The Book History Reader
SECOND EDITION

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ORAL RELIGIO-POLITICAL ACTIVISM & TEXTUAL PRODUCTION

For all my Labours and Travels, this Paper will not contain them.

(Elilnor James, Mrs. James’s [sic] Apology befor of持hebanen, c.1694)

What did print mean to early female polemicists and preachers, and especially to those women whose lack of access to printed texts—or lack of time to read them—ensured that they remained rooted in a still fundamentally oral world? “I wish well to the Reader, whoever they be,” Elilnor James declared at the head of one of her earliest broadsides. James’s headnote sounds a tone of regret, as if she recognized that to print her ideas was to lose control over how her audience would respond to them. “I have given so much that I can give no more,” she lamented, “and cannot through the narrow doors of time, I have yielded to publish them, contrary to my intention.” Unable to chart her addresses in person, or to correct their mistakes, she could not ask God to bless this paper, that the Reader may be the better. Even with God’s help, print could be a strangely distancing mode of communication.

In turning to the newly available tool of print to supplement their ongoing oral efforts to influence public opinion, Elilnor James, Anna Docwra, Joanna Whitmore, and Jane Lead were not all trying to avoid more public polemical encounters. These women used print not to “cover” themselves but rather to expand the public oral audience that they already had. These women typically signed their papers and books, and provided readers and hearers with their own personal addresses. They did this to “authenticate” their works and of course to maximize the sales of their texts. But they also provided their personal addresses so that readers and hearers who disagreed with their opinions could come and debate issues further with them in person. . . . The broadsides, pamphlets, and books written by these polemicists must be read as the products—and agents—of oral discussion and debate: voices of specific social communities which may be inferred by listening between the lines of the texts themselves. They are utterances responsive to specific utterances, and in them, their authors’ anticipation of readers’ responses can be heard.

[. . .]

In late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century London, the religion-political culture of ordinary women was still fundamentally an oral culture. Furthermore, this chapter will show, this oral political culture informed not only the content, but also the format and other aspects of the material production and circulation of these women’s printed texts. A consideration of those authors’ diverse modes of publishing their religious and political ideas, of their intended audiences, and of the ways that these conditions of publication influenced the external format and internal characteristics of their texts will help to reduce the openness of these women’s writings for the modern reader, and enable us to move on to a consideration of their religious and political world views and ideas.

[. . .]

For Quaker women in particular the practical and psychological benefits of access to this publishing support system may be surmised from the fact that seventeenth-century Quaker women produced twice as many extant printed editions as any other female group. Anna Docwra published at least seven tracts between 1687 and 1700, and was an ardent polemicist for religious toleration, the separation of church and state, and women’s right to prophecy and testify in public. The benefit of the Quaker publishing system may also be surmised from the many favorable observations of Docwra’s chief polemical opponent, apostate Quaker Francis Bugg. Bugg remarked, for instance, that Docwra’s books were printed and “Sold by Joy Scott, the Quakers Bookseller, as a Sign both of their Appreciation, and Unity.” Jacobe Swale served as primary printer and publisher for the Friends, and her press was the primary channel through which Quaker works were issued. In addition to Anna Docwra’s pamphlets, Jacobe Swale printed books and tracts by more than a dozen women writers. These women, not all of them Quakers, included Elizabeth Baeburn, Sarah Cavers, Elizabeth Chesser, Mary Edwards, Alice Hill, Katherine Evans, Jane Pearson, Alice Haye, Elizabeth Jacob, Jane Lead, Mary Mallinson, Elizabeth Sterridge, Jane Trumwell, and the “mother of Quakerism” Margaret Anewell Fox.

From the beginning, Quakerism was a religion of the book. As part of her ongoing efforts to educate the public as to who Quakers were and what they believed, Anna Docwra engaged in an ongoing battle to print with apostate Quaker Francis Bugg. In addition to the other religious-political writings Docwra and Bugg produced a total of at least one dozen works slandering each other’s beliefs, backgrounds, and personal characters. Their exceedingly public dispute is worth considering in detail for the insights it provides into the character and rhetorical and commercial strategies of early modern popular religion-political print culture. Remembering that theological discourse was in fact the “bestselling” form of print material in the early modern literary marketplace does much to help decode the “abundance” for twentieth-century readers of debates such as Docwra and Bugg’s. As a Quaker, Docwra did not need to concern herself with printing costs as much as Bugg did; Quaker central organization did this for her. Quaker texts also had a ready-made readership. Quaker Monthly Meetings throughout Britain and Ireland were required to take copies of all Quaker books authorized and published by central organization. Bugg, by way of contrast, had to rely on a general audience to purchase his books for their educational and entertainment value. To some extent, the extraordinary muddling of his exchange with Docwra can be explained by this simple fact. In the increasingly competitive
sponsored print propaganda as a powerful new form of "positive censorship" in her society. She argued that the legal slander of nonconformists was in fact an increasingly central form of state persecution of opposition voices. "If Bugge, and his Abettors of the Clergy, have rated a New Frenemy with Tongue and Pen, (Second Part of an Apocatastasis Exposed (1702), 3)

A propagandist such as Bugge might publish 'Lyes and Deceits,' but once those 'Lyes and Deceits' were printed they were powerful weapons. Playing on the meaning of 'magazine' as a place where ammunition is stored, she observes, 'I perceive by [Bugge]'s Writing, that he hath prepared a large Magazine of Bugge against me, if his Clergy will pay for printing it' (Second Part of an Apocatastasis Exposed (1705), 3).

Bugge rallied back against Doecra's charges that he was in the pay of the established church. He declared, 'I never West for Money, nor was I ever a Beggar, nor have I wanted a sufficient support to this Day.' But he had introduced his claim that he 'would not pay Money for Money' when he then went on to admit to having accepted support for his writing from the church, and sought to justify his financial strategies by comparing them to what appeared to him the well-funded publishing programme of the Quakers. 'If I have Appleyd my self to the Clergy,' he explicated, 'that thereby, I might be Enabled to Defend my Christian Profession, against the Powerful Flock of the Quakers; it is no more than Six, Wholeso, and others of the Quakers have done, who at first were not able to Print a Book at their own Charge' (William Penn, the Pretended Quaker (1702), 15).

In an Apocatastasis Exposed, and The Misunderstandings Concerning Therein Discovered, for Information and Caution (1699), Doecra attached Bugge's services as a 'Mercenary Agent,' and attempted to convince his church substituted propaganda. In Joseph Whistam, and His Daughter Anne Doecra, Publickly Repro'd, For Her Law and Litigions in Her Book, entitled, An Apocatastasis Controversy (1699) Bugge responded to Doecra's charges, systematically quoting each of Doecra's 'Lies' and printing replies. In The Second Part of an Apocatastasis Exposed (1709) Doecra responded to Bugge's responses, and provided further evidence for her own case against him. Referring to the Act of Toleration granting freedom of worship to Protestant subjects, she accused her opponent of being 'unreasonable under the Liberty granted to Protestant Dissenters' (3).

In opposition to the rising tide of Augustan polemics against religious enthusiasm, Doecra appealed to this pamphlet a defense of inspiration, a 'Treatise concerning Evangelicals' by A.D. By the eighteenth century, religious enthusiasm was associated with the political upheaval of the Civil War period, and increasingly became 'the bugger ... of polite and scholarly ... society.' 10 Jonathan Swift's satire A Tale of a Tub (1708; pub. 1704), written and published during the same years that Anne Doecra was publishing her works, exposes 'Enthusiasts and Fanatics among us' and specifically links religious enthusiasm to women. 11 Section VII is devoted to 'The Learned Abuses' ("All Pretenders to Inspiration whatsoever") (95 n.) and notes that the practices of 'our Modern Abuses' are encouraged in 'Risual Priests ... who are agreed to receive their Inspiration ... like their Ancestors, the Salsins.' (95 n.) "Mercantile Priests' is accused. Quakers who suffer their Women to preach and pray' (99 n.) Doecra, by way of contrast, argued that the motives of those who would represent marginalized and persecuted religious groups as 'fanatics' were fundamentally political ones. She worked to show the Legendarian that had been used in this Nation, by some of the Learned, concerning this strange word Evangelicals, which they have frightened the ignorant People with, making them believe that there is dangerous matter contained in it ("Second Part, 39, (Swift for instance specifically links religious enthusiasts with 'revolutions of government.') By means of her word choice 'Legendarian,' Doecra suggested that the leaders of the Church of England, rather than the dissenters, were the purveyors of deception and "black art." In the case of enthusiasm, Doecra argued, it was in fact the 'Legendarian' rather than the simple folk who were 'superstitious' and 'irrational.' She pointed out that 'the strange word Evangelicals, is from a Greek word, and signifies in English, 'Inspiration' (Second Part, 39) and noted that English dictionaries confused 'Doecra Abuses' with
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The Reformation. She concluded her treatise by emphasizing that in such matters, it was not ordinary folk but "learned Men [who are most subject to Error]" (Second Part, 46).

Docwra came to believe that the new public forum of print was in fact the safest place to do battle with one's enemies. Oral debates could be misrepresented to those who did not hear them, and manuscript letters could be misquoted or forged. Docwra claimed to have received letters from Bugg full of "Clamour and Threats," if I will not retract my Book, I shall not enact! (Second Part of the Apology Consecrated Expound (1700), preface, 31). She claimed that his opponent had "forged letters, as from me to him, and printed them with my name to them." Docwra believed that she was no longer "free to answer F. Bugg, or any of his Cabal," but in print, least they should put false constructions of them, or add some Scurrility to them (Second Part, 9, 31). While Docwra increasingly saw print as one of the safest places to conduct an argument, Francis Bugg fundamentally dismantled this new mode of communication. Despite a John Dunton-like abduction with print, Bugg would appear to have felt more comfortable with oral modes of debate. Docwra Against the Prevalence of Quakers (1711) questioned why "this Ann Docwra, whose Books they (the Quakers) still, dispense, and spread for the Service of Truth . . . does not come forth and prove what she says" (75). In William Penn, the Pretended Quaker, Docwra disclosed to her correspondence with the Quaker's (sic) at Rome, in which is Added, A Wittling-Shew for Ann Docwra (1720), he went further, actually challenging Docwra to a public trial. He listed the names of four persons - including a woman - who would witness that she was not as Docwra claimed "distressed." He dared Docwra to abandon the "shelter" of print and dispute religious-political matters with him in person. He suggested that she choose six men to serve on an ad hoc "jury," along with six of his own choosing. He added that if this supposedly neutral jury could not decide who made the better argument, he was willing to stand before two more supposedly neutral judges, the Viscount-Cancellor and Mayor of Cambridge. In the 1640s, the Brownist pamphleteer and preacher Katherine Chettle carried on a pamphlet war with Thomas Edwards, and challenged her opponent to an oral parley much like this one that Bugg proposed to Docwra. Each opponent was to choose six people who, in the presence of an impartial moderator, would listen to the details of the debate, then decide upon a verbal "victory." In stately terms, as well as in actuality, oral parleys such as the Chettle-Edwards and Docwra-Bugg debates are at the heart of early modern religious-political political polemics. They are another example of the fundamentally oral underpinnings of late Stuart and early Hanoverian literary life.

Obsessed with print and yet afraid of it, Francis Bugg complained of his polemical opponent that the Friends "now cry her up, Or, a name William and she crius up them, Or, G. Whitehead is a gentleman Quaker" (Sensible Convent, 62-3). Bugg dedicated his career as a polemical hack to alerting the nation to the powerful new combination of diction and print, and to pointing out the dangerous "Effects each Book have amongst . . . credulous People" (71).

Other than Francis Bugg, what were some of Anne Docwra's most pressing concerns as a Quaker? Docwra's first publication, A Looking-Glass for the Reader and Journam of the Troubles, The Old Jury for the Town and County of Cambridge (182), was written in response to the legalized persecution of dissenters during the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis (1678-81). In December 1687, the Privy Council had attempted to enforce the Claflendon Code to the fullest. Local missionaries had been ordered to enforce the Corporation Act of 1661, excluding Quakers and other non-conformists from any share in government or administration, and subjecting them to disabling laws and imprisonment. Docwra's Looking-Glas was written to chastise what she saw as a corrupt local government. Two of her other pamphlets of the 1680s were also responses to intensified persecution. As Equity of Love and Good Advice To My Old Friends and Fellow-Sufferers in the Law: A True and Exact Narrative Of Some of the Most Eminent And Extraordinary Discoveries And Their Service, And Also How They Are Conformists from Any Share in Government or Administration, and Subjecting Themselves to Disabling Laws And Imprisonment (1687) and The Scriptures And Their Duty (1687) attack the tyranny of power that would
Certainly bring on another civil war, for the 'poor People' of England could endure their wretched circumstances no longer. 'Vipers' might flourish now, Doctor warn, But Storms will come to make these Creep into their Holes, in hopes of Sleep; Instead of Rest, with Sorrow Weep This is the Portion that will be Due to so great Hypocrites.

Ance Doecwaya.

(Looking-Glas, 7)

Recalling the 'late Experience' of the Civil War, as well as the continuing instability of recent years, Doctor deployed unpublished oral narratives to support her political prophecies for the future: 'There is nothing but Truth and Righteousness which will stand in this Land of our Native, all things else stand but as a tattering Wall in England, as late Experience hath shown, whether they be Laws against Dissenters, Stoning of Ancestors, burning of Kings, contracted Covenants and Engagements for or against this or that Government.' (Looking-Glas, 7) As an appendix to her argument for religious freedom, she offered an adverbial informing those in power that the warnings they had drawn up against local dissidents were unfounded and unlikely to be profitable: 'Those People that the warnings are against are mostly poor People, and but few, if any at all (that I can hear of) that can or will provide the Money for to pay such as Illegal Deeds.' As the body of her pamphlet, so in the appended advertisement she concluded her appeal with a prophetic clause: 'Disappointment will be the portion of all those that carry on such Designs as this. The Lord God Everlasting hates the Confirmation of it that men may see where they are, and what they are doing. A.D.' (Looking-Glas, 11). If nothing else she could authorize her public political critique of the government, the end of the world made it not only possible, but urgent for her to write.

Polemist and preacher Joan Whitrowe published at least eight tracts over a period of twenty years from 1677 to 1699. Most active in the immediate post-revolutionary period, she addressed most of her pamphlets specifically to William and Mary, expressing a sense of disillusionment that these professed owners of the church had not lived up to their own and the in the specificity of their demands for social change. More than any of the other women political writers considered here, Whitrowe was motivated to write by her anger at the indifference of problems rather than abstract constitutional issues, her pamphlets are rich in social observation, and her critique of property is sustained. Her papers are informed by an intensive, private concerns with what might call class relationships, and serve as a reminder of the importance to mention these modern scholars who see sectarian radicals as having been 'reduced to silence and inertia' after the Restoration. Initially united with the Quakers but later separated from them, Joan Whitrowe may have been one of the Quakers' own intensified internal press controls during the later years of the Restoration. Mysterious references to Whitrowe in Francis Bugg's polemics against Anne Doecza suggest that at one point the Society of Friends tried to put an end to Whitrowe's radical (and exceptionally dangerous) writings by withholding support for their publication. In denouncing Anne Doecza, Francis Bugg made a vague and chilling allusion to Joan Whitrowe's books being 'stop'. Anne Doecza's books, Francis Bugg complained, were still 'sold by the Quakers', and not

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'not as Joan Whitrowe'. Bugg implied that Joan Whitrowe was 'reduced as an incendiary', and reflected pre-publication censorship of her writings cut by the government but rather by her own persecuted group. Joan Whitrowe's censorship by her peers, and difficulty in publishing her 'too-radical' writings, presents an interesting case study of one woman political writer's access to the means of literary material production. It should also serve to caution twentieth-century readers against idealizing the mutual support systems and collaborative publishing programmes of early sectarian groups.

Early Quakers suffered relentless persecution from dominant religious institutions, and it is not surprising that the leaders of the movement sought to minimize divisive criticism from within. After 1677, Quaker central organization acted in the capacity of a modern 'publisher', financing production, supplying printers with copies, and overseeing national and international distribution. But the executive bodies of 'antient men Friends' which made up Quaker central organization also served as a complex board of review for all Quaker publications. The Morning Meeting read over even the works of their founder George Fox line by line with meticulous care, and decided which passages must be altered or omitted. Like any alternative social formation for which survival is dependent on internal cohesion, the embattled Quaker community of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was a powerful force for internal censorship. By the 1700s, the Quaker press was characterized by caution and extreme political sensitivity, which had been absent in the 1660s. Minutes of the meetings of Quaker central organization reveal that Joan Whitrowe's writings were censored by the Friends on at least one occasion. On 21 July 1677, meeting minutes record Quaker leaders' concern that Whitrowe had not yet submitted a book that she was writing to the Morning Meeting for approval. Rebecca Travers, a prominent Quaker whose house meetings were held, was nominated by the group to speak to Whitrowe about submitting her manuscript 'book for pre-publication review:

Rebecca Travers is desired to speak or write to Joan Whitrowe that she may submit the book containing the Relation of what her daughter spoke at the time of her death to friends as others do that send books that Friends may Learn out what they see not of service to the Truth, which Friends are dissatisfied with. (M&M (Morning Meeting Minutes), vol. i (1671-92))

One week later, meeting minutes record that Joan Whitrowe did submit this particular book to Quaker leaders as requested. The appropriate reviewers, however, found certain passages to be unacceptable: 'the book brought by Joan Whitrowe [to be left to J. Claypoole and Rebecca Travers to consider] and to decide by that meeting what is to be left out' (M&M, 1671-92, 30 July 1677). The manuscript 'book' in question was The Work of God in a dying Man, being a short account of the dealings of the Lord with one Susanna Whitrowe about the age of fifteen years and daughter of Robert Whitrowe inhabiting in Comv-garden in the county of Middlesex; together with her experimental confessions to the power and work of the Lord God both in her passions and mercy to her soul. The first of her books that the Quakers censored, then, was Joan Whitrowe's very personal account of the death of her daughter Susanna. By 1689, Joan Whitrowe wrote, 'I walk alone as a Woman forsaken.' A marginal figure even within the Quaker movement, Whitrowe's far more radical writings after the Revolution of 1688 may have been considered too aggressive to publish. Whitrowe's post-revolutionary polemics are extremely aggressive. She had specific suggestions for social change and argued at length for a more just distribution of available resources. By 1692, she signed herself 'one that is of no sect or gathered People', suggesting that by this time she no longer saw herself as part of the Quaker community or any other. And by 1694, her outspoken criticism of the disparities of wealth and poverty in her
society was addressed to dissenters as well as to members of the Church of England. If Whitrowe's writings were 'ungent' by the Quakers, she was effectively silenced. After a flurry of activity, her publications ceased abruptly in 1667. For many female polemicists, the Quaker press was the only practical avenue to print. How many women (and men) must have been silenced by the movement's understandable concern with uniformity and caution? flagrant.

Whitrowe's printed books and papers were but a small part of her public activism. Both before and after her separation from the Quakers, she travelled enormous distances on foot, praying, preaching, and displaying her absurd body as a sign of God's wrath. Just before the Great Plague, the Lord commanded her to go to Bristol. Accordingly, she undertook one of her first major journeys, with 'a Sackcloth on my Body, and Ashes on my Head', she travelled to Bristol to deliver her call to repentance, then returned home to London where I came to my Husband and Family in ten Days time, or the truth Day of my parting from them, leaving a young Child of a Year old that suck'd at my Breast, and found all things well, myself also, so well as I had not gone one Mile, although a weak Woman of Body, and not able to go two Miles without Pain, yet in the strength of the Lord I went almost two hundred Miles a Foot. (Handel Adler, 9)

Shortly thereafter, the plague began, and she was once again 'commanded to go out of my own House Sackcloth and Ashes, and proclaim the terrible Day of the Lord'. (Handel Adler, 10). Herself gravely ill, she prayed to God to remove her own burden. But the Lord explained:

It is the burden of the Iniquities of the Nation I have laid upon thee, and thou must bear my indignation, for thou art their Sign of Repentance and Humiliation. I require of thee: then I know what the Prophet Hosea meant when his lips quivered, his body trembled, and wravethess had entered his Bones. (10)

Whitrowe saw her physical body as 'a sign to the Multitude' (17), and the illness to which it was liable as marks of God's wrath. Sustained fasting, sackcloth and ashes, and discomforts of long-distance foot travel were in themselves models of religious-political activism. They were part of a signifying system of the body, aimed at encouraging all who saw her to 'humble themselves in the dust'. When the Lord commanded Whitrowe 'to wear Sackcloth three years', she did, 'till after the death of King Charles' (13). And when he told her 'to depart from the Multitude . . . to give up Name and Fame, and whatsoever was dear to me in this Life', she did that too — to the point where she eventually came to see herself as 'one that is of no first or gathered People whatsoever' (S King William and Queen Mary, 16).

Upon the death of Queen Mary in 1694, God commanded Whitrowe to travel to the City of London from Putney. 'I knew not for what, for I had been there a little before, therefore had no Bosom in my own.' (15) Once she had arrived in the City, the Lord commanded her to call the people of London to fasting. Caught up in a crowd somewhere between Cheapside and Cornhill, Whitrowe 'opened [her] Mouths to them, and said, The Lord calls for Fasting, and you go and Fasting'. She moved with the crowd through the streets, declaring the Word of the Lord throughout Cornhill, and part of the next Street. 'Once she had delivered her public testimony to her own (and the Lord's) satisfaction, she 'left them, and Returned that Day to Putney' ('In the King', 109-10).

On another occasion, Whitrowe received a similar call to oral activism immediately after dropping off a book manuscript at the printer's.

as I was going from the Printer, overcoming with the Lord, and contemplating of his Glorious Power, being fill'd with Harassments of Ministers inxdcending Wars, yet so it were in deep Conflict of Spirit; and this going on till I came about the middle of November, where I stood still and beheld; and, as I steadied with Admiration, these Words, in great Power, spoke aloud in my Ear, The London, the City of Abomination, this is the Abominable City: And these words were Repeated over and over, till I came about the middle of Chaucer's.

('To the King', 187-8)

She continued walking through this central economic area of London until she came to Bishopsgate, where, filled with a sense of despair for the 'Abominable City', she fell on her knees and prostrated herself before the Lord — as well as, no doubt, before many worthy faces in this busy part of working London. Whitrowe's writing and publishing, then, should be understood as an extension of an ongoing mode of religious-political activism which was oral and 'bodily'. As Phyllis Mack has pointed out, 'the acts of writing and public prophecy were actually more similar than one might suppose; writing involved public confrontation as well, since works were hawked by their authors on street corners or in front of taverns, or handed to mystagogues like a modern pamphleteer'. Whitrowe, too, was willing to endure a long journey on foot and a long wait for a fleeting opportunity to hand over her papers to the King. One of her pamphlets is signed 'Pamphyl April the 11th, 1696. This I delivered into the King's Own Hands, the 11th Instant. Jane Wharow' — if even the touch of a king she disapproved of gave a powerful talismanic quality to other copies of the paper.

Like all of the polemicists discussed here, Whitrowe appears to have found print a challenging and sometimes awkward mode of communication. Whitrowe's printed texts paint a portrait of a zealous activist glimpsed not only by material hardships and loneliness, but also by the mental and material struggles of authorship. Whitrowe wrote of her depression and frustration with work that was not going fast enough, and her desire to start new projects before current ones were in press. Most poignantly, she expressed a sense of despair that she could not address all the iniquities of her society at once. By 1694 she thought that she 'would write a Volume of Speeches, Visions and Revelations which she had had above for these thirty Years'. But it was not that easy. 'Had it stood with my will,' she explained,

I had never been concerned with this Generation, after having delivered the three first books to the King and Queens, but having delivered the last of the three, Titled to Queen Mary — and a strong powerful Voice Said, Arise and stand, oh Daughter of Zion. Then after this I wrote another Printed book to the King and Quean, and four Papers in writing at several times, which I delivered into their own hands, and then after I had delivered these Writings, I wrote another Book, which I had almost finished, but this coming so favorable upon me, I laid that by, and this hath been longer in hand than I expected when I began it, for indeed all things looking so dark and dismal, I rather expected some dreadful Judgment would break forth before this Book would be finished.

Lying in her bed feeling low in spirits, Whitrowe threw her book manuscript out of her hand, 'as Moses threw the Tables of Stone'. But a 'powerful voice' charged her with neglecting her duty, and told her to 'Write down thy Poverty, which I immediately did'. And now', Whitrowe concluded her latest publication, 'I have given you an Account why it was not committed to the Press before now' (Whitrowe Wharow's [sic] Humble Thanksgiving (1696), vii-vii.)
In this instance, Whittow relates how she experienced a particularly dreadful form of writing-induced melancholy and weeping — a strong sense of impending ‘judgment’ preventing her from putting goul to paper. On another occasion, Whittow was prevented from completing a manuscript, but rather from taking it to a printer. Despite her strong dislike of William III’s personal behaviour and political policies, Whittow claimed to have held back one of her manuscripts out of concern lest she add to the King’s grief upon the death of his wife. She had originally, she claimed, written a paper to the Queen, ‘telling her therein, that the Sacrifice of the Lord was drawn and Fulfilled, two Edged, yeas three Edged, and only wants Commandment’. But in this same paper, she had also praised Queen Mary’s death — a prediction whose fulfilment put her on guard against printing the paper: ‘And so I went on, declaring to the Queen the very thing that came to pass to my unspeakable Grief, which Paper had been printed at this time, but for fear of outrunning the King’s Sorrows’ (‘To the King, and Both Houses of Parliament’, Prefatory Spatiale to Heloise Wigram, (1685), 18).

Despite her apparent concern for William’s feelings upon the death of his wife, Whittow was in fact deeply disturbed by William and Mary, and addressed the majority of her pamphlets explicitly to them. As far as we know, Stuart women writers, the Revolution of 1688 was for her a momentous occasion: a series of events ending spiritual and political importance. The bloodless coup was irrefutable evidence of divine intervention in state affairs: the strength of the ‘Lord’s own Arm which we made bare in the sight of all’ (Humble Address to the Whole Whitch to King William (1689)). The new King and Queen were irrevocably in God’s favor, and they gravely endeavored their already precarious positions as heads of state by fostering God’s will. Whittow spent the better part of her career as a polemist and preacher urging William and Mary to fulfill their promises as professed champions of the Protestant faith, and advising the ‘Church and People of England’ to ‘put into practice what you have promised the Lord’ (Humble Address, 14). Among many other requirements, William III was to ‘visit the Widow and Fatherless in their Afflictions, give up his hunting, and stop playing with his dogs in church’.

I saw three upon East Sheen Green, where thou wast taking thy pleasure in Hunting: I was much grieved to see the King spending his precious time in such a vain Exercise, in such a day as this, when the Nation lies bleeding... Oh King! this is a day for PLEASURE...! Here be the men that the Lord is going to be in, if thou be not with them. Thou, O King, art a witness, that it was not thy Swine, nor thy Magpie that brought thee thereto, but the Lord’s own Arm which we made bare in the sight of all. And now thou see st how bright the Lord is for all his Goodness, and what thou wilt return to the snare of Eternal Glory.

(Humble Address, 4-5)

Queen Mary was to abandon her vain and worldly amusements, while the people of England were to reflect:

What did you send for King William out of his own Country, and turn out King James? You said it was to set up the Christian Religion, and to Establish it: why is it not done?... put into practice what you have promised the Lord; but if you will not, then it will appear to all the World, that you did not all this to set up the Christian Religion, but to set up your own desires.22

Whittow repeatedly warned the King to bow down before the Lord, for ‘without Him you can do nothing’.23 Many religious polemics of the post-revolutionary period appear to have taken special pleasure in reminding William III what little power he had in comparison to his predecessors, and in pointing out that even that might be given to him by the Lord (and so could be taken away again). Whittow urged William and Mary to remember that they were God’s ‘Viscount-Gerens here on Earth’, and prayed that they would ‘joy and live together in Heart and Soul to humble themselves in the dust before the Almighty God’.24 Whittow’s radically leveling image of the King and Queen humbling themselves in the dust was a personal favourite. She repeatedly warned William and Mary to ‘come down from your Thrones, and humble yourselves in the dust by Fortitude and Prayers, and deep Humiliation, crying mightily to God the Father’ (Whittow Whitcham’s Heloise Thanksgiving, 5). She also exercised considerable aggression by means of the ostensibly dutiful act of biblical quotation. In the footnote to her Heloise Thanksgiving (1689) she highlighted Jeremiah 13: 18: ‘Say unto the king and to the queen humble your selves, sit down.’

Religious conviction afforded women such as Whittow an outlet for aggression in the form of a desire for millenarian ‘renewal’. As in Anne Dowsen’s polemics, so in Joan Whittow’s pamphlets there is a powerful subtext of prophetic threat. These women’s writings contain powerful subversive visions of millenarian writings. In these futuristic fictions, existing social hierarchies are dissolved, and widows and children have enough to eat. (And, of course, rulers like William and Mary are ‘humbled in the dust’.) Like these millenarian visions, the crown-prosec was another important subgenre in women’s religion-political polemics. Whittow prophesied that neither force nor the rule of law could prevent the eventual inevitable destruction of the ‘great one’.

‘There’s neither Strength nor Policy shall stand, Against what’s coming on this Land’ (Whittow’s Heloise Thanksgiving, 4). In another pamphlet Whittow expressed her gratitude for King William’s safe return from the battle at La Hoose, but recorded her disgust at the wood waste in bodiments to celebrate his victory:

How many poor distressed Families both in City and Country would be glad and rejoice to have that Firing to warm and refresh them and theirs in cold and bitter Weather; that was spent in waste when the king came home to gratify the humors of an ungodly Crew, who one day cries Huzza! Huzza! and the next day with a Looker on, Crouche, Crouche.

(To King William and Queen Mary (1687), 6)

Whittow’s critique of the conspicuous consumption and waste of state rituals is in fact more subversive than it might initially appear. While directed ostensibly at William III but at those ‘Judges, Justices, and Officers of all sorts, that do fail not the Will of men’ (5), her complaint was graphically illustrated with a powerful image of rob state. In 1692, the image of a crowd chanting ‘Crouche, Crouche’ would immediately bring to mind the execution of Charles I and the recent forced abdication of James II. By implicitly reminding William III of England’s willingness to crucify his predecessors, Whittow effectively hinted that this professed saviour of the church was no more secure than they.

Whittow’s critique of conspicuous consumption was characteristic of her increasing visibility not only with any particular task but rather with the working poor, ‘many hundreds to City and Countr y, that sit in their Houses with hungry Bellies, both of Woes and others, that knows not which way to shift for their Children’ (Whittow Whitcham’s Heloise Thanksgiving, 73). Whittow was intensely aware of what the aristocracy and gentry did and did not with their resources, almost without exception, her writings contrast the substance-level existence of the labouring poor with the privileged lives of the propertied classes. She criticized the upper ranks’ excessive attention to things of the flesh, especially fine food and apparel, and she consistently
referred to aliens rather than to working people as “the drinkards, the feasters, the swears, gamblers, whores, orangers, the proflige.” She attacked colonialism and rapacious overseas trade, the amassing of excess wealth and estates, and especially disregard for the poor. Above all, she argued that the careless accumulation of capital in the hands of a few must be curbed.

The next to your Habit is your Houses, which are deck’d with all manner of Curiosity, Richness and Delicacy, as your said Wife Pahress: Your great spacious Lordly Houses, furnished with all manner of costly, rich and sumptuous Furniture, which would be too tedious, and sill up much Paper to insert them, but your villagous Feeding, and excessive Feasting one another, in so much that you run out great Estates, both of your own and other Men’s, but in your own Familiers, that is, among your Servants, many of you are very pinchling and sparing, and to the Poor little or nothing, but what you are compelled to do in your Parish Duties; and your poor Neighbours, and the poor Hands in City and County, seek in your Houses with hungry Bellies, both of Witnesses and others, that know not which way to shift for Bread for their Children; some eating Bread sparingly, and drink Water. Others getting Garden stuff, or Cabbage, and such like for their Children to feed on; whilst you feed, Done like, lying at your Ease, exceeding your selves upon your rich Satin Beds and Couches, wallowing in all your stolif Pensions, not knowing what to Eat, Drink, or put on for Richness and Dainties; and others of you, Boarded up Treasure as Sneed, and are never satisfied, compelling Sea and Land to get Riches, adding House to House, and Land to Land, and all for Parson’s for our Children, say they; and thus the Fathers eat sweare Grapes, and the Childrens Teeth are set on edge.

(Widow Whitmore’s Husbands Troubles, 21–2)

It was the immediate duty of the substantially propertied of all states to make “pleasant Provision, not only for the support of your own Judgement, but for all sorts, that the Widow, Fatherless, and Strangers may have no want” (Widow Whitmore’s Husbands Troubles, 23). Such stop-gap relations to alleviate poverty, however, were only the first step on the agenda for social change. Petty charity “compelled ... by [Parish Duties] was a sop to the poor rather than a commitment to social justice. For the problems of inequality was inherent in the mode of production and distribution itself.

But you Courteous, Earnestly named Professors of all sorts, you aggraviouy pinch the Poor, your giving five, ten, twenty or forty Shillings, may live, ten, twenty Pounds, (though who is so liberal) will not excuse you that you have hundreds, and thousands, and many thousands lying by a year will not excuse you. ... When His Majesty calls you to an account what you have done with his Treasure ... will you say, we boarded it up by us; or will you say, we gave it our Children for their Portion, to live in Pride and Luxury.

(Widow Whitmore’s Husbands Troubles, 23)

Not only the landowners and capitalists but also the “Teachers and Ridders of this Generation” were hypocritical and covetous, concerned only for their Self-interest in one kind or other; some for yearly maintainance, others for Name and Fame, or to be highly esteemed for their Gifts and Parts” (Widow Whitmore’s Husbands Troubles, 12). The “Professors of Religion” in fact “outstrip the Prophet,” striving for “Honours and Preferments into great Places” (Humble Adden, 6). Given insights into the relation of religion, politics, and property in this period such as these, it is perhaps not surprising that by 1669 Whitmore declared: “I walk alone as a Woman forsaken; I have fellow-

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ship with those that live in Caves, and in Dens, and desolate places of the Earth, of whom the World was not worthy” (Humble Adden, 13). For by that time, her repenting social critique was directed at members of the Church of England and dissenters alike.

Notes
1 Elinor James, Mrs. James’s Induction of the Church of England. In her Answer to a Pamphlet Intituled, A New Test of the Church of England’s Loyalty (1687), 1, and Mrs. James Prayer for the Queen and Parliament, and Kingdome too (1719). After each broadside is cited once, all further references are cited parenthetically in the text.
2 Joan Whitehouse was an exception to this rule. While she did typically sign her works, her later pamphlets were too outspoken to show either her own address or a publisher’s name or address in imprints.
3 Thomas O’Malley, “Defying the Powers and Tempering the Spirit”: A Review of Quaker Control over their Publications 1672–1689,” Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 33 (1982), 74. The word “existent” here is important. After 1672, the Quakers had a very thorough policy for collecting their own works; thus proportionately more of their publications survive.
7 According to her own account, Docwra was “the eldest daughter of William Waldegrow, of Busers, in the County of Suffolk” (in Apotheosis Commonplace 1689), 64. In about 1647, she married James Docwra of Fallowfield near Cambridge, and in about 1669 she became a Quaker. Her husband died in 1672, and after about 1681 she dwelt in Cambridge. For further biographical information on Docwra, possibly of minor value, see her works, as well as the many biographical claims made by Francis Boggy in his hooked Whitewood, and Her Daughter Anna Docsers, Publicly Repro’d, for Her Line and Lightness in Her Book, called, An Apotheosis, 4th ed. (1699) and A Serious Account Against the Propriety of Quakers (1781), 57.
8 Francis Boggy, William Peer, the Potentated Quaker, Discours to Holden a Correspondence with the Jews[r]s [sic] . . . To which is Added, A Writing Sheet for Ann Docwra (1700), 5.
9 This kind of vivid personal-public debate is an underexplored though central aspect of seventeenth-century popular religious controversy. For a study of nonconformist literary culture which teaches on some aspects of these debates see N. H. Keil’s The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Late Seventeenth-Century England (Albana: University of Georgia Press, 1987).
10 On Quaker central organization see McDowell, “Tice Sowle.”
12 At almost the same time that Docwra and Boggy were attacking one another in print, Dellerter Monley was publishing her own political allegories, satisfying a similar public desire for entertainment, ‘sour’, and edifying intellectual debate.
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31 Joan Whitmore, The Widow Whitmore's Humble Thanksgiving for the King's Safe Return (1649), 33.
32 To Queen Mary: The Humble Salutation and Faithful Greeting of the Widow Whitmore, With a Warning to the People of the Land (1690) and The Humble Address of the Widow Whitmore to King William (1689), 13–34.
33 Joan Whitmore, To the King, and Both Houses of Parliament (1696).
34 Joan Whitmore, To King William and Queen Mary (1697), 7 and Widow Whitmore's Humble Thanksgiving (1689), 4.
35 Joan Whitmore, To Queen Mary: The Humble Salutation and Faithful Greeting of the Widow Whitmore (14 Dec. 1690), 18.

26 O'Malley, "Defying the Powers and Tempering the Spirit", 85.
27 The work also records the recent death of her 6-year-old son Jon.
28 Joan Whitmore, The Humble Address of the Widow Whitmore to King William, With a Faithful Warning to the Subjects of England, To Haste and Prepare by True Repentance, and Deep Humiliation, to meet the Lord, Before His Indignation comes like Fire, and breaks forth into a mighty Flame, in that none can quench it (1689), 13.
29 Joan Whitmore, To King William and Queen Mary, Grace and Peace. The Widow Whitmore's Humble Thanksgiving... for the King's safe Return to England (1690), 7.
30 It is not yet known how Whitmore got her works into print after she left the Quakers. Only three of her works show printers' or publishers' names in imprints. The imprint of The Widow Whitmore's Humble Thanksgiving, which was apparently licensed, reads: "Printed by D. Edwards in King and Both Houses of Parliament", shows Elizabeth Whitlock's name in imprints. Faithful Warnings shows: "Printed, and are to be sold by E. Whitlock, in Stationers Court near Stationers-Hall. 1697.
31 O'Malley, "Defying the Powers and Tempering the Spirit", 86.
32 The "young Child of a year old" was probably Whitmore's daughter Susannah, who died in 1672, at the age of 15.
33 Joan Whitmore, "To the King, and Both Houses of Parliament", Preliminary Epistle to Faithful Warnings, Expostulations, and Exhortations, To the several Professors of Christianity in England, as well as those of the Highest at the Lower Quality (1657), 109.
35 Joan Whitmore, To the King, And Both Houses of Parliament (1696).