This workshop is interested in literary and historical articulations of utopian female communities in mid- to late-seventeenth-century England. Both communities and exchanges will be taken into consideration as we consider the possibilities and limitations of exclusive female communities and the ways in which they register a desire for new methods of female-instituted interaction, invention, and exchange. This workshop aims to explore early modern formulations of all-female communities and the boundaries that they cross through the work of Margaret Cavendish. Her 1668 play *The Convent of Pleasure* stages a secular community of women dedicated to pleasures of the body and mind in an environment completely stripped of male interference. Yet when the convent eventually disbands after a male intruder dresses as a woman, seduces the convent’s founder, and marries her, the nerve center of the female community breaks down. In her 1622 play, Cavendish sets out to test the limits of another institution - the all-female academy. In *The Female Academy*, affluent ladies routinely deliver eloquent speeches (on topics such as truth and falsehood, friendship, and theatre) while male voyeurs watch and listen from a grate. Though the men establish a male academy to rival that of their next-door neighbors, the female collegians “take no notice of the Academy of Men...they neither mention the Men, nor their Discoursings, or Arguments, or Academy, as if their were no such Men.” Exasperated, the male adversaries try to drown out the women’s rhetoric with trumpet sounds – a ploy that eventually moves the headmistress to concede that the female academics have cloistered themselves only to prepare for marriage. Both plays leave readers with a pressing question: why do these all-female communities fail? It’s worth noting, moreover, that while Cavendish’s fictional utopias reveal themselves vulnerable to male intervention, they also imagine other permeable boundaries primed for crossing: class, religion, sexuality, and genre.

These dramatic representations coincide with contemporaneous historical proposals for all- female communities, academies, and convents. Though never put into practice, appeals like *A Letter Touching a Colledge of Maids, or, A Virgin-Society* (1665), *The English Nunne* (1642), and *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (1694) also imagine alternative space(s) for women. Keeping with the possibilities for boundary crossing that Cavendish so provocatively stages, this workshop is designed to be interdisciplinary in its approach, combining close literary analysis with historical contextualization and comparison. We will examine several historical, non-literary documents that - though different in genre - share the same goals of intellectual development, self-sufficiency, spiritual enlightenment, and freedom from the risks associated with spousal abuse and childbirth. And although these historical proposals sometimes differ in ambition, they pay attention to the same kinds of questions and motivations that concern Cavendish’s plays. Why must women cordon themselves off from men? Should these institutions admit all women – or only upper-class virgins or widows? Should seclusion from men be a permanent life choice or a temporary status? Exploring these non-literary sources will provide an invaluable historical context for Cavendish’s work as well as raise questions about how genre and audience affect the configurations of and possibilities for female utopian communities. Other questions that we hope to consider in this workshop include, what other formulations for female communities besides convents exist during the mid- to late-seventeenth century? What differences arise between male- versus female-instituted communities? What does each community try to keep out? What do they try to keep in? What are the reasons for their various failures and successes? What kinds of women are allowed to participate in these communities, and who is left on the margins?
### Required Reading


7. Astell, Mary. *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest by a Lover of her Sex* (selections). London: R. Wilkin, 1694.

### Suggested Reading


The ACTORS NAMES.

Three Gentlemen.
Lady Happy.
Madam Mediator.
Monsieur Take-pleasure, and Dick his Man.
Monsieur Facil.
Monsieur Adviser.
Monsieur Courty.
Lady Amorous.
Lady Vertue.
The Princess.
Two mean Women.
A Lady, and her Maid.
Two Ladies.
A distracted Lady, and her Maid.
A Citizen's Wife.
Two Ancient Ladies.
A Gentleman and a Young Lady.
A Shepherd.
Sea-Nymphs.
An Ambassador.

A Piece of a Play.

Advertisement to the Reader.

The Reader is desir'd to take notice, That the following Fragments are part of a Play which I did intend for my Blazing-World, and had been Printed with it, if I had finish'd it; but before I had ended the second Act, finding that my Genius did not tend that way, I left that design; and now putting some other Comedies to the Press, I suffer this Piece of One to be publish'd with them.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Enter Sir Puppy Dogman, and Monsieur As.

Sir Puppy Dogman.

Monsieur As, you are the only person in the whole World, I am ambitious to be acquainted with.

M. As. I am your thrice humble servant, Sir Puppy.

Sir Puppy. I am informed you are the best drolling, A

cselling,
The Convent of Pleasure
A Comedy

Enter Three Gentlemen.

First Gentleman. Tom, Where have you been, you look so sadly of it?

2 Gent. I have been at the Funeral of the Lord Fortunate, who has left his Daughter, the Lady Happy, very rich, having no other Daughter but her.

1 Gent. If she be so rich, it will make us all Young Men, spend all our Wealth in fine Clothes, Coaches, and Lackies, to set out our Wooing hopes.

3 Gent. If all her Woosers be younger Brothers, as most of us Gallants are, we shall undo our selves upon bare hopes, without Probability: But is she handsome, Tom?

2 Gent. Yes, she is extream handsome, young, rich, and virtuous.

1 Gent. Faith, that is too much for one Woman to possess.

2 Gent. Not, if you were to have her.

1 Gent. No, not for me; but in my Opinion too much for any other Man. 

Exeunt.
Scene 2

Enter the Lady HAPPY, and one of her Attendants.

SERVANT. Madam, you being young, handsome, rich, and virtuous, I hope you will not cast away those gifts of Nature, Fortune, and Heaven, upon a Person which cannot merit you?

L. HAPPY. Let me tell you, that Riches ought to be bestowed on such as are poor, and want means to maintain themselves; and Youth, on those that are old; Beauty, on those that are ill-favoured; and Virtue, on those that are vicious: So that if I should place my gifts rightly, I must Marry one that's poor, old, ill-favoured, and debauch'd.

SERV. Heaven forbid.

L. HAPPY. Nay, Heaven doth not only allow of it, but commands it; for we are commanded to give to those that want.

Enter Madam MEDITATOR to the Lady HAPPY.

MEDIT. Surely, Madam, you do but talk, and intend not to go where you say.

L. HAPPY. Yes, truly, my Words and Intentions go even together.

MEDIT. But surely you will not incloyster your self, as you say.

L. HAPPY. Why, what is there in the publick World that should invite me to live in it?

MEDIT. More then if you should banish your self from it.

L. HAPPY. Put the case I should Marry the best of Men, if any best there be; yet would a Man'd life have more crosses and sorrows then pleasure, freedom, or happiness: nae Marriage to those that are virtuous is a greater restraint then a Monastery. Or, should I take delight in Admirers? they might gaze on my Beauty, and praise my Wit, and I receive nothing from their eyes, nor lips; for Words vanish as soon as spoken, and Sights are not substantial. Besides, I should lose more of my Reputation by their Visits, than gain by their Praises. Or, should I quit Reputation and turn Courtizan, there would be more lost in my Health, then gained by my Lovers, I should find more pain then Pleasure; besides, the troubles and frits I should be put to, with the Quarrels and Brouilleries* that Jealous Rivals make, would be a torment to me; and 'tis only for the sake of Men, when Women retire not: And since there is so much folly, vanity and falshood in Men, why should Women trouble and vex themselves for their sake; for reticness bars the life from nothing else but Men.

* Brouilleries: disagreements; confusions.

MEDIT. O yes, for those that incloyster themselves, bar themselves from all other worldly Pleasures.

L. HAPPY. The more Fools they.

MEDIT. Will you call those Fools that do it for the gods sake?

L. HAPPY. No Madam, it is not for the gods sake, but for opinion's sake; for, Can any Rational Creature think or believe, the gods take delight in the Creature's uneasie life? or, Did they command or give leave to Nature to make Senses for no use; or to cross, vex and pain them? for, What profit or pleasure can it be to the gods to have Men or Women wear coarse Linen or roath Woollen, or to fleas* their skin with Hair-cloth, or to eat or saw thorow their flesh with Cordet or, What profit or pleasure can it be to the gods to have men eat more Fish then Flesh, to fast? unless the gods did feed on such meat themselves; for then, for fear the gods should want it, it were fit for Men to abstain from it: The like for Garments, for fear the gods should want fine Clothes to adorn themselves, it were fit Men should not wear them: Or, what profit or pleasure can it be to the gods to have Men to lie uneasily on the hard ground, unless the gods and Nature were at variance, strife and wars; as if what is displeasing unto Nature, were pleasing to the gods, and to be enemies to her, were to be friends to them.

MEDIT. But being done for the gods sake, it makes that which in Nature seems to be bad, in Divinity to be good.

L. HAPPY. It cannot be good, if it be neither pleasure, nor profit to the gods; neither do Men any thing for the gods but their own sake.

MEDIT. But when the Mind is not employed with Vanities, nor the Senses with Luxury;* the Mind is more free, to offer its Adorations, Prayers and Praises to the gods.

L. HAPPY. I believe, the gods are better pleased with Praise then Fasting; but when the Senses are dull'd with abstinence, the Body weakened with fasting, the Spiritus tir'd with watching, the Life made uneasie with pain, the Soul can have but little will to worship: only the Imagination doth frighten it into active zeal, which devotion is rather forced then voluntary; so that their prayers rather flow out of their mouth, then spring from their heart, like rain-water that runs thorow Gutters, or like Water that's forced up a Hill by Artificial Pipes and Cisterns. But those that pray not unto the gods, or praise them more in prosperity then adversity, more in pleasures then pains, more

* Fleas: scape off.
† Luxury: riches, but with a strong sexual connotation.
in liberty then restrain, deserve neither the happiness of ease, peace, freedom, plenty and tranquility in this World, nor the glory and blessedness of the next. And if the gods should take pleasure in nothing but in the torments of their Creatures, and would not prefer those prayers that are offer'd with ease and delight, I should believe, the gods were cruel: and, What Creature that had reason or rational understanding, would serve cruel Masters, when they might serve a kind Mistress, or would forsake the service of their kind Mistress, to serve cruel Masters? Wherefore, if the gods be cruel, I will serve Nature; but the gods are bountiful, and give all, that's good, and bid us freely please our selves in that which is best for us; and that is best, what is most temperately used, and longest may be enjoyed, for excess doth wast it self, and all it feeds upon.

MEDITAT. In my opinion your Doctrine, and your Intention do not agree together.

L. HAPPY. Why?

MEDITAT. You intend to live incloister'd and retired from the World.

L. HAPPY. 'Tis true, but not from pleasures: for, I intend to incloister my self from the World, to enjoy pleasure, and not to bury my self from it; but to incloister my self from the incumbered cares and vexations, troubles and perturbation of the World.

MEDITAT. But if you incloister your self, How will you enjoy the company of Men, whose conversation is thought the greatest Pleasure?

L. HAPPY. Men are the only trouble of Women; for they only cross and oppose their sweet delights, and peaceful life; they cause their pains, but not their pleasures. Wherefore those Women that are poor, and have not means to buy delights, and maintain pleasures, are only fit for Men; for having not means to please themselves, they must serve only to please others; but those Women, where Fortune, Nature, and the gods are joined to make them happy, were mad to live with Men, who make the Female sex their slaves; but I will not be so enslaved, but will live retired from their Company. Wherefore, in order thereto, I will take so many Noble Persons of my own Sex, as my Estate will plentifully maintain, such whose Births are greater then their Fortunes, and are resolv'd to live a single life, and vow Virginity: with these I mean to live incloister'd with all the delights and pleasures that are allowable and lawful; My Cloister shall not be a Cloister of restraint, but a place for freedom, not to vex the Senses but to please them.

For every Sense shall pleasure take,
And all our Lives shall merry make.
Our Minds in full delight shall joy.

Not vex'd with every idle Toy;
Each Season shall our Caterers be,
To search the Land, and Fish the Sea;
To gather Fruit, and reap the Corn,
That's brought to us with Plenty's Horn;
With which we'll feast and please our tast,
But not luxurious make a waste.
We'll Cloth our selves with softest Silk,
And Linen fine as white as milk.
We'll please our Sight with Pictures rare,
Our Nose with perfumed Air.
Our Ears with soft melodious Sound,
Whose Substance can be no where found;
Our Tast with sweet delicious Meat,
And savory Sauces we will eat:
Variety each Sense shall feed,
And Change in them new Appetites breed.
Thus will in Pleasure's Convoy live,
With delight, and with it die.

Exeunt.

ACT II

Scene I

Enter Monsieur TAPE-PLEASURE, and his Man DICK.

TAKEPL. Dick, Am I fine to day?
DICK. Yes, Sir, as fine as Feathers, Ribbons, Gold, and Silver can make you.
TAKEPL. Dost thou think I shall get the Lady Happy?
DICK. Not if it be her fortune to continue in that name.
TAKEPL. Why?
DICK. Because if she Marry your Worship she must change her Name; for the Wife takes the Name of her Husband, and quits her own.
TAKEPL. Faith, Dick, if I had her wealth I should be Happy.
DICK. It would be according as your Worship would use it; but, on my conscience, you would be more happy with the Ladie's Wealth, then the Lady would be with your Worship.
TAKEPL. Why should you think so?
DICK. Because Women never think themselves happy in Marriage.
takepl. But they impoll Women in all Places in their Gardens; and for Brewing, Baking and making all sorts of things; besides, some keep their Swine, and twenty such like Offices and Employments there are which we should be very proper for.

facil. O yes, for keeping of Swine belongs to Men; remember the Prodigal Son.*

advisr. Faith, for our Prodigality we might be all Swin-heards.

court. Also we shall be proper for Gardens, for we can dig, and set, and sow.

takepl. And we are proper for Brewing.

advisr. We are more proper for Drinking, for I can drink good Beer, or Ale, when 'tis Brew'd; but I could not brew such Beer, or Ale, as any man could drink.

facil. Come, come, we shall make a shift one way or other: Besides, we shall be very willing to learn, and be very diligent in our Services, which will give good and great content; wherefore, let us go and put these designs into execution.

courly. Content, content.

advisr. Nay, faith, let us not trouble our Selves for it, 'tis in vain.

exsunt.

ACT III

Scene 1

Enter the Princess, and the Lady Happy, with the rest of the Ladies belonging to the Convent.

Lady happy. Madam, Your Highness has done me much Honour, to come from a Splendid Court to a retired Convent.

prin. Sweet Lady Happy, there are many, that have quit their Crowns and Power, for a Cloister of Restraint; then well may I quit a Court of troubles for a Convent of Pleasure: but the greatest pleasure I could receive, were, To have your Friendship.

l. happy. I should be ungrateful, should I not be not only your Friend, but humble Servant.

prin. I desire you would be my Mistress, and I your Servant; and upon this agreement of Friendship I desire you will grant me one Request.

l. happy. Any thing that is in my power to grant.

* the Prodigal Son] for the Prodigal Son as a swineherd, see Luke 15:15-16.

prin. Why then, I observing in your several recreations, some of your Ladies do accouatre Themselves in Masculine-Habits, and act Lovers-parts; I desire you will give me leave to be sometimes so accouatre and act the part of your loving Servant.

l. happy. I shall never desire to have any other loving Servant then your Self.

prin. Nor I any other loving Mistress then Your Self.

l. happy. More innocent Lovers never can there be,

Then my most Princeely Lover, that's a She.

prin. Nor never Convent did such pleasures give,

Where Lovers with their Mistresses may live. Enter a Lady, asking whether they will see the Play. 

lady. May it please your Highness, the Play is ready to be Acted. The Scene is opened, the Princess and L. Happy sit down, and the Play is Acted within the Scene; the Princess and the L. Happy being Spectators. Enter one dress like a Man that speaks the Prologue.

Noble Spectators, you shall see to night
A Play, which though't be dull, yet's short to sight;
For, since we cannot please your Ears with Wit,
We will not tire your limbs, long here to sit.

Scene 2

Enter Two mean* Women.

first woman. O Neighbour well met, where have you been?

2 woman. I have been with my Neighbour the Cobbler's Wife to comfort her for the loss of her Husband, who is run away with Goody Mettle the Tinker's Wife.

1 woman. I would to Heaven my Husband would run away with Goody Shred the Butcher's Wife, for he lies all day drinking in an Ale-house, like a drunken Rogue as he is, and when he comes home, he beats me all black and blew, when I and my Children are almost starved for want.

2 woman. Truly Neighbour, so doth my Husband; and spends not only what he gets, but what I earn with the sweat of my brows, and whilst my Children cry for bread, and he drinks that away, that should feed my small Children, which are too young to work for themselves.

1 woman. But I will go, and pull my Husband out of the Ale-house, or I'll break their Lattice-windows down.

* mean lower-class.
2 woman. Come, I'll go and help; for my Husband is there too: but we shall be both beaten by them.

1 woman. I care not: for I will not suffer him to be drunk, and I and my Children starve; I had better be dead.

Exeunt.

Scene 3

Enter a Lady and her Maid.

Lady. Oh, I am sick.

Maid. You are breeding a Child, Madam.

Lady. I have not one minute of time.

Ex.

Scene 4

Enter Two Ladies.

First Lady. Why weep you, Madam?

2 Lady. Have I not cause to weep when my Husband hath play'd all his Estate away at Dice and Cards, even to the Clothes on his back?

1 Lady. I have as much cause to weep then as you; for, though my Husband hath not lost his Estate at play, yet he hath spent it amongst his Whores; and is not content to keep Whores abroad, but in my house, under my roof, and they must rule as chief Mistresses.

2 Lady. But my Husband hath not only lost his own Estate, but also my Portion; and hath forced me with threats, to yield up my Jointure, so that I must beg for my living, for any thing I know as yet.

1 Lady. If all Married Women were as unhappy as I, Marriage were a curse.

2 Lady. No doubt of it.

Exeunt.

Scene 5

Enter a Lady, as almost distracted, running about the Stage, and her Maid follows her.

Lady. Oh! my Child is dead, my Child is dead, what shall I do, what shall I do? Maid. You must have patience, Madam.

Lady. Who can have patience to lose their only Child? Oh! I shall run mad, for I have no patience.

Runs off the Stage. Exit Maid after her.

* Jointure; the part of a husband's estate entailed for life on his wife or widow.

Scene 6

Enter a Citizen's Wife, as into a Tavern, where a Bush is hung out,* and meets some Gentlemen there.

Citizen's Wife. Pray Gentlemen, is my Husband, Mr. Negligent here?

1 Gent. He was, but he is gone some quarter of an hour since.

Cit. Wife. Could he go, Gentlemen?

2 Gent. Yes, with a Supporter.

Cit. Wife. Out upon him! must he be supported? Upon my credit Gentlemen, he will undo himself and me too, with his drinking and carelessness, leaving his Shop and all his Commodities at six's and seven's; and his Prentices and Journey-men are as careless and idle as he; besides, they cozen* him of his Wares. But, was it a He or She-Supporter, my Husband was supported by?

1 Gent. A She-supporter; for it was one of the Maid-servants, which belong to this Tavern.

Cit. Wife. Out upon him Knave, must he have a She-supporter, in the Devil's name? but I'll go and seek them both out with a Vengeance.

2 Gent. Pray, let us intreat your stay to drink a cup of Wine with us.

Cit. Wife. I will take your kind Offer; for Wine may chance to abate Cholerick† vapours, and pacifie the Spleen.

1 Gent. That it will, for Wine and good Company are the only abaters of Vapours.

2 Gent. It doth not abate Vapours so much as cure Melancholy.§

Cit. Wife. In truth, I find a cup of Wine doth comfort me sometimes.

1 Gent. It will cheer the Heart.

2 Gent. Yes, and enlighten the Understanding.

Cit. Wife. Indeed, and my understanding requires enlightening.

Exeunt.

Scene 7

Enter a Lady big with Child, groaning as in labour, and a Company of Women with her.

* where a Bush is hung out! A branch hung outside a tavern was a signal that the tavern is open.
† Cholerick; angry, irritable.
§ Melancholy; depressed. Melancholy, Cholerick, Sanguine (stupidly cheerful), and Phlegmatic (moosely and physically inert) are the terms used to describe personalities disordered by an excess of black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm, respectively.
LADY. Oh my back, my back will break, Oh! Oh! Oh!

1 WOMAN. Is the Midwife sent for?

2 WOMAN. Yes, but she is with another Lady.

LADY. Oh my back! Oh! Oh! Oh! [Juno,* give me some ease.

Exeunt.

Scene 8

Enter two Ancient Ladies.

LADY. I have brought my Son into the World with great pains, bled him with tender care, much pains and great cost; and must he now be hang'd for killing a Man in a quarrel? when he should be a comfort and staff of my age, is he to be my ages affliction?

2 LADY. I confess it is a great affliction; but I have had as great; having had but two Daughters, and them fair ones, though I say it, and might have matched them well: but one of them was got with Child to my great disgrace; th'o' other run away with my Butler, not worth the droppings of his Taps.

1 LADY. Who would desire Children, since they come to such misfortunes?

Exeunt.

Scene 9

Enter one Woman meeting another.

1 WOMAN. Is the Midwife come, for my Lady is in a strong labour?

2 WOMAN. No, she cannot come, for she hath been with a Lady that hath been in strong labour these three days of a dead child, and 'tis thought she cannot be delivered.

Enter another Woman.

3 WOMAN. Come away, the Midwife is come.

1 WOMAN. Is the Lady deliver'd, she was withall?

3 WOMAN. Yes, of life; for she could not be delivered, and so she died.

2 WOMAN. Pray tell not our Lady so: for, the very fright of not being able to bring forth a Child will kill her.

Exeunt.

Scene 10

Enter a Gentleman who meets a fair Young Lady.

GENT. Madam, my Lord desires you to command whatsoever you please, and it shall be obey'd.

* [Juno] Roman queen of the gods and also the goddess of childbirth.

LADY. I dare not command, but I humbly intreat, I may live quiet and free from his Amours.

GENT. He says he cannot live, and not love you.

LADY. But he may live, and not lie with me.

GENT. He cannot be happy, unless he enjoy you.

LADY. And I must be unhappy, if he should.

GENT. He commanded me to tell you that he will part from his Lady for your sake.

LADY. Heaven forbid, I should part Man and Wife.

GENT. Lady, he will be divorced for your sake.

LADY. Heaven forbid I should be the cause of a Divorce between a Noble Pair.

GENT. You had best consent; for, otherwise he will have you against your will.

LADY. I will send his Lordship an answer to morrow; pray him to give me so much time.

GENT. I shall, Lady.

Exit Gentleman. LADY sola.

LADY. I must prevent my own ruin, and the sweet virtuous Ladies, by going into a Nunnery; wherefore, I'll put my self into one to night: There will I live, and serve the Gods on high, And leave this wicked World and Vanity.

Exeunt. One enters and speaks the epilogue.

Marriage is a Curse we find,
Especially to Women kind:
From the Cobbler's Wife we see,
To Ladies, they unhappie be.

1. HAPPY TO THE PRIN. Pray Servant, how do you like this Play?

PRIN. My sweet Mistress, I cannot in conscience approve of it; for though some few be unhappy in Marriage, yet there are many more that are so happy as they would not change their condition.

1. HAPPY. O Servant, I fear you will become an Apostate.*

PRIN. Not to you sweet Mistress.

Exeunt. Enter the Gentlemen.

1 GENT. There is no hopes of dissolving this Convent of Pleasure.

2 GENT. Faith, not as I can perceive.

3 GENT. We may be sure, this Convent will never be dissolved, by reason it is ennobled with the company of great Princesses, and glorified with a great

* Apostate] one who betrays his or her vows.
Fame; but the fear is, that all the rich Heirs will make Convents, and all the Young Beauties associate themselves in such Convents.

1 Gent. You speak reason; wherefore, let us endeavor to get Wives, before they are Incloister'd.

Exeunt.

ACT IV

Scene 1

Enter Lady Happy dressed as a Shepherdess; she walks very Melancholy, then speaks as to her self.

My Name is Happy, and so was my Condition, before I saw this Princess; but now I am like to be the most unhappy Maid alive: But why may not I love a Woman with the same affectation I could a Man?

No, no, Nature is Nature, and still will be
The same she was from all Eternity.

Enter the Princess in Masculine Shepherd's Clothes:

Prin. My dearest Mistress, do you shun my Company? is your Servant become an offence to your sight?

1. Happy. No, Servant! your Presence is more acceptable to me then the Presence of our Goddess Nature, for which she, I fear will punish me, for loving you more then I ought to love you.

Prin. Can Lovers love too much?

1. Happy. Yes, if they love not well.

Prin. Can any Love be more vertuous, innocent and harmless then ours?


Prin. Then let us please our selves, as harmless Lovers use to do.

1. Happy. How can harmless Lovers please themselves?

Prin. Why very well, as, to discourse, imbrace and kiss, so mingle souls together.

1. Happy. But innocent Lovers do not use to kiss.

Prin. Not any act more frequent amongst us Women-kind: Nay, it were a sin in friendship, should not we kiss: then let us not prove our selves Reprobates. They imbrace and kiss, and hold each other in their Arms.

Prin. These my Imbraces though of Female kind,

May be as fervent as a Masculine mind.

The Scene is open'd and the Princess and L. Happy go in. A Pastoral within the Scene. The Scene is changed into a Green, or Plain, where Sheep are feeding, and a

MAY-POLK* in the middle. L. HAPPY as a Shepherdess, and the Princess as a Shepherd are sitting there. Enter another Shepherd, and Woes the Lady HAPPY.

Shepherd. Fair Shepherdess do not my Suit deny,

O grant my Suit, let me not for Love die:

Pity my Flocks, Oh save their Shepherd's life;

Grant you my Suit, be you their Shepherd's Wife.

1. Happy. How can I grant to every one's request?

Each Shepherd's Suit lets me not be at rest;

For which I wish, the Winds might blow them far,

That no Love-Suit might enter to my Ear.

Enter Madam Mediator in a Shepherdess dress, and another Shepherd.

Sheep. Good Dame unto your Daughter speak for me.

Persuade her I your Son in Law may be:

I'll serve your Swine, your Cows bring home to Milk;

Attend your Sheep, whose Wool's as soft as Silk;

I'll plow your Grounds, Corn I'll in Winter sow,

Then reap your Harvest, and your Grass I'll mow;

Gather your Fruits in Autumn from the Tree.

All this and more I'll do, it's please for me.

Shepherdess. My Daughter swears a single life,

And swears, she'll be a Wife;

But live a Maid, and Flocks will keep,

And her chief Company shall be Sheep.

The Princess as a Shepherd, speaks to the Lady HAPPY.

Prin. My Shepherdess, your Wit flies high,

Up to the Skie,

And views the Gates of Heaven,

Which are the Planets Seven;†

Sees how fixt Stars are plac'd,

And how the Meteors wast;

What makes the Snow so white,

And how the Sun makes light;

What makes the biting Cold

On every thing take hold;

And Hail a mixt degree,

* May-Pole, a phallic fertility symbol; remnant of pagan fertility rituals.
† Planets Seven, in early astronomy, in order of their distance from Earth: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.
PRINC. Besides, within the Waters deep,
In hollow Rocks my Court I keep;
Of Amber-greece* my Bed is made,
Whereon my softer Limbs are laid,
There take I Rest; and whilst I sleep,
The Sea doth guard, and safe me keep
From danger; and, when I awake,
A Present of a Ship doth make.
No Prince on Earth hath more resort,
Nor keeps more Servants in his Court;
Of Mare-maids you’re waited on,
And Mare-men do attend upon
My Person; some are Councillors,
Which order all my great Affairs;
Within my wat’ry Kingdom wide,
They help to rule, and so to guide
The Common-wealth; and are by me
Prefer’d unto an high degree.
Some Judges are, and Magistrates,
Decide each Cause, and end Debates;
Others, Commanders in the War;
And some to Governments prefer;
Others are Neptune’s Priests, which pray
And preach when is a Holy-day.
And thus with Method order I,
And govern all with Majesty;
I am sole Monarch of the Sea,
And all therein belongs to me.

A Sea-Nymph Sings this following SONG.
1. We Watery Nymphs Rejoice and Sing
   About God Neptune our Sea’s King;
   In Sea-green Habits, for to move
   His God-head, for to fall in love.
2. That with his Trident he doth stay
   Rough foaming Billows which obey;
   And when in Triumph he doth stride
   His manag’d Dolphin for to ride.

* Amber-greece | ambergris, a rare substance from sperm whales used in making perfume.

3. All his Sea-people to his wish,
   From Whale to Herring subject Fish,
   With Acclamations do attend him,
   And pray’s more Riches still to send him.

Exeunt. The SCENE Vanishes.

ACT V

Scene 1

Enter the PRINCESS and the Lady HAPPY; The PRINCESS is in a Man’s Apparel as going to Dance; they Whisper sometimes; then the Lady HAPPY takes a Ribbon from her arm, and gives it to the PRINCESS, who gives her another instead of that, and kisses her hand. They go in and come presently out again with all the Company to Dance, the Musick plays; And after they have Danced a little while, in comes Madam MEDIATOR wringing her hands, and spreading her arms; and full of Passion cries out.

M. MEDIATOR. O Ladies, Ladies! you’re all betrayed, undone, undone; for there is a man disguised in the Convent, search and you’ll find it.

They all skip from each other, as afraid of each other, only the PRINCESS and the Lady HAPPY stand still together.

PRINC. You may make the search, Madam MEDIATOR; but you will quit me, I am sure.

M. MEDIATOR. By my faith but I will not, for you are most to be suspected.

PRINC. But you say, the Man is disguised like a Woman, and I am accosted like a Man.

M. MEDIATOR. Fiddle, faddle, that is nothing to the purpose.

Enter an EMBASSADOR to the PRINCE; the EMBASSADOR kneels, the PRINCE bids him rise.

PRINC. What came you here for?

EMBASS. May it please your Highness, the Lords of your Council sent me to inform your Highness, that your Subjects are so discontented at your Absence, that if your Highness do not return into your Kingdom soon, they’ll enter this Kingdom by reason they hear you are here; and some report as if your Highness were restrained as Prisoner.

PRINC. So I am, but not by the State, but by this Fair Lady, who must be your Soveraigness.

The EMBASSADOR kneels and kisses her hand.

PRINC. But since I am discover’d, go from me to the Councillors of this State,
and inform them of my being here, as also the reason, and that I ask their leave I may marry this Lady; otherwise, tell them I will have her by force of Arms.

Exit Ambassador.

M. MEDITAT. O the Lord! I hope you will not bring an Army, to take away all the Women; will you?

PRINC. No, Madam MEDITAT, we will leave you behind us.

Exeunt.

Scene 2

Enter Madam MEDITAT lamenting and crying with a Handkerchief in her hand.

Written by my Lord Duke.

O Gentlemen, that I never had been born, we're all undone and lost! ADVIS. Why, what's the matter?


ADVIS. How?

M. MEDITAT. How, never such a Mistake; why we have taken a Man for a Woman.

ADVIS. Why, a Man is for a Woman.

M. MEDITAT. Fidele fadle, I know that as well as you can tell me; but there was a young Man drest in Woman's Apparel, and enter'd our Convent, and the Gods know what he hath done: He is mighty handsome, and that's a great Temptation to Virtue; but I hope all is well: But this wicked World will lay aspersion upon any thing or nothing; and therefore I doubt, all my sweet young Birds are undone, the Gods comfort them.

COURTLY. But could you never discover it? nor have no hint he was a Man?

M. MEDITAT. No truly, only once I saw him kiss the Lady Happy; and you know Women Kisses are unnatural, and me thought they kissed with more alacrity then Women use, a kind of Titillation, and more Vigorous.

ADVIS. Why, did you not then examine it?

M. MEDITAT. Why, they would have said, I was but an old jealous fool, and laugh at me; but Experience is a great matter; If the Gods had not been merciful to me, he might have fallen upon me.

COURTLY. Why, what if he had?

M. MEDITAT. Nay, if he had I care not: for I defie the Flesh as much as I renounce the Devil and the pomp of this wicked World; but if I could but have sav'd my young sweet Virgins, I would willingly have sacrificed my body for them; for we are not born for our selves but for others.

ADVIS. "Tis piously said, truly, lovingly and kindly.

M. MEDITAT. Nay, I have read the Practice of Piety;" but further they say, He is a Foreign Prince; and they say, They're very hot.

COURTLY. Why, you are a Madam MEDITAT, you must mediate and make a friendship.

M. MEDITAT. What do you talk of Mediation, I doubt they are too good Friends; Well, this will be news for Court, Town and Country, in private Letters, in the Gazette, and in abominable Ballets! before it be long, and jeered to death by the pretending Wits; but, good Gentlemen, keep this as a Secret, and let not me be the Author, for you will hear abundantly of it before it be long.

ADVIS. But, Madam MEDITAT, this is no Secret, it is known all the Town over, and the State is preparing to entertain the Prince.

M. MEDITAT. Lord! to see how ill news will fly so soon abroad! COURTLY. Ill news indeed for us, Woes.

ADVIS. We only wooed in Imagination but not in Reality.

M. MEDITAT. But you all had hopes.

ADVIS. We had so; but she only has the fruition: for it is said, the Prince and she agreed to Marry; and the State is so willing, as they account it an honour, and hope shall reap much advantage by the Match.

M. MEDITAT. Yes, yes; but there is an old and true Saying, There's much between the Cup and the Lip.

Exeunt.

Scene 3

Enter the Prince as Bridegroom, and the Lady Happy as Bride, hand in hand under a Canopy born over their heads by Men; the Magistrates march before, then the Hobosy; and then the Bridal Guests, as coming from the Church, where they were Married. All the Company bids them joy, they thank them.

M. MEDITAT. Although your Highness will not stay to feast with your Guests, pray Dance before you go.

PRINC. We will both Dance and Feast before we go; come Madam let us Dance, to please Madam MEDITAT.

The Prince and Princess Dance.

* the Practice of Piety: The Practice of Piety: directing a Christian how to walk that he may please God, by Lewis Bayly (d. 1693), a tract so popular that it had been reprinted at least 39 times by 1734 and translated into both Welsh (1675) and Algonquin (1664).

† Ballets: ballads popular, often satirical songs about current events.

‡ Hobosy: odes.
HE SPEAKS THE EPILOGUE

Noble Spectators by this Candle-light,
I know not what to say, but bid, Good Night:
I dare not beg Applause, our Poets then
Will be enrag'd, and kill me with her Pen;
For she is careless, and is void of fear:
If you dislike her Play she doth not care.
But I shall weep, my inward Grief shall show
Through Floods of Tears, that Through my Eyes will flow.
And so poor Mimick he for sorrow die,
And then through pity you may chance to cry:
But if you please, you may a Cordial give,
Made up with Praise, and so he long may live.

Finis
SCENE 1. [Enter two Antient Ladies.]

1 Lady
If you would have your Daughter virtuously and wisely educated, you must put her into the Female Academy.

2 Lady
The Female Academy, what is that?

1 Lady
Why, a House, wherein a company of young Ladies are instructed by old Matrons; as to speak wittily and rationally, and to behave themselves handsomly, and to live virtuously.

2 Lady
Do any men come amongst them?

1 Lady
O no; only there is a large open Grate, where on the out-side men stand, which come to hear and see them; but no men enter into the Academy, nor women, but those that are put in for Education; for they have another large open Grate at the other end of the Room they discourse in; where on the out-side of that Grate stand women that come to hear them discourse.

2 Lady
I will put my Daughter therein to be instructed.

1 Lady
If your Daughter were not of honourable Birth, they would not receive her; for they take in none but those of antient Descent, as also rich; for it is a place of charges.

2 Lady
Why then they will not refuse my Daughter, for she is both honourably born, and also rich.

SCENE 2. [Enter a Company of young Ladies, and with them two Grave Matrons; where through the Hanging a company of men look on them, as through a Grate.]

1 Matron
Come Lady, ’tis your turn this day to take the Chair. [All sit, and she that speaks sits in an adorned Chair.]

Lady Speaker
Deliver your Theam.

1 Matron
You speak Lady like a Robber, when he sayes deliver your Purse; but you must say propound your Theam.

Lady Speaker
Why then propound your Theam.

1 Matron
I present to your opinion, whether women are capable to have as much Wit or Wisdome as men. [Lady Speaker orates persuasively and articulately (at length) on the “[t]heam.”]
SCENE 3. [Enter two Gentlemen.]
1 Gentleman
I suppose you have heard that a company of young Gentlemen have set up an Academy, next to the Ladies Academy.

2 Gentleman
We heard nothing of it.

1 Gentleman
Why then I will tell you, the men are very angry that the women should speak so much, and they so little, I think: for they have made that Room which they stood in to see and hear the Ladies speak in, so a place for themselves to speak in, that the Ladies may hear what they can say.

2 Gentleman
Faith if you will have my opinion, it is, that the men do it out of a mockery to the Ladies.

1 Gent
'Tis likely so, for they rail extremely that so many fair young Ladies are so strictly inclosed, as not to suffer men to visit them in the Academy.

2 Gentleman
Faith if the men should be admitted into their Academy, there would be work enough for the Grave Matrons, were it but to act the part of Midwives.
[Exeunt.]

SCENE 23. [Enter three Gentlemen.]
1 Gent
The Academy of Ladies take no notice of the Academy of Men, nor seem to consider what the men say, for they go on their own serious way, and edifying discourses.

2 Gent
At which the men are so angry, as they have sworn to leave off talking, and instead thereof, they will sound Trumpets so loud, when the Ladys are in their discoursings, as they shall not hear themselves speak; by Which means they hope to draw them out of their Cloyster, as they swarm Bees; for as Bees gather together at the sound of a Basin, Kettle, or such like met-led thing: so they will disperse that swarm of Academical Ladies, with the sound of brazen Trumpets.

3 Gent
Why the Ladies look through their Grate, upon the men, whilst the men are speaking, and seem to listen to what they speak, as the men do on and to the Ladies.

2 Gent
That is true, but they take no notice of them in their literal Discourses, as what the men have said; for they neither mention the men, nor their Discoursings, or Arguments, or Academy, as if there were no such men.

SCENE 25. [Enter the Academical Gentlemen.]
1 Gent
This is not to be suffered: for if we should let these Ladies rest in peace and quiet, in their inclosed Habitation, we shall have
none but Old Women; for all those young Ladies, that are not in
the Academy, talk of nothing but of going into a Female Academy.

2 Gent
You say true, insomuch as it begins to be a Mode, and a Fashion, for all the
Youngest, Fairest, Richest, and Noblest Ladies, to inclose themselves into an Academy.

3. Gent
Nay, we must seek some way, and devise some means to unroost them.

4. Gent
There is nothing can do it, but noise; for they take such pleasure in the exercise of
their Tongues, that unless we can put them to silence, there is no hopes to get them out.

1. Gent
Trumpets, I doubt, will not be loud enough.

6. Gent
Let us try.

SCENE 28. [Enter the Lady and their Matroness; The Lady Speaker takes the Chair.]
Matron
Lady, let the Theam of your discourse at this time be of Virtuous Courtships, and wooing Suters.

Lady Speaker
Some Poetical and Romantical Writers make valiant gallant Heroicks wooe poorly, sneakingly, and pedlingly.

Matron
Lady, let me interrupt you; would you have gallant Heroicks
in their Courtships to Fair young Ladies, as Commanding as in the Field,
or as Furious as in a Battel.

Lady Speaker
No, I would have them wooe with a Confident Behaviour,
a Noble Demeanor, a Generous Civility, and not to be amazed or to tremble for fear, to weep for pitty, to kneel
for mercy, to sigh and be dejected with a Mistresses frown; for though sorrow, sighs, tears and Humility become all
Heroick Spirits very well, and expresse a Noble and Generous Soul, yet not in such a cause: for tears become all
Heroick Spirits, for the Death or Torments of Friends, or for the sufferances of Innocents, or Virtue, yet not if
only themselves were tormented, or to dye, or for any obstructions to their own pleasures or delights, but it
becomes all Heroick Spirits, to tremble for fear of their Honour, or losse of their Fame, and expresses a generous
Soul to grieve and to mourn in a general Calamity, and to humble themselves to the Gods for those in distresse,
and to implore and kneel to them for mercy, both for themselves and others, as for to divert the wrath of the
Gods; but not to weep, sigh, tremble, kneel, pray, for their Effeminate pleasures, delights, or Societies; nor to
grieve or sorrow for the losse of the same.

Also some Writers, when they are to describe a Bashfull and Modest Lady, such as are Nobly and Honourably
bred, describe them as if they were simply shame-faced; which description makes such appear, as if they came
meery from the Milk-boul, and had been bred only with silly Huswifes, and that their practice was, to pick Worms
from Roots of Flowers, and their pastimes to carry and fling crumbs of Bread to Birds, or little Chickens that were
hatched by their Hens their Mothers gave them, or to gather a lapfull of sweet Flowers, to Distill a little sweet
Water to dip their Hankerchiefs in, or to wash their Faces in a little Rose-water; and indeed, this
harmlesse and innocent Breeding, may be Modest and Bashfull, or rather shame-faced, for want of other
Conversation, which Custome and Company will soon cast off, or wear out, and then print Boldnesse on their
brow; but true modest Souls, which have for the most part Bashfull Countenances, proceed from a deep
Apprehension, a clear Understanding, an ingenuous Wit, a thinking Brain, a pure Mind, a refined Spirit, a Noble
Education, and not from an ignorant obscure Breeding; for it is not Ignorance that makes Modesty, but
Knowledge, nor is it Guiltiness that makes Bashfulnesse, but fear of those that are guilty; but as I said, many
Writers that would make a description of Modest and Bashfull women, mistake and express a shame-faced Ignorance and obscure Breeding: and instead of expressing a young Lady to be innocent of Faults, they express her to be one that is ignorant of Knowledge, so as when they would describe a Modest, Bashfull, Innocent Virgin, they mistake and describe a simple ignorant shame fac'd Maid, that either wants Breeding or Capacity.

Matron
But Lady, let me ask you one question, would you have a young Virgin as confident and knowing as a Married Wife?

Lady Speaker
Yes, although not in their Behaviour or Condition of life, but in her Virtue and Constancy; for a chast Married wife is as Modest and Bashfull as a Virgin, though not so simple, ignorant, and shame-faced as a plain bred Maid; but as I said, Writers should describe the wooing of gallant Heroicks, or Great and Noble Persons, to woo with a Generous Confidence, or Manly Garb, a Civil Demeanor, a Rational Discourse, to an honest Design, and to a Virtuous end, and not with a whining Voice, in pittifull words, and fawning Language; and if it be only for a Mistriss, as for a Courtezan, Bribes are the best Advocates, or to imploy others to treat with them, and not to be the Pimp, although for themselves.

Also Writers should when they describe Noble Virgins, to receive Noble Addresses of Love, and to receive those Noble Addresses or Courtships with an attentive Modesty in a bashfull Countenance; and if to tremble for fear, to describe the fear, as being the Nature of the Sex; also to describe their Behaviour after a Noble Garb, and their answers to their Suters, to be full of Reason, Sense, and Truth, and those answers to be delivered in as short discourses, and as few words as Civility will allow of, and not like an ignorant innocent, a childish simplicity, an unbred Behaviour, expressing themselves, or answering their Suters with mincing words that have neither Sense nor Reason in them.

Also Poetical and Romantical Writers should not make great Princes that have been bred in great and populous Cities, glorious Camps, and splendid Courts, to woo and make Love like private bred men, or like rude bred Clowns, or like mean bred Servants, or like Scholars, that woo by the Book in Scholastical Terms or Phrases, or to woo like flanting, ranting, swearing, bragging Swaggerers, or Rusters; or to woo a Country wench, like as a Noble Lady, or great Princesse.

SCENE THE LAST. [Enter the Academical Gentlemen; to them enters a Servant.]
Man Servant
May it please your Worships, there is an Antient Gentlewoman that desires to speak with your Worships.

1 Gent
I lay my life it is one of the Matrons of the Academy.

2 Gent
Faith if the Humble Bee is flown out, the rest of the Bees will follow.

3 Gent
I fear if they do, they will swarm about our Ears.

4 Gent
Yes, and sting us with their Tongues.
[He goes out.] [Enters with the Matron; All the Gentlemen pull off their Hats.]

Matron
Gentlemen, the Ladies of the Academy have sent me unto you to know the Reason or Cause that you will not let them rest in quiet, or suffer them to live in peace, but disturb them in both, by a confused noise of Trumpets, which you uncivilly and discourteously blow at their Grate and Gates.

1 Gent
The cause is, that they will not permit us to come into their
Company, but have barricadoed their Gats against us, and have incloystred themselves from us; besides, it is a dangerous example for all the rest of their Sex; for if all women should take a toy in their heads to incloyster themselves, there would be none left out to breed on.

**Matron**
Surely it is very fit and proper that young Virgins should live a retired life, both for their Education and Reputation.

**2 Gent**
As for their Education, it is but to learn to talk, and women can do that without teaching, for on my Conscience, a woman was the first inventor of Speech; and as for their Retirement, Nature did never make them for that purpose, but to associate themselves with men: and since men are the chief Head of their kind, it were a sign they had but very little Brain, if they would suffer the youngest and fairest women to incloyster themselves.

**Matron**
Gentlemen pray give me leave to inform you, for I perceive you are in great Error of mistake, for these Ladies have not vowed Virginity, or are they incloystred; for an Academy is not a Cloyster, but a School, wherein are taught how to be good Wives when they are married.

**3 Gent**
But no man can come to woo them to be Wives.

**Matron**
No, but if they can win their Parents, or those they are left in trust with, and get their good liking and consent, the young Ladies have learn'd so much Duty and Obedience, as to obey to what they shall think fit.

**4 Gent**
But we desire the Ladies good liking, we care not for their Friends; for the approvment and good liking of their Friends, without the Love of the Ladies, will not make us happy, for there is no satisfaction in a secondary Love, as to be beloved for anothers sake, and not for their own.

**Matron**
If you be Worthy Gentlemen, as I believe you all are, their Love will be due to your Merits, and your Merits will perswade them to love you.

**All the Gentlemen**
Well, if you will be our Mediator, we will surcease our Clamour, otherwise we will increase our noise.

**Matron**
If you can get leave of their Parents, and Friends, I will endeavour to serve you, and shall be proud of the imployment that you shall be pleased to impose to my trust and management.

**Gentlemen**
And we shall be your Servants, for your favours.

[They all go out, with the Gentlemen waiting on her, with their Hats in their hands, Scraping and Congying to her.] **FINIS.**
Before the late unhappy Troubles in England, it was the usual Observation of Forreigners, who had been acquainted with this and other Nations, that the English Lady was the most modest, chaste, and pious Woman in Europe; that she was eminent for Reverence, Obedience, and Affectionatness to her Husband, for discreet, frugal management of her House and Family, for Sobriety, Taciturnity, Humility, Patience, and all other Graces and Vertues, wherewith the holy Women of old were endowed: Since which, by a general licentiousness, during our late unnatural War, not only all kind of Sects, and with them Irreligion, Atheism, and Debauchery, were introduced amongst the Men of this Nation; but also most of those fore-mentioned excellent Qualifications are now at length...become more rare amongst Women, then perhaps in any of our Neighbouring Countreys: which having been seriously and sadly considered, it is by many Godly prudent men judged very expedient, that most earnest endeavors should speedily be used by some extraordinary way of Education to reduce (if possible) the Female Sex of England to their Pristine Vertues; that so by their Godly Conversation, and good Examples, their Husbands, Children, and Servants may in time be won, and at length a general Reformation wrought in this Kingdom.

Some have thought best to set their Daughters to be educated in the Maiden Schools in and about London, where either through the Unskilfulness, or Negligence; through the Unfaithfulness, or Covetousness of the Mistresses, too much minding their private profit, the Success oft times hath not answered the Expectation of their Parents...Others therefore (though of the Protestant Religion) have chosen rather to be at the great Charges, and hazard of sending their Daughters to be bred up (till the time of their Marriage) in some Popish Monasteries of our next Neighbouring Countreys: whence they have return'd otherwise very vertuous, but generally tainted with, and enclin'd to Romish Superstitions, and Errours. Some have assayed to educate their Daughters alwayes at home, but thereby have found them apt to be corrupted, or betrayed by Servants, (of whose unfaithfulness and viciousness there is now a more general complaint than ever;) or else in continual danger to be stoln away by some debauched indigent Neighbours; or if they are rich Orphans, to be sold by the Trustees...or to be wholly ignorant and unacquainted with the World; or at least to want that handsome becoming Deportment, which usually sets off, and recommends Ladies to good Husbands.

It is not to be doubted but that some such Collegiate life (if rightly instituted) may prove as successful, and perhaps much more, for the Education of Daughters; and that thereby may be founded not onely excellent Seminaries and Nurseries, out of which, Persons of Honour and Worth may at all times make choice of Vertuous Wives; but also Provision (whereof there is great want in England) may be made for sober, pious, elder Virgins and Widdows, who desire to separate themselves from the vanities of the World, and yet employ their Talents to the benefit of the Publick. These are therefore to give notice, to all whom it may any way concern, that near London, in a pleasant healthy Soil and Air, there is for both the purposes above-mentioned, proposed a large House, with a Chappel, fair Hall, many commodious Lodgings, and Rooms for all sorts of necessary Offices; together with pleasant Gardens, Orchards, and Courts, all encompassed and well secured with strong high Walls: Also there is a Reverend, Learned, and Pious Divine in the same Parish, ready to officiate daily Morning and Evening as Chaplain; a grave discreet Lady to be Governess, with divers other Matrons, who having taken up a resolution to live a retired, single, and religious life, are to assist in the Government of the Colledge, without expecting any gain, profit, or emolument for themselves...Moreover, there will come at due times the best and ablest Teachers in London for Singing, Dancing, Musical Instruments, Writing, French Tongue, Fashionable Dresses, all sorts of Needle Works; for Confectionary, Cookery, Pastery; for Distilling of Waters, making Perfumes, making of some sort of Physical and Chyrurgical Medecins and Salves for the Poor, &c.

For the perfecting of these Designs there are divers Persons of Eminency and Worth, who have expressed not onely their approbation, but also their readiness to contribute thereunto; and it is to be hoped that many others who are Lovers and Encouragers of Vertue and Piety, will upon right information afford their [money] to a work so much tending to a General Reformation of Manners.
Maids, or the Virgin-Society, at least so far as to free it from ridicule. Thus then,

First, The End (for that is first to be considered) is to improve ingenuous Maids in such qualities as best become their Sex, and may fit them both for a happy Life in this, and much more in the next World.

Secondly, The Means is first to separate them from the contagion of common Conversation (which is seldom uncorrupt) and to find them decent employments and exercises, both Divine and Humane (with moderate Recreation) in a convenient House, where they may have Lodging and Diet together, and be under Government, somewhat like the Halls of Commoners at Oxford.

Thirdly, At entrance every one puts in Caution-money into the hands of the Steward, an Aged, grave Gentleman, and of known integrity; five pounds, more or less, according to the quality of the Persons. For,

Fourthly, There are two Tables, higher and lower Commonsals, and the chief Governess at the head of the higher, the Pro-Governess of the lower Table.

Fifthly, They are served by Maids of meager birth and estate, and some of these have thereby maintenance from their friends (not enough) and they wait at the higher Table, some other, and fewer, wait at the lower. And all these wait also on the Ladies in their Chambers, being well rewarded for their service.

Sixthly, There belongs to this House an antient Divine, of competent Gravity and Learning (approved by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese) to attend at the Chappel or Dining-room, once or twice a day for Prayers; and He also Preacheth once or twice a Week.

Seventhly, The Governess's, (which may be chosen yearly by consent,) according to the Advice of the Chaplain, appoint the Ladies and their maids.
A Letter touching
a method of private Reading and Devotion.

Eighthly, The Fathers of the Virgins (or two chosen men amongst them) are Visitors of the College, and may, when they please, take their Daughters home for a few days, and dispose of them in marriage when they please, taking a full Farewell of the Society.

Ninthly, A fair Garden belongs to the House, where they have pleasant Walks and Arbors, and variety, not only of beautiful Flowers, but of wholesome Herbs, and Physical Plants; whereof they learn the Use and Virtues.

Tenthly, Their Library, or closet of Books, in the Dining room, contains choice Authors of History, Poetry, and especially of Practical Divinity and Devotion: Not only English, but of Learned, as well as Modern Language. Wherein divers of the Society are skilled, and willing to teach the rest, as many as are inclined and apt to learn.

Eleventhly, There are among themselves also not wanting, who teach Musick and Dancing; besides Needle-works and Drawing; so far at least, (which is enough) as concerneth decent motion, and gesture of body, and may serve for recreation, or for the service of God, I mean Musick of Voice or Instrument.

Twelfthly, Some of them are capable and well-affected to studies of Philosophy, especially Natural and Moral; and delighted with making some of the easier Experiments in Natural things.

Thirteenthly, Their Chambers, and liberty of going abroad, and visiting of Friends, may be easily ordered by the Counsels of their Parents, whom we have named Visitors or Overseers, and by the Governors.

Fourteenthly, Their Apparel is modest, suitable to their Minds. The upper Garment a loose Gown girt about them,

To the young, and unmarried Catholike Gentlewomen of England.

WORTHY, and vertuous young Gentlewomen: My Penne for your spirituall good, is willing in these ensuing leaues, to spread it selfe. You are all Catholikes in Fayth and profession, and therefore the more apt to receaue (if so Gods Grace be not wanting) the impression of the Advie & Counsell, which in this Treatise is giuen.

My mayne proiect at this present is, since you all (to whom I wryte) as yet remayne in your Chast and Virginall state, & free from Mariage, to perswade you (what in me lyeth) to abandoone this Wicked World, and to imbrace a Votary and Religious life. A hard labour (no doubt) in your judgments, but facile and easy to such of you, who haue a feeling, & true apprehension of the ioyes of Heauen, and torments of Hell.

I do not speake this, as if one in a maried state could not arryue to Heauen, and auoyde Hell. Noe, God forbid; For I acknowledg with the Apostle, *Marriage to be honourable*, but withall I hould Virginity to be more honourable. I here only propound the most secure way to come to Heauen, and escape Hell. And here I demand, if any of You were married, and after the death of your husbands, were to enjoy a great, and rich Ioynuture, of a thousand, or two thousand pounds yearly; would you not be desirous, that besides the common Course of making Ioyntures (which perhaps might be subiect to some danger) to take (by your learned Counsell) the best meanes for the ratifying and better securing of your Right to your said Ioynture? I know, you would be most solicitous herein.

You all pretend Title to the kingdome of Heauen; a kingdom infinitly surpassing in worth, all worldly Joyntures that the whole Earth can afford; and will you then content your selues to seeke by the common, and ordinary Course of a *Secular lyfe*, to obtaine this kingdome (in which state, as I grant, many liuing haue gayned it, so incomparably far many more haue lost it;) but that rather you wil enter into that Vocation (how seuer, how strict, how crosse soeuer it shall seeme) which may giue you greater assurance, and more strengthen your Interest, and Title to that most Blessed Kingdome?

This Treatise I haue composed in forme of a feigned Dialogue, as hoping that thereby you will be sooner induced to the reading and perusing it at full; then if it were written in one long continued speach, without any vicissitude, or change of Persons.

In the Persons here feigned by supposall, I haue thought good to incorporate all the Reasons (as deliuered by them) chiefly mowing to a *Religious & retired Life*; as also such obiections, as commonly are made against that most happy Course; as you may be more fully instructed by perusing the Argument, or subject hereof next following.

And seing the chiefest barre, & et in women to a *Monasticall lyfe*, is *desire of Mariage, & hope of children*; I will (besides what is treated therof hereafter) insist heere a little, discouering the insufficiency of this Motiue; shewing that the accustomed miseries of a married lyfe, and of hauing issue, ought much rather to sway with women, for their forbearance of Marriage.

And first, whereas *Lyfe* is the dearest thing to man or woman; yet we find, that besides the certaine great paines of Child-birth, *Lyfe* it selfe in young married women, is for the most part, every one, or two yeares greatly endangered to be lost: witnesse heereof is the daily experience of women dying in Childbed.

What true desire then can a woman haue to vndertak that course of life, wherein lyfe so great a perill of loosing that (I meane her *Lyfe,) which is most deare vnto her; and that her body thereby shall, before its prefixed tyme by God, become meate for wormes.
Yf any one of you had a Jewel set with rich and Orient pearle, valewed at some hundreds of pounds, how careful would you be in keeping of it? & how would your care be doubled from endangering the losse of it, at any tyme? And yet only for the enjoying of a little momentary pleasure (attended after with multitude of miseries) you can be content so often to hazard the losse of your owne lyfe, the most precious Jewel, that God & Nature hath bestowed upon you in this world. O fondnes of Judgment!

But to proceed. Admit, that a woman in bringing forth her Children, should be freed from all danger of death; yet to how many other insupportable afflictions doth she become thrall, & lye open? For we obserue (and this not seldome) that the Husband becomes vnkind, withdrawing his loue and affection, from whence it is due, & placing it on others where it is not due. Againe, the Husband (I meane, no few number of them) doth oftentimes dissipate and waste his Estate and Patrimony in sensuality and riot, to the utter overthrow or beggary (in the end) of Himselfe, his Wyfe, and Children.

But suppose, the Husband be exempt from these disorders; yet if the wyfe haue many Children, falleth it not often out, that the children through the negligence of their Father, are brought vp in all liberty and dissolution, to the inconsolable griefe of the poore Gentlewoman their Mother, & to the eternall Damnation of the Childrens soules? And what comfort then can that woman haue, to be an instrument of bringing forth that Child, who shall become for euer, an Heyre of Hell-fire?

O how many wyues are there in England, who find by ouer late, & too dearely bought experience, all this to be true, which I here affirme, of the frequent dangers, grieves, and afflictions of mynde commonly accompanying Marriage? From all which languors of spirit, that woman deliuereth herselfe, who forbearing marriage doth determine to leade a Religious lyfe.

In proove of the Truth her said, I appeale euen to the certain knowledge of diuers of your selues, who, if you will but cast your eyes vpon some of your owne kyndred, and friends, (at least of our acquaintance, that liue in hate of mariage) must needs confesse that all, or diuers of the afore mentioned miseries and calamities, do daily oppressse many of them. You are yet free; beware then of such dangers. Nor will any further enlarge my selfe in this place vpon this Subject, but wil refer you to the serious perusal of the Booke it selfe.

Yf this Discourse were a second Syr Philip Sidneys Arcadia, relating of amourous Conceyts; with what a greedines would many of you read it? Condemne then your owne want of spirituall feroour in such of you, as but only vouchsafe to cast a curious eye here & there vpon these leaues; & yet it may be in part said, that this Booke in general discourses of the same subject, of which the Arcadia doth; to wit of Love. But the Arcadia, of sensuall and wayne Love, attended on with sinne, and Repentance; This, of chast, and holy Love, whereby a Soule by solemn vow espouseth herselfe to Christ her Bridegroome: so verifying those words of the Apostle Present you a chaste Virgin unto Christ.

I only wish, that what Cosmophila (a feigned young Gentlewoman in this Dialogue) is supposed to do, you really, and truly would act her Scene, in your proceedings: So might you by a mortified lyfe, not only auoyd all spirituall dangers both of soule and body; but infallibly purchase to your selues, an eternall Crowne of Glory.

Yf any of you reape such profit by this my Labour, as by the reading heereof, to shake hands for euer with the vanities of the world, and happily to Cloyster your selves in some deuout Monastery; how fully should I thinke my paynes to be recompensed herein? And with this I cease, intreating your remembrance of me (only for my intention at east, and endeavoure of advancing your spirituall good) at the best tymes of your devotions.

Yours in all Christian Charity. N. N.
The Soil is rich and would, if well cultivated, produce a noble Harvest, if then the Unskilful Managers not only permit, but encourage noxious Weeds, tho' we shall suffer by their Neglect, yet they ought not in justice to blame any but themselves, if they reap the Fruit of their own Folly. Women are from their very Infancy debar'd those Advantages, with the want of which, they are afterwards reproached, and nursed up in those Vices which will hereafter be upbraided to them. So partial are Men as to expect Brick where they afford no straw; and so abundantly civil as to take care we shou'd make good that obliging Epithet of Ignorant, which out of an excess of good Manners, they are pleas'd to bestow on us!

One wou'd be apt to think indeed, that Parents shou'd take all possible care of their Childrens Education, not only for their sakes, but even for their own. And tho' the Son convey the Name to Posterity, yet certainly a great Part of the Honour of their Families depends on their Daughters….To introduce poor Children into the world, and neglect to fence them against the temptations of it, and so leave them expos'd to temporal and eternal Miseries, is a wickedness, for which I want a Name; 'tis beneath Brutality, the Beasts are better natur'd, for they take care of their off-spring, till they are capable of caring for themselves.

Nature as bad as it is, and as much as it is complain'd of, is so far improveable by the grace of GOD, upon our honest and hearty endeavours, that if we are not wanting to our selves, we may all in some, tho' not in an equal measure, be instruments of his Glory, Blessings to this world, and capable of eternal Blessedness in that to come. But if our Nature is spoil'd, instead of being improv'd at first; if from our Infancy, we are nurs'd up in Ignorance and Vanity; are taught to be Proud and Petulent, Delicate and Fantastick, Humorous and Inconstant, 'tis not strange that the ill effects of this Conduct appears in all the future Actions of our Lives. And seeing it is Ignorance, either habitual or actual, which is the cause of all sin, how are they like to escape this, who are bred up in that? That therefore women are unprofitable to most, and a plague and dishonour to some men is not much to be regretted on account of the Men, because 'tis the product of their own folly, in denying them the benefits of an ingenuous and liberal Education, the most effectual means to direct them into, and to secure their progress in the ways of Vertue.

For that Ignorance is the cause of most Feminine Vices may be instanc'd in that Pride and Vanity which is usually imputed to us, and which, I suppose, if throughly sifted, will appear to be some way or other, the rise and Original of all the rest. These, tho very bad Weeds, are the product of a good Soil; they are nothing else but Generosity degenerated and corrupted…. 

She whose Vanity makes her swallow praises by the whole sale, without examining whether she deserves them, or from what hand they come, will reckon it but gratitude to think well of him who values her so much; and think she must needs be merciful to the poor despairing Lover whom her Charms have reduc'd to die at her feet. Love and Honour are what every one of us naturally esteem; they are excellent things in themselves, and very worthy our regard; and by how much the reader we are to embrace what ever resembles them, by so much the more dangerous, it is that these venerable Names should be wretchedly abus'd, and affixt to their direct contraries, yet this is the Custom of the World: And how can she possibly detect the fallacy, who has no better Notion of either, but what she derives from Plays and Romances? How can she be furnished with any solid Principles whose very Instructors are Froth and emptiness? Whereas Women were they rightly Educated, had they obtain'd a well inform'd and discerning Mind, they would be proof against all these Batteries, see through and scorn those little silly Artifices which are us'd to ensnare and deceive them....

Now as to the Proposal, it is to erect a Monastery, or if you will (to avoid giving offence to the scrupulous and injudicious, by names which tho innocent in themselves, have been abus'd by superstitious Practices) we will call it a Religious Retirement, and such as shall have a double aspect, being not only a Retreat from the World for those who desire that advantage; but likewise, an institution and previous discipline, to fit us to do the
greatest good in it; such an institution as this (if I do not mightily deceive my self,) would be the most probable method to amend the present, and improve the future Age. For here, those who are convince'd of the emptiness of earthly Enjoyments, who are sick of the vanity of the world, and its impertinencies, may find more substantial and satisfying entertainments, and need not be confin'd to what they justly loath. Those who are desirous to know and fortify their weak side, first do good to themselves, that hereafter they may be capable of doing more good to others; or for their greater security are willing to avoid temptation, may get out of that danger which a continual stay in view of the Enemy, and the familiarity and unwearied application of the Temptation may expose them to; and gain an opportunity to look into themselves, to be acquainted at home, and no longer the greatest strangers to their own hearts;…

You are therefore Ladies, invited into a place, where you shall suffer no other confinement, but to be kept out of the road of sin: You shall not be depriv'd of your grandeur, but only exchange the vain Pomp and Pageantry of the world, empty Titles and Forms of State, for the true and solid Greatness of being able to despise them. You will only quit the Chat of insignificant people, for an ingenious Conversation; the froth of flashy wit for real wisdom; idle tales for instructive discourses. The deceitful Flatteries of those who under pretence of loving and admiring you, really served their own base ends, for the seasonable Reproofs and wholesome Counsels of your hearty well-wishers and affectionate Friends; which will procure you those perfections your feigned lovers pretended you had, and kept you from obtaining. No uneasy task will be enjoin'd you, all your labour being only to prepare for the highest degrees of that Glory, the very lowest of which, is more than at present you are able to conceive, and the prospect of it sufficient to out-weigh all the Pains of Religion, were there any in it, as really there is none. All that is requir'd of you, is only to be as happy as possibly you can, and to make sure of a Felicity that will fill all the capacities of your Souls! A happiness, which when once you have tasted, you'll be fully convinc'd, you cou'd never do too much to obtain it; nor be too solicitous to adorn your Souls, with such tempers and dispositions, as will at present make you in some measure such holy and Heavenly Creatures, as you one day hope to be in a more perfect manner; without which Qualifications you can neither reasonably expect, nor are capable of enjoying the Happiness of the Life to come. Happy Retreat! which will be the introducing you into such a Paradise as your Mother Eve forfeited, where you shall feast on Pleasures, that do not, like those of the World, disappoint your expectations, pall your Appetites, and by the disgust they give you, put you on the fruitless search after new Delights, which when obtain'd are as empty as the former; but such as will make you truly happy now, and prepare you to be perfectly so hereafter. Here are no Serpents to deceive you, whilst you entertain yourselves in these delicious Gardens.

No Provocations are given in this Amicable Society, but to Love and to good Works, which will afford such an entertaining employment, that you'll have as little inclination as leisure to pursue those Follies which in the time of your ignorance pass'd with you under the name of love; altho' there is not in nature two more different things, than true Love, and that brutish Passion which pretends to ape it….It shall not so cut you off from the world, as to hinder you from bettering and improving it; but rather qualify you to do it the greatest Good, and be a Seminary to stock the Kingdom with pious and prudent Ladies; whose good Example it is to be hop'd, will so influence the rest of their Sex, that Women may no longer pass for those little useless and impertinent Animals, which the ill conduct of too many, has caus'd them to be mistaken for.

The Ladies, I'm sure, have no reason to dislike this Proposal, but I know not how the Men will resent it, to have their enclosure broke down, and Women invited to tast of that Tree of Knowledge they have so long unjustly monopoliz'd…. The only danger is, that the Wife be more knowing than the Husband; but if she be, 'tis his own fault, since he wants no opportunities of improvement; unless he be a natural Blockhead, and then such an one will need a wise Woman to govern him, whose prudence will conceal it from publick Observation, and at once both cover and supply his defects.