avoided sounding like that bore.

My reminiscences begin with a term paper assigned in September 1968, the first semester of my graduate training at Brooklyn College (CUNY), following by just a few weeks, as it happens, the very overdue arrival of my third child. That conjunction of events proved an unintentional but powerful spur to years of study of what we now call early modern women and their writings. “Pick a passage in The Faerie
Queene that speaks to you, find and summarize everything that’s been written about it, and pull the commentaries together with your own thoughts about the passage.” The passage that spoke to me at that perhaps auspicious but certainly vulnerable moment was Cymoent’s lament for her son, Marinell (FQ.III.4.36-39). And what I discovered—in what we can certainly term those early days of the new scholarship on women—was that the mother’s grief evoked so movingly by Spenser just before Cymoent’s lament,

His mother swowned thrise, and the third time
Could scarce recovered be out of her paine;
Had she not bene deuoyd of mortall slime,
She should not then haue bene reliu’d againe (III.4.35.1-4),

had quite escaped the notice of centuries of male commentators. Unable to cite the commentaries about other passages in Spenser that presumably filled the papers of my classmates, I earned my instructor’s praise for originality.

Emboldened by this early approbation, I proposed in the mid-seventies, for my doctoral dissertation, to explore thinking about and the position of the mother in what we then called Renaissance England. This time around, convincing an advisor that I was on to something was not easy: “But there were always mothers, no? Always were, always will be. What could you possibly say about mothers in the English Renaissance?” Of the many pointed objections I had to counter while formulating what would eventually become the proposal for “The New Mother of the English Renaissance” (St. John’s University, 1976), this one, posed by a Yale-trained literary scholar with strong feminist inclinations who was also the mother of young children, stands out in my mind as epitomizing the paucity of information about, the invisibility of, the lack of interest in, and even the resistance to the new scholarship on women, particularly to domesticated women, in those early days. After convincing a committee that I was on to something, I proposed initially to write on Shakespeare’s treatment of the mother, or, rather, his failure to portray the newly developed Renaissance type of mother. My first stab at a dissertation topic, “Shakespeare’s Treatment of the Mother, Viewed in the Context of Renaissance Thought,” posited a negative, and on this proposal I yielded to the hardheaded advice that I avoid a negative thesis since it would be particularly difficult to publish. We were “a long way, Baby” from Mary Beth Rose’s sophisticated study, “Where Are the Mothers in Shakespeare? Options for Gender Representation in the English Renaissance” (Shakespeare Quarterly 42 [1991]: 291-314).
A.L.P. I myself had never thought much about such matters. As the daughter and granddaughter of women with careers, and thanks to teaching at a college that valued women, I had never personally run into a sexism that I could at the time identify as such. True, a “section man” helping with Harvard’s course on the history of science had answered my inquiry about majoring in the topic by saying that my A on the exam didn’t mean I could compete with young men in that field—but I was not troubled into thought, feeling only a dull gratitude for being spared the potential humiliation of revealing my inferiority concerning science to myself and to others. That was then. Now when Harvard presidents even hint at such thinking they “resign.” It was during my time at Harvard, though, that I was given and declined a chance to venture into what would later be called women’s studies. In a course on medieval European history one of our proposed term paper topics, designed in part to provide a taste of primary research and also, I suspect, to make Radcliff students feel more welcome, was the situation of women in some walk of life (I forget which). I was irritated to find that the teaching assistant had simply assumed I would choose that assignment, but I had rejected it precisely because of that assumption: I wanted to study real history, not to write about girl stuff just because I was a girl. It would be almost three decades before I came to my senses.

B.S.T. Continuing to read about early modern mothers while pregnant with my fourth (and last) child, I followed up references to texts that they and other early modern women had written, and my dissertation gestated into an opening section isolating and documenting early modern ideas about the “new” mother and a second section considering writings by early modern mothers. This early work, in turn, initiated a thirty-year engagement with texts by early modern women, an engagement contemporaneous but not necessarily in agreement with such scholarly developments as gendered analysis, interdisciplinarity, the canon wars, deconstruction, social history, and post-colonialism, as well as with shifts in editorial theory and methodology. Then, as now, my focus was archaeological—sounding silenced voices by recovering texts and information about authors and their circumstances; I remain challenged by that ongoing archaeological task and convinced that it is far from complete. But I anticipate.

During a conversation in her office soon after I had defended my dissertation, my department chair suggested that I develop an anthology of writings from my completed dissertation. That suggestion evolved into The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance, published in hard cover by Greenwood Press in 1980 and reprinted in
paperback by Columbia UP in 1989. *Paradise*, organized by subject, rather than by genre to illuminate patterns in the writings of early modern Englishwomen, is an early example of gendered analysis and of interdisciplinarity that has seen the inside of many classrooms, I am told. Quite a remarkable run for a book that was submitted to at least half a dozen presses before it found a home. And equally remarkable when I consider that my mentions of those writings, before its publication, had invariably led to another memorable question, posed even by sympathetic scholars, “Were there women writers in the English Renaissance?”—a question, in turn, evocative of the title of Joan Kelly’s famous essay, “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” (*Becoming Visible*, 1977).

if a fortuneteller had prophesied to me in the early 1980s that I would spend some of my happiest hours co-editing early modern women writers with Betty Travitsky, I would have suggested that she seek psychiatric help or find another line of work. In around 1980 I had looked at Betty’s *Paradise of Women* with cold dislike (the outside reader for Greenwood Press had shown me a copy even before its publication). In the first place, I thought to myself, these are not the big guys I want to teach, not big like Chaucer, Spenser, Sidney. Not even big like Samuel Daniel or Joshua Sylvester. In the second place, if women want to join the canon club, I thought, well . . . all right. But why isolate them in their own ladies’ room or at the back of the gender bus? After all, if they were any good, and by my unconsciously masculine literary standards few in England were, they’d have to present the same credentials as male applicants. (I say “in England” because thanks to my work on Anglo-French relations in the Renaissance I was dimly aware of Marguerite de Navarre and Louise Labé and knew I was supposed, sort of, maybe, to take them seriously, although I remained quite ignorant of the excellent Italian women poets whom I now teach.)

Looking back, I am not sure what first made me realize how wrong I had been about Betty’s anthology, to say nothing about that Harvard history assignment, and on how many counts. Probably it was in the mid 1980s, when Margaret Hannay asked me to contribute to a large panel at the MLA that then became a book: *Silent but for the Word* (Kent State University Press, 1985). Later I came to see that women had not in fact been as silent, even in England, as Hannay’s title implies, but the experience was nevertheless transforming (not least because the male respondent spent his time telling us where women studies ought to go next and opining that in an age of postmodern theory archival research was not where the excitement would now be; for the first time I felt the stirrings of quasi-feminist anger). My own essay was on Elizabeth’s girlhood
translation of Marguerite de Navarre’s *Miroir de l’ame pecheresse*, and since I focused on the manuscript version I had to begin noticing some of the issues that editors must consider. I was only edging into women’s studies, for I could tell the skeptic in me, if she (he?) were to complain, that although having female bodies my royal subjects nevertheless had the hearts and stomachs of kings, ones that probably deserved to be examined in a modern scholarly book.

**B.S.T.** Books are just one part of the publication story, though admittedly its high-end in terms of publisher investment—especially in pre-electronic, pre-publication-on-demand publishing days. Therefore, despite my initial difficulties in getting *Paradise* into print—the most dreadful instance, the dismissal of my submission by a university press that had sent me glowing readers’ reports and had then unexpectedly returned the manuscript, three months later, with just a curt rejection—I did not find publication of and about women’s writings a particularly onerous process, on the whole. If anything, the new scholarship on women held a bit of an advantage, I believe, in attracting the notice of journal editors and their referees. And I think that editors of that pioneering time should be commended for their willingness to entertain and print unfamiliar materials. Definitely their willingness constitutes an advance over the judgment of John Pinkerton, say, an eighteenth-century editor of the Maitland Quarto Manuscript (c. 1586; PL 1408, Pepys Library), who omitted “MQ #49,” the earliest erotic love poem to a woman by a woman that I know of in any form of English, from the selections he included in his partial edition of the manuscript, terming it “[a] song of friendship from one lady to another of sufficient insipidity” (*Ancient Scottish Poems*, 1786). Or, a bit more than a century later, over that of the first editor of the full manuscript, W. A. Craigie, who—though Marie Maitland’s autograph appears in two places on the title page, though she is commonly credited with transcribing the entire manuscript, and though she is named as a poet in two other poems in it—considered the grounds for ascribing the poem to her “plainly insufficient” (*Maitland Quarto Manuscript*, 1919-20). How indeed could Cymoent’s lament have attracted scholarly interest given that sort of mindset? In contrast, in those early days, *Paradise* and a number of my early essays did find quite respectable publishers.

Indeed, in some ways the late-twentieth-century academy and many individual academics were supportive of the new scholarship on women. In the early 1980s, though my academic career had been cut short by family illness, I was awarded a number of grants in support of my research that allowed me to continue it. On the very day I first visited the Furness Shakespeare Library at the University of Pennsylvania as what Penn called...
a ‘Mellon Post-doc’, I was shown a copy of the newly published *Paradise* on the desk of Georgianna Ziegler, then assistant curator there. In 1982, while participating in a summer seminar at the hospitable Folger Shakespeare Library, I had many pleasant conversations about early modern women writers with Betty Hageman, a summer habitué at the Folger, who was then preparing the first of her bibliographies on early modern English women writers for *English Literary Renaissance* and was perhaps already laying the groundwork for the monthly evening colloquia on early modern women that would meet there for several years and for *Renaissance Women Online*. In the spring of 1987, after several years as a “creature of Amtrak” (to appropriate Werner Gundersheimer’s term for himself in the year he spent commuting from Penn to the Folger while arranging his move to the library), as, that is to say, a commuter to Folger colloquia while holding a 9 to 5 job in New York City, a conversation about that difficulty while en route with Margaret Mikesell, who had become a fellow (Amtrak) traveler, encouraged me to pull together a number of scholars to create a discussion group parallel to that of the Folger.

That May, Patrick Cullen, Margaret Ferguson, Joan Hartman, Anne Haselkorn, Margaret Mikesell and I met at the CUNY Graduate Center to brainstorm on logistics for the group—a meeting place, a meeting time, a list of potential members, the mechanics of sending meeting notices and mailings. SSWR, or the Society for the Study of Women in the Renaissance, as Joan would later name us, has met since the fall of 1987 at the Graduate Center, at first unofficially; I well remember lugging heavy batches of mailings to the post office, scampering about the Graduate Center searching for a vacant room, and even moving chairs from one location to another in our early years. Ah, but the glory, despite our gypsy status, of inviting and listening to such eminent speakers as Leeds Barroll, Irene Dash, Margaret Hannay, Katherine Henderson, David Kastan, Margaret King and Carole Levin—among many, many others! Joan, then chair of the English Department and later a dean at CUNY’s College of Staten Island, eventually found clerical assistance for the mailings, and in the spring of 1997, at the invitation of Electa Arenal, director of the Center for the Study of Women and Society at the Graduate Center, and through the authorization of Alan Gartner, Dean for Research and University Programs there, SSWR became officially affiliated with the Graduate Center. Official stationery, assistance with mailings, and no more scrounging around for chairs or rooms! Though I was working, by then, as a librarian, I myself was appointed an affiliated scholar of the Center, an appointment that led to some funding and to essential library privileges to
further my research. I resigned from the SSWR planning committee in the fall of 2004, having coaxed Susan O’Malley to take my place, but I spoke there this spring, and I know that Susan has established a new planning committee to continue to lead the group.

*A.L.P.* Certain conversations I recall from the 1980s and even earlier, casual at the time, have since seemed crucial. What is worth editing and by what criteria? Catherine Stimpson, herself a pioneer in making women’s studies more visible and at that point a colleague, spent some friendly time one day trying to persuade me that my literary preferences were the result of cultural conditioning, so to speak. Columbia had just expelled Rabelais from its Literature and Humanities course, in part because some female students objected to the scene in which Panurge wants to build city walls of vulvas—I still think they were misreading the passage (there are male genitalia there too) and missing the point (make love not war, reproduction is better urban defense than ramparts). Columbia’s more significant agenda, however, was to make room on the syllabus for a woman writer. Perhaps some of those responsible had heard that Patrick Cullen, Betty’s first co-editor for her Ashgate series, had told students when he was a visiting professor at Columbia to look at the great names engraved under the roof of Butler Library and note the absence of women. We should add Sappho, he suggested (and, at least as I heard the story, was rewarded by a student complaining to the dean that he was promoting lesbianism). Loving Rabelais, I had been bemoaning his loss and had said something slighting about Marguerite de Navarre. You must see, said Kate, laughing, that you just think him greater than Marguerite because that’s what you’ve been taught. Canon essentialist that I was I stuck to my phallocentric Rabelaisian guns, and indeed I continue to think him the greater writer—but the conversation made me look again at Marguerite, and although I have not yet edited her I have now written extensively on her and hope at some point to help get early modern English translations of her and of her granddaughter-in-law Marguerite de Valois into a modern edition.

At about that time my college roommate’s daughter, Julia Flanders, was chatting with me at a conference and mentioned that after working for a while with the Brown University Women Writers’ Project she had come, not always consciously, to sense in some of the texts themselves not a lower but a different aesthetic, a different voice, and perhaps a different position in our definitions of periodization. This is of course a complex matter and luckily not one I need sort out for myself in order to edit women writers. Whether, how, and to what degree a female voice is, when most female, inherently different has been subject to research with both double-blind tests and the occasional MRI. (In one experiment, for
example, male and female students considered whether a pair of words rhymed or not and investigators looked to see which bits of the brain blazed with electrochemical thought; as I recall, the female brains lit up in two places and the male brains in one, although what that means is anybody’s guess.) Perhaps so long as we live in a still to some degree sexist world the neurological and stylistic truth does not matter as much as our assumptions. Some years earlier B. J. (Joy) Chute, the author of *Greenwillow* had told me that a book review she wrote for the New York Times had been sent back heavily edited because it “sounds feminine.” “Please inform the editor,” Joy had replied, “that I am a woman; the revisions go.”

The revisions went, but the issue remains. A few years after I had become involved with the Attending to Women series of conferences at the University of Maryland, and had begun my collaboration with Betty, I was team—teaching a course on women writers in the Renaissance, still somewhat naive about the theory part, which I left to my colleague in the classroom, Paula Loscocco. Often when we looked at a metaphor or conceit I would remind students that it was also found in male poets, offering juxtapositions that in a small way anticipated the anthology that Betty and I would put together, *Female and Male Voices*. Once, when I mentioned that an Italian poet who compared herself to a foundering ship probably meant us to remember Petrarch, Paula replied, with an exasperation that made the moment both memorable and instructive, “But the same image can mean something different when a woman says it.” In terms of resonance and the implied subjectivity it of course does. How could I have been so deaf?

**B.S.T.** I dredged through my SSWR correspondence files to reconstruct its capsule history because it seems to me, in retrospect, that it demonstrates both the evolving scholarly commitment to early modern women’s studies and the slowness, often the failure, of the established academy—perhaps because of other, simultaneous scholarly developments—to institutionalize scholarship on and editing of early modern women, in those early days, as a significant or respected niche in early modern literary studies; while articles and books about these women and their writings were increasingly accepted and published, they remained “a curiosity rather than a contribution,” to adopt Ruth Hughey’s description of Mary Fage’s admittedly curious *Fames Roule* (“Cultural Interests of Women in England from 1524 to 1640. Indicated in the Writings of the Women. A Survey.” Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1932). In particular, such scholarship—celebrating the newly recovered writer along with her text—was at odds with the tendency to
eliminate the author, indeed, with the death of the author. Scholarly play with the text, with the document, with the material object was and is hot, but interest in the author not. Unlike the newer and in some ways parallel field of book history, scholarship on women’s texts has remained on the margins; in other words, it was and is unlikely—unless it is subsidiary to scholarship in a more established niche—to lead to a tenured position in a college or university. This failure is perhaps especially problematic because the new scholarship on women seems particularly inviting to younger scholars, though it is possible that the relative inexperience and powerlessness of these scholars in the academic world may have contributed to the failure.

Certainly, I was not alone in hearing the sirens’ call, and I think it’s fair to say that Paradise contributed to the developing groundswell. Among milestones along the way was a Renaissance English Text Society session at MLA in 1986 titled “Editing Women Writers of the Renaissance,” a sign, surely, of growing institutional interest. The networking effected by the Folger and Graduate Center colloquia led to two important academic developments. The first was the organization, led by the planning committee of SSWR together with some members of the Folger colloquium, of a multi-session and interdisciplinary forum, “New Directions for the Study of Women’s Texts and Genres,” hosted in 1989 by MLA, and resulting in a special issue of Women’s Studies that Ann Rosalind Jones and I co-edited. In turn, through the good offices of Virginia Beauchamp of the University of Maryland, one of the planners of the forum, and the energetic sponsorship of Adele Seeff of the Centre for Renaissance and Baroque Studies at Maryland, the planning committee created “Attending to Women in Early Modern England,” an event that attracted over 300 scholars to the University of Maryland at College Park in 1990 in what was to be the first of triennial, three-day Attending conferences memorialized in conference proceedings that are edited by a member of the planning committee. Terrific work, and terrific fun! I still chuckle when I remember Adele’s confiding to me that her husband, aghast at witnessing her on the telephone with me at 6 a.m., the only hour when both she and I were able to make contact, asked her, “Is there really another human being at the end of that line?” That first conference was a stirring event, important in establishing a sense of community among students of early modern women. I’ll confess, on a personal note, that I was taken aback when I exchanged names with a graduate student with whom I was strolling on the campus and she told me: “Paradise of Women—that’s my bible.”

A.L.P. It was in around 1990 that Hugh Maclean asked me to join him in
preparing a new edition of Spenser’s poetry for W. W. Norton, and I leapt to agree. The technical details of editing fascinated me: Spenser’s views on gender or his treatment of figures such as Cymoent, seemed less significant than the challenge of knowing which words to gloss, which allusions to explain, and how, without betraying the last edition published in Spenser’s lifetime, to punctuate his love poems so students would not be distracted by the 1595 printer’s lunatic way with colons and commas. What is the balance between wanting a text to be available to modernity and wanting to remain loyal to the author’s intentions. Or did that sometimes mean, rather, the printer’s intentions? Or did a printer even have definable intentions as he reached for a y rather than an i? And, of course, what is an Author? While Betty was thinking deeply about such matters I was at least discovering, for example, that when you look up even slightly puzzling words in the *Amoretti* you find the (to me) surprising degree to which Spenser’s vocabulary and metaphors, like Shakespeare’s in his *Sonnets*, glance sidelong at legal matters and exploit legal discourse. That these lexical overtones gave the love poetry, even when addressing a lady, a more complex implied readership was not something I noticed. But, once more, that was then, and after a few years of editing early modern women with Betty I know that the next edition of the Norton Spenser will do well to heed such matters if only so as to remind students that Spenser’s was not a disembodied and ungendered voice.

Does this sort of issue matter to editing women? It does if we think of the early modern women whose voices we want to recover and whose texts we want to make available in editions or in the classroom as people with bodies and minds (to use a modern dichotomy). As Betty has mentioned, the surge of interest in such recovery came at just the time when capital A authorship was subjected to intense interrogation and skepticism. The respected scholar Mireille Huchon recently argued that one star of the French Renaissance, Louise Labé, was a “paper creation” by a group of male poets, a literary hoax. While walking to a panel discussion of the matter I told a friend of my distress. “Don’t worry,” she said consolingly. “You still have a female author position.” Not good enough, I said. “You mean you need a female *body*?” she asked. I said yes, yes, yes—feeling old fashioned. For editors of books by or related to women the issue is not minor. Should we edit author-positions? Or should we include texts by men, or possibly men, that take up room in volumes largely by women? The issue is all the more vexing because of the early modern taste for pseudonyms, anonymity, joint authorship, and in-family editing.
B.S.T. Also in 1990, in further evidence of this still off-center but undoubted groundswell, Sara Jayne Steen affirmed in “Voices of Silence: Editing the Letters of Renaissance Women,” another RETS session at MLA, that “[w]omen scholars want to bring women from behind the arras of a male-dominated canon”; “that women, long silenced, must be enabled to speak”; and that there is a “disjunction between an emphasis among editors on the text as a cultural and historical document and an emphasis among women’s scholars on the writer and the reader” (Hill, 1993, 230-31). This disjunction, to which I referred earlier, is a crucial one, and I’ll confess that I have based my own efforts at editing on an attempt to capture authorial intention, the ‘authoritative word’ (Smith, Poetics, 39), efforts that take into account the circumstances of the author and of the production of her text, that attempt—and often succeed—in providing for the author a local habitation as well as a name.

An avalanche of text publication followed this initial groundswell of interest, first in hard copy and later in electronic form. Quite apart from individual, often crucially important editions like the late Josephine Roberts’ *The First Part of The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* (1995), texts have been published in series like Oxford University Press’s *Women Writers in English, 1350-1850*, co-edited by Susanne Woods and Betty Hageman and Ashgate Press’s *Early Modern Englishwoman*, the brainchild of Patrick Cullen who coaxed me to co-edit the series with him for several years till he retired and Anne, happily, took his place. As interest has grown in integrating newly recovered women’s texts with the texts by male writers—otherwise known as the traditional canon—these texts have been included increasingly in anthologies.

But while some changes in the literary landscape of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries can be attributed to developments in women’s studies and to general scholarly trends, the groundswell of interest in women’s writings that I have been describing did not, of course, occur in a technological vacuum. I can remember moving repeatedly from one end to the other of the New York Public Library’s card catalog room in search of women’s variant names in different parts of the alphabet, a search that can be conducted today much less strenuously from a single computer terminal. Digitization has enhanced access to information in all fields with tools like the online public access catalog; it has accelerated the study of early modern women’s texts with specialized catalogs like Perdita and with electronic archives like Brown University’s Women’s Writers Project and Emory University’s Women Writers Resource Project; it has transcended the miracle of microfilm—in its day a democratizing agent of access for scholars who could not afford travel to distant archives—
providing access to selected documents not only in the local library, but on the screen of the personal desktop computer. To inject a personal note, again, I vividly recall that the first time I read texts on EEBO, I sat transfixed at the computer for hours, calling up one text after another, unable to believe that this material had been made available in my own study.

A.L.P. I hardly need say that the major turning point in my life as an editor and scholar interested in female voices, or at least voices/texts from females or people claiming to be female, was Betty’s invitation to join her in doing our anthology and in co-editing two series for Ashgate (or, more precisely, overseeing the individual volume editors). When I said yes, my inner skeptic’s conversion was complete. The invitation came just as there was a surge of interest in what my former colleague David Kastan calls the New Boredom (he is entitled—he helped make it fashionable) and what others call the material history of the book. One series comprises straightforward editions and the other offers facsimiles. Why facsimiles? Not everyone has physical or electronic access to the texts as they first appeared, of course, and yet presentation in print, as in manuscript, is a currently fashionable topic because so culturally revealing. The study of early modern women surely should include how they were metaphorically escorted into printing houses, into the street, and into libraries. Facsimile editions, for all their bibliographical ambiguity, enable such research.

There is more to be done here, of course, and more consciousnesses to raise. A dean at a distinguished women’s college, for example, not too long ago confessed himself put off by the less than stellar letterheads of some recommendations for an assistant professor in women’s studies, finding it hard to remember that with some notable exceptions most senior scholars in the field had not climbed an ivy-league ladder. And a fine recent book on the physical presentation of early modern books, Michael Saenger’s *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance* (Ashgate 2006) has ample illustrations but none of a text ascribed to a woman. Are women presented differently in early modern books? One female almanac writer at least had the advantage of appearing on her title page with a lovely pair of breasts beneath her pretty smiling face, something her male colleagues in the trade could not do. One advantage of our facsimile series is to enable such investigation. When discussing this and related editorial matters with students, I sometimes cite Gaspara Stampa’s poetry as an example of how editorial choices can relate to gender. Shortly after Stampa died, her sister published the first edition of her poetry; including amatory and religious lyrics, it ends with a few poems on fame and glory. Stampa’s nineteenth-century (male) editor,