Chapter 12

JANE CAVENDISH AND ELIZABETH BRACKLEY'S MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

Sara Mueller*

JANE Cavend ISH AND Elizabeth Brackley's works are preserved in two manuscript collections: one held at the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford (Rawlinson MS Poet. 16) and the other at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University (Osborn MS b.233). The two manuscripts share much in common, including over eighty poems and Cavendish and Brackley's masque, *A Pastorall*. The manuscripts are both in the same hand, probably that of John Rolleston, the secretary employed by Cavendish and Brackley's father, William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle.[1] Both manuscripts are also handsomely bound presentation volumes, and there are few substantial variants among the many works they share. The small number of corrections and strikeouts found in the Beinecke manuscript appear in their corrected form in the Bodleian manuscript, which suggests that the Beinecke manuscript may have served as the Bodleian manuscript's copy text.[2] In addition to including nearly all of the contents of the Beinecke manuscript, the Bodleian manuscript contains eight additional poems and the unique copy of Cavendish and Brackley's most well-known work, a play called *The concealed Fansyes*.

The manuscripts share so many similarities that when I edited Cavendish and Brackley's dramatic works for *Women's Household Drama: "Loves Victorie," "A Pastorall," and "The concealed Fansyes"* (2018) with Marta Straznicky, we considered doing a side-by-side transcription of *A Pastorall* but determined that this was unnecessary given

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* My thinking about the two manuscripts discussed in this chapter is deeply indebted to Marta Straznicky and Elizabeth Hageman. I thank them both for their mentorship.

1 *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, P. Simpson, and E. Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925–52), 7:767 first identified Rolleston as the likely scribe of Rawlinson MS Poet. 16. Lynn Hulse, "The King's Entertainment," *Viator* 26 (1995): 355–405 at 361 has also done extensive work on Rolleston's hand and describes him as the volume's scribe as well. See also Hilton Kelliher, "Donne, Jonson, Richard Andrews, and The Newcastle Manuscript," *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700* 4 (1993): 134–73 at 153. Jane Cavendish, *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, ed. Alexandra Bennett (London: Routledge, 2017), 14, suggests that the manuscripts could be in the hand of Jane Cavendish herself. Marion Wynne-Davies, " 'My Fine Delitive Tomb': Liberating Sisterly Voices during the Civil War," in *Female Communities 1600–1800*, ed. Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 111–28, 127n8, makes the same suggestion.

2 Alexandra Bennett, " 'Now Let My Language Speak': The Authorship, Rewriting, and Audience(s) of Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 11 (2005): 1–13 at 7–10.

the few significant variants between the two manuscripts.[3] Alexandra Bennett's recent *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish* also does not include a side-by-side transcription. Yet despite the many similarities between the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts, they diverge in important ways that have not yet been fully elaborated in scholarly analyses of Cavendish and Brackley's works. In this chapter, I aim to tease out some of these differences to help better situate discussions of the two extant manuscript collections. To date, Margaret Ezell has done a thorough analysis of the Bodleian manuscript and Alexandra Bennett and Marie-Louise Coolahan have done the same for the Beinecke manuscript, but even with this careful and important scholarship, we are only starting to think through what the textual differences between the two volumes might reveal.[4] Jennifer Higginbotham, in a 2017 comparative study of the two manuscripts, has suggested that Cavendish and Brackley may have specifically tailored their manuscripts to particular audiences, raising fascinating possibilities for some of the choices made in each of the manuscripts.[5] But I would like to suggest that we should consider the inconsistent strategies used across Cavendish and Brackley's two manuscript collections further. The readings that emerge from this discussion of the differences between the two manuscripts are at times speculative and, in some cases, contradictory, an outcome that accords with the complex nature of manuscript production and circulation in the period. By reading the two manuscript collections in this way, I suggest that we can open up new avenues of discussion about authorship and performance in Cavendish and Brackley's works that are grounded in the textual realities of both of their manuscript collections.

Before we compare the two manuscripts, it is important to acknowledge that there is much we do not and cannot know about both manuscripts and their circumstances of production and circulation. For a start, we do not know when the works included in either of the manuscript collections were written. Many of the events described focus on the early to mid-1640s after Elizabeth's marriage to John Egerton, Lord Brackley in 1641; during the English Civil War when the sisters were garrisoned in their family home; and in the midst of the exile of Cavendish and Brackley's father, William Cavendish, then Marquess of Newcastle, who fled to the continent after leading the Royalist army to its

3 Marta Straznicky and Sara Mueller, ed., *Women's Household Drama: "Loves Victorie," "A Pastorall," and "The concealed Fansyes"* (Toronto: Iter, 2018).

4 Margaret Ezell, " 'To Be Your Daughter in Your Pen': The Social Functions of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish," in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 51 (1988): 281–96; Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 1–13; and Marie-Louise Coolahan, "Presentation Volume of Jane Cavendish's Poetry," in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Poetry*, ed. Jill Seal Millman and Gillian Wright (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 87–89.

5 Jennifer Higginbotham, "Exilic Inspiration and the Captive Life: The Literary Political Alliances of the Cavendish Sisters," in *The Politics of Female Alliance in Early Modern England*, ed. Christina Luckyj and Niamh J. O'Leary (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 225–46, 225–28 argues that the Beinecke manuscript was specifically tailored to Newcastle and was presented to him as a gift. In the case of the Bodleian manuscript, she suggests that the sisters commissioned the manuscript to "shift away from the Beinecke's emphasis on the sisters' father as a singular Royalist military hero and toward an emphasis on female familial and political alliances."

loss at Marston Moor in 1644. We also know that Cavendish and Brackley lived together at their family estates, Welbeck Abbey and Bolsolver Castle, until the mid-1640s, when Brackley went to live with her husband.[6] All of these factors suggest, but do not prove, that the majority of the works were written in the early to mid-1640s.[7] Along with this uncertainty in dating, we also do not know when either of the manuscripts were compiled or who compiled them. Furthermore, while it is impossible to say who read either of the manuscripts or who may have been in the audience if either of Cavendish and Brackley's dramatic works were ever performed, we do know from the copious dedications to Newcastle that the volume sought his readership, as well as that of the broader Cavendish circle, something both Ezell and Higginbotham have discussed at length.[8] Also, while Bennett has established persuasively that the Beinecke manuscript very probably predates the Bodleian manuscript, we cannot say by how much.[9] Finally, and critically, we do not know what kind of involvement Cavendish and/or Brackley had in the production or compilation of either of the manuscripts.

Despite all that is unknown, it is abundantly clear from a study of the two manuscripts that they differ dramatically in their presentation of authorship. The Beinecke manuscript begins with a dedication of the volume to Newcastle that is signed by Jane Cavendish alone:

> My Lord
> As nature ownes my creation from you, & my selfe my– —
> Education; soe duety invites mee to dedicate my workes
> to you, as the onely Patterne of Judgement, that can
> make mee happy if these fanceys may "owne sense they" [illegible deletion] wayte
> upon your Lo:pp as the Center of witt, I humbly thanke yor
> Lo.pp; & if a distinction of Judgement, God reward your Lo.p
> For in a word, what I have of good, is wholly derived
> from you, as the soule of bounty and this booke desires
> noe other purchas, then a smyle from yo:ur Lopp or a– —
> word of like, wch will glorifie your creature; That
> is affectionately
>
> You Lo:pps most obliged
> obedient
> Daughter
> Jane Cavendysshe[10]

6 Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High, and Puissant Prince William Cavendish, Duke, Marquess, and Earl of Newcastle* (London, 1667), 95.

7 Kelliher, "The Newcastle Manuscript," 153, notes that "when the first prologue [of *The concealed Fansyes*] says 'And I did tell the Poett plainely truth / It lookes like .18. or .22. youth' it is evidently referring to the relative ages of the two ladies: Jane would have been twenty-two and Elizabeth eighteen in 1643 or 1644."

8 Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter," 284–86, and Higginbotham, "Exilic Inspiration," 227. See also Sarah C. E. Ross, "Coteries, Circles, Networks: The Cavendish Circle and Civil War Women's Writing," in *A History of Women's Writing*, ed. Patricia Phillippy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 332–47, 337–39, and Hero Chalmers, "The Cavendishes and their Poetry," in the present volume.

9 Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 8–11.

10 Osborn MS b.233, 2.

Here, Cavendish explicitly refers to "my works," dedicating them to her father. She does not mention her sister, but she also does not clarify what "workes" she speaks of, other than to call them "fansyes." The focus of the dedication is instead on Cavendish's desire that the volume will please her father, who we know took an interest in the literary education of his children.[11]

The Beinecke dedication stands in sharp contrast to the Bodleian manuscript, which, after an incomplete table of contents that was probably added at a later date, begins with a title page that trumpets the sisters' collaborative authorship of the entire volume.[12] The title of the volume reads as such:

> POEMS
> SONGS
> a
> PASTORALL
> and a PLAY
> by the
> R^{t} Hon^{ble} the
> Lady
> JANE CAVENDISH
> and
> Lady
> ELIZABETH BRACKLEY[13]

Importantly, following its title page, the Bodleian manuscript jumps directly to what is the second poem in the Beinecke manuscript, "The Greate Example," omitting Cavendish's dedication. This fundamental difference between how the two manuscripts present their own authorship raises many questions, particularly given how many works they share in common. Why does the volume held by the Bodleian Library strongly suggest that the whole volume is collaborative while the Beinecke does not? Why does the Bodleian manuscript, if it did use the Beinecke manuscript as its copy text, omit the dedication with Jane Cavendish's statement that the volume includes "my workes"?

The scholarship that has considered this contradiction between the two manuscripts has only partially answered these questions. For Ezell, in her 1988 landmark article that focuses on the Bodleian manuscript alone, the manuscript is an intrinsically collaborative piece of work:

> The prominent display of the author's names on the title page indicates that the women had no desire to hide their literary accomplishments. These pieces were not "closet"

11 Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter," 293–94.

12 Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter," 282, argues that this table of contents is in a "sprawling eighteenth century hand." A complete table of contents in the hand of Brackley's husband, John Egerton, is included at the end of the volume, as was the norm in the seventeenth century.

13 Rawlinson MS Poet. 16. As Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter," 282, notes, "And a PLAY" is squeezed in with lighter ink, suggesting that the title page was composed before *The concealed Fansyes* was written and that it was added onto the title page of the volume at a later date.

> poems in the sense that they were hidden and anonymous. On the other hand, few of the pieces are specifically attributed. Since the individual pieces, with the exception of the scenes in the pastoral, were not signed, the volume suggests a collaborative and cooperative effort rather than pieces of individual workmanship. This implies the authors do not seem to have felt much anxiety over being recognized, or not, for individual literary accomplishments. Poetry here is not the unique, original product of a lone artistic soul; with only a few exceptions, the poems do not "belong" to an individual.[14]

Conversely, in a short piece describing the Beinecke manuscript, Marie-Louise Coolahan describes the volume's presentation of authorship very differently. She finds that:

> The Beinecke copy's two dedications reveal that Jane is the sole author of the poetry collected in both volumes; the manuscript opens on a dedicatory epistle to her father signed by Jane …, and closes on a poem entitled "Upon the right honorable the Lady Jane Cavendish on her book of verses"—unattributed, but possibly composed by the scribe.[15]

Bennett finds similarly, writing that

> Scholars have long referred to all of the works in the Oxford manuscript as being co-written by the sisters, but it is notable that though there are numerous poems in both manuscripts addressed to, and written about, Cavendish family members both living and dead, not a single poem is written to or about Jane herself. The combination of these facts suggests, I would contend, that Jane was the sole author of the verses in each volume, and that only *A Pastorall* in each collection …, and *The Concealed Fancies* in the Oxford MS … are collaborative.[16]

Ezell's reading of the Bodleian manuscript in isolation is absolutely persuasive, and Coolahan and Bennett's account of Cavendish's role as sole author of the poems may certainly be correct as well.[17] Their description of the authorship of the poems is widely accepted by scholars, including in Hero Chalmers's discussion of how the poems are situated in relation to works by others in the Cavendish family elsewhere in this volume.[18] But I would like to suggest, given the complexities of the evidence that emerge from a comparative analysis of the two manuscripts, that it may be worthwhile to be cautious in attributing authorship in the manuscripts.

That is, I argue that a comparison of the two manuscripts puts into question some of the assumptions that have recently coalesced in the scholarship of Cavendish and Brackley's works, particularly the notion that the poems included in both volumes are the sole creation of Jane Cavendish. While I will make no claim about who actually

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14 Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter," 284.

15 Coolahan, "Presentation Volume," 87.

16 Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 6.

17 See, for instance, Cavendish, *Collected Works*, 28.

18 Chalmers, "The Cavendishes and their Poetry." See also Kate Chedgzoy, "Cavalier and She-Majesty: The Cultural Politics of Gender in Jane Cavendish's Poetry," *The Seventeenth Century* 32 (2018): 393–412.

authored what in the two volumes, nor will I speculate on what the compiler or compilers of the manuscripts actually intended, I will work through the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts to suggest that their authorship might be best described just as it comes across in the juxtaposition of the Beinecke dedication and the Bodleian title page above: as complex, shifting, and inconsistent.

To start, I would argue that it is possible to read Cavendish's dedication at the beginning of the Beinecke manuscript differently. This is not to say that Bennett and Coolahan's reading of it is incorrect; I want to suggest instead that there is some evidence to point to an alternative reading of the poems. One very obvious point to make about the dedication is that it is written at the start of the Beinecke manuscript. Given that we know from manuscript studies about the shifting nature of many manuscript collections, it is impossible to say at what stage of the manuscript's preparation the dedication was included in the volume.[19] As Arthur Marotti notes, "in manuscript circulation texts were inherently malleable, escaping authorial control to enter a social world in which recipients casually transcribed, revised, supplemented, and answered them, not particularly worried about changing an authorial original."[20] If the dedication was among the very first items to be included in the manuscript, then it is not at all certain that all of the subsequent works that were included align with its claims. This is especially relevant since there is significant evidence that the Beinecke manuscript is incomplete, or at least was not completed as its compiler may have envisioned completing it. Coolahan notes that

> the large quantity of blank pages suggests that the scribe never completed the compilation as first planned. Perhaps the scribe had originally intended to transcribe *The concealed Fansyes* in the lengthy gap between the pastoral play and the dedicatory verses.[21]

Given this, it may be possible that the dedication was copied at an earlier date than the works transcribed later on in the volume. The first pages of the Beinecke manuscript—including the page that includes the dedication—are more damaged than the rest of the manuscript, which may indicate that they were prepared earlier or at a different time than the rest of the manuscript. Another factor to consider is that the paper used in the Beinecke manuscript came from two different stocks, potentially a further indication

19 See, for instance, Patricia Pender and Rosalind Smith, "Introduction: Early Modern Women's Material Texts: Production, Transmission, and Reception," in *Material Cultures of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1–13, 2–5.

20 Arthur F. Marotti, "Malleable and Fixed Texts: Manuscript and Printed Miscellanies and the Transmission of Lyric Poetry in the English Renaissance," in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the English Renaissance Text* Society, ed. W. Speed Hill (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Text and Studies and Renaissance English Text Society, 1993), 159–74, 160.

21 Coolahan, "Presentation Volume," 88. Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 12, argues persuasively that the number of available pages in the Beinecke manuscript are insufficient to fit the whole of the *The concealed Fansyes*.

that the manuscript was compiled over time.[22] If this is the case, Cavendish's claim in the dedication that these are "my workes" may not in fact apply to the volume as a whole. Perhaps, then, the explanation for why this dedication was omitted from the Bodleian manuscript when it was copied from the Beinecke manuscript is that the dedication no longer reflected the reality of what the volume had become.

In addition, the early pages of the Beinecke manuscript also show signs of revision. The first six poems in the Beinecke manuscript feature dedications to particular family members; these dedications are all squeezed into the available space (often just "Uncle" or "Brother" written at the start of the poem between the title and the rest of the verse). This suggests that these additions may have been included after the manuscript was initially copied.[23] The effort to squeeze in dedications to particular family members in the opening poems could be evidence of a desire to tailor the manuscript for a particular set of readers or to alter what the earlier parts of the manuscript do, further raising the possibility that the aims of the volume may have changed from when it was initially conceived.

To suggest that the Beinecke dedication was written before the full volume took shape is entirely speculative, but this speculation is reinforced by the fact that whatever the dedication says, the Beinecke manuscript also explicitly presents itself—at least in part—as a collaborative work. In *A Pastorall*, in the left-hand margin, each new scene is marked with the initials J.C. or E.B., clearly denoting which sister authored it. Denoting authorship in a collaborative work in this way is highly unusual, and it has generally been read as an attempt to clarify which contributions are Brackley's in the volume, on the understanding that Cavendish authored the rest of the works. As Bennett writes, "it is problematic to assume that Jane would lay such confident and entire claim to the works in the Yale volume if they were not hers without at least noting somewhere, as in the margins of *A Pastorall*, that her sister had written some of them."[24] Notably, the attribution of authorship also appears in the Bodleian manuscript's transcription of *A Pastorall*, so in copying the Bodleian manuscript from the Beinecke manuscript, the scribe elected to remove Cavendish's dedication and to retain *A Pastorall*'s distinctive attribution of authorship. Bennett has also suggested that attributing authorship in this way is an artifact of Cavendish and Brackley's writing process, and imagines the possibility that the sisters traded off on writing scenes to pass the time while they were garrisoned

22 The paper used in the Beinecke manuscript has two different watermarks, one with a flag, similar to Heawood 147, and the other with a letter or initial, similar to Heawood 3100. The Bodleian manuscript is copied all on the same paper, which has a watermark similar to Heawood 1287 that features a double-headed eagle and the letters LC.

23 The six opening poems from Osborn MS b.233 are "The Great Example," dedicated to "the Marquesse of Newcastle" (3); "Passions Love to my Lord my Father," dedicated to Newcastle again (3); "On my sweete brother Charles," with "Brother" squeezed in before the first verse (4); "On my sweete brother Henry," again with "Brother" squeezed in before the first verse (4); "On my Lo: my father the Marquess of Newcastle," dedicated to "My Lord" (4); and "On my Noble Uncle S^{r} Charles Cavendish Knight," with "Uncle" added before the first line (5).

24 Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 6.

in their family home.[25] Since this method of attributing individual scenes is repeated in *A Pastorall* in the Bodleian manuscript—where the entire volume is presented as collaborative—then perhaps this decision to denote the authorship of individual scenes was indeed a part of the composition process that the scribe chose to include for the benefit of readers rather than an attempt to credit Brackley for her contributions to a volume largely authored by Cavendish.

What is more, even if the dedication at the start of the Beinecke manuscript was written at the same time as the rest of the manuscript, I would suggest that we could possibly read Cavendish's statement that she dedicates "my workes" to Newcastle differently. The volume unquestionably contains Cavendish's "workes," but does this necessarily mean that it does not contain Brackley's "workes" as well? It is worthwhile to look at how Cavendish and Brackley describe their authorship in the several other dedications included in the two manuscripts, including the two dedications to *A Pastorall*, which are included in both the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts, and the three prologues of *The concealed Fansyes* from the Bodleian manuscript. In these prologues the sisters at times describe work that is elsewhere presented as collaborative in individual terms, as in Cavendish's Beinecke dedication, while at other times they describe their work as "ours." For instance, in the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts, *A Pastorall* is preceded by two dedications, where the sisters each speak in individual terms of how they dedicate their work to their father and hope to receive his approval:

My Lord
After the deuty of a Verse,
Give leave now to rehearse;
A Pastorall; then if but give
Your smile, I sweare, I live,
In happyness, For if this may
Your favour have, 'twill ne're decay
Now let my language speake & say
If you bee pleas'd, I have my pay.
That passionately am
your Lo:^{pps}
most affectionate, and obedient
Daughter
Jane Cavendysshe.
My Lord
This Pastorall could not owne weake
But my intrest which makes mee speake.
To begg you'l not condem̃ the best
For thi'll, but chase it, to it rest
Where I shall owne the word submitt,
Unto your Judgement of pure witt.
your Lo:^{pps} most affectionate and obliged
Daughter.
Elizabeth Brackley[26]

25 Cavendish, *Collected Works*, 29.

26 Osborn MS b.233, 32–33.

In the explicitly collaborative *A Pastorall*, the sisters do not once in their dedications refer to their works in anything other than individual terms. Instead, they speak of "my language," in the case of Cavendish's dedication, or "my intrist," in Brackley's.

The prologues to *The concealed Fansyes*, conversely, do use strongly collaborative language:

> A Prologe to the Stage.
>
> Ladyes I beseech you blush not to see
> That I speake a Prologe being a Shee
> For it becomes as well if votes cry Eye
> Why then should I, a Petticote cry fye,
> Gentlemen if soe you allow, is witt
> Why then not speake, I pray your patience sitt
> And now to tell you trueth of our new Play
> It doth become a womans witt the very way
> And I did tell the Poett plainely trueth
> It lookes like ·18· or ·22· youth
> Or els it could not bee, as 'tis but well
> I'le say noe more untill yo^{r} hands Playes tell
>
> The second Prologe spoke by a Woman.
>
> Though a second Prologe spoke to our Play
> I will speake trueth, 'tis woman all y^{e} way
> For you'll not see a Plott in any Act
> Nor any ridged, high, ignoble fact
> Feareing you'll sensure mee now full of Tongue
> It is not fitt, that I should speake too longe.
>
> A perticuler Prologe to your Lo:^{pp}
>
> My Lord
> If that your judgement doth approve of wee,
> I pray you smile, that all may truely see,
> You like, & doe approve, of what wee say,
> And then each one will freely give their pay,
> If then your quicker witt doth crowne our Play
> Your health shalbee our word today:[27]

Here the prologues speak more than once of "our play," a way of speaking of a collaborative work that more comfortably accords with modern conceptions of coauthorship than Cavendish's dedication at the start of the Beinecke manuscript and the *A Pastorall* dedications.

Since the sisters demonstrate different ways of writing about their collaborative works, it is harder to read the dedication at the start of the Beinecke manuscript straightforwardly as a claim of sole authorship on the part of Jane Cavendish. It is certainly true that there is no dedication from Brackley paired with Cavendish's at the start of the Beinecke manuscript, a fact that may confirm the supposition that Cavendish was

27 Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 87–88.

the sole author of the poems. But given the evidence that the Beinecke volume evolved over time, as well as the different methods that the sisters used to describe their collaborative contributions, I am not convinced that the absence of a dedication from Brackley at the start of the Beinecke manuscript is enough to make the argument that she had no role in writing the poems. There is no way to answer this question of who authored what in the manuscripts definitively, but given the shifting depiction of authorship across both manuscripts, the most justifiable approach may be to simply embrace the manuscripts' heterogeneous presentation of authorship.

As mentioned above, another key piece of evidence that has been put forward to claim that the poems are the work of Jane Cavendish alone comes from the poems themselves. There are, without question, numerous poems that appear to come from the perspective of Cavendish herself, such as "On my sweete Sister Brackley,"[28] "On my Sister Brackleys Picture,"[29] and "The angry curs,"[30] which is included in the Bodleian manuscript alone and expresses frustration on the part of the speaker about Brackley's departure to live with her husband. Yet while many of the poems are clearly attributable to Jane Cavendish and her personal circumstances, many are not. As Ezell notes of the poems,

> The contents of the volume confirm in tone and subject that it was envisioned as having a public or social dimension. The general intent of these pieces is to praise virtue and lament the conditions brought on by the war. The virtues of the king and queen and prince of Wales are applauded as well as those of family members. The praise tends to be of a generic, not a personal nature; men are praised for courage and constancy, women for wit and sweetness. The terms are so conventional and so general one is left with a type rather than an individual; the subjects are held up as absolutes, the perfection of the virtues they embody.[31]

Even for the poems that do appear to be more personal in tone, why must we limit the poems to straightforwardly autobiographical readings? Given the well-documented interest in *The concealed Fansyes* in playing with identity and in reimagining and recasting domestic life in a fictional setting, is it reasonable to rule out that some of the poems that appear to be autobiographical actually imagine entirely fictional events?[32] Just as many of the resonances of occasional household theatre are lost when that work is taken out its context, so can those same resonances be lost in occasional verse that was designed for circulation to a known audience.

At the conclusion of the Beinecke manuscript, there is a final piece of evidence that may speak to Cavendish as the sole author of the poems. The volume concludes with a verse that is dedicated to Jane Cavendish alone and describes the book as "her book of verses." It reads:

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28 Osborn MS b.233, 13.

29 Osborn MS b.233, 24.

30 Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 25.

31 Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter," 285.

32 See, for instance, Alison Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 53; Lisa Hopkins, "Play Houses: Drama at Bolsover and Welbeck," in *Early Theatre* 2 (1999): 25–44 at 25–28.

Upon the right honourable the Lady Jane Caven=
=dish her book of verses
Madame at first I scarcely could beleive
That you soe wittyly could tyme deceive
Or that in garrison your muse durst stay
When that shee heard the drumms and cannon play
Shee knew her modest and most innocent straine
Could with none better then your self remaine
The Issue of your braine I lyke soe well
That whether I shall your other soe yet cannot tell
If both prove lyke soe modest chast and witty
That you should want an equall match 'twere pitty.[33]

The author of these verses is unknown, as is the hand who wrote them into the manuscript, though both Rolleston and Newcastle have been suggested as possible authors.[34] We do not know when the verse was written, nor do we know what state of completion the manuscript was in when it was written (it appears many blank pages after the end of *A Pastorall*). Bennett has investigated the poem thoroughly and concludes that

> the hand is neither Elizabeth's [Brackley's], William's [Newcastle's], nor that of Elizabeth's husband, John Egerton … Did Jane manage to send this copy to her father, and did he have a secretary write out a poem in response? Did she show the text to someone else in her family or literary circle? Some possible candidates include the living addresses of specific verses in each text, among them her uncle Charles Cavendish, Henry Ogle, Richard Pypes, and Lady Alice Egerton.[35]

Moreover, the lines "The Issue of your braine I lyke soe well / That whether I shall your other soe yet cannot tell," while obscure, raise some interesting interpretive possibilities. Bennett wonders if the phrase "your other" refers to Cavendish's future children.[36] I wonder if it might allude to some future artistic work. In this reading, the author of this verse approves of what he or she has seen so far and speculates on whether future "issues of your braine" will similarly find approval. Whatever the verse's meanings, I would suggest that we know little about it and its circumstances of composition, and that, in concert with the other uncertainties discussed above, it can only uncomfortably be taken as evidence of Cavendish's sole authorship of the poems.

We cannot know the writing process for these poems, and the two extant manuscripts leave evidence of a variable process of collaboration and an imprecision about crediting

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33 Osborn MS b.233, 77.

34 Elizabeth Clarke, "The Garrisoned Muse: Women's Use of Religious Lyric in the Civil War Period," in *The English Civil Wars in the Literary Imagination*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 130–43, 133. Higginbotham, "Exilic Inspiration," 226, suggests that the Beinecke manuscript was intended for Newcastle when in exile in France and that this verse was his own. Coolahan, "Presentation Volume," 87, suggests the scribe as the possible author.

35 Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 12.

36 Bennett, "Now Let My Language Speak," 12.

authorship. Critically for this discussion, there is no significant difference stylistically between the scenes attributed to Brackley and the scenes attributed to Cavendish in *A Pastorall*. Whatever their writing process was, the two were able to weave their works together seamlessly, a fact that should be taken into account in analyses of the poems. I have chosen throughout to describe the works discussed here as being by "Cavendish and Brackley," but there is every possibility that this is inaccurate. But, given the conflicting evidence, I have made this choice to be as open as possible in describing the authorship of the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts. For all of the above reasons, I argue that it is preferable to follow what the manuscripts tell us and preserve their ambiguous and imprecise understanding of their own authorship.

Before concluding, I would like to suggest that, in addition to providing valuable context to the presentation of authorship in Cavendish and Brackley's two manuscript collections, comparing the two manuscripts can also shed new light on the inconsistent presentation of playreading and performance between Cavendish and Brackley's two dramatic works. Much attention has been given to the potential performance of *A Pastorall* and *The concealed Fansyes*. Alison Findlay and Lisa Hopkins in particular have demonstrated the possibilities within the plays for household performance, especially for *The concealed Fansyes*, a play that consciously places itself within the dramatic tradition of Jonson and that features numerous ambitious scenes, including a masque where the characters are drawn up using stage machineries common in court masque.[37] While there is no evidence that the plays were ever performed, through careful textual and spatial analysis, Findlay and Hopkins have both teased out some of the important ways in which Cavendish and Brackley's work envisions performance. To add to this discussion, I would like to draw attention to a few textual details that emerge from a comparison of the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts that further speak to the investment in the text of *The concealed Fansyes* in the possibility of its own performance.

There are significant inconsistencies between the presentation of *A Pastorall*, which is transcribed using very similar strategies and in both the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts, and *The concealed Fansyes*, which, as mentioned above, appears in the Bodleian manuscript alone. It is notable that the two dramatic works in the Bodleian manuscript are presented differently because the volume is so uniform in significant ways: its pages are neatly and extravagantly ruled, its layout is consistent, and it is all copied on the same paper stock. Yet *The concealed Fansyes* is presented as a work intended for performance in a way that *A Pastorall* is not. Instead, *A Pastorall* is very much presented as a text for reading, and it includes numerous elements that would only be evident to a reader of the masque.

As discussed above, both copies of *A Pastorall* attribute authorship of each scene to either J.C. or E.B., a textual element that would only be discernable to readers of the work. In this same vein, A *Pastorall* also features a running header at the top of each page that gives the work's title throughout, leaves copious amounts of white space, and makes limited use of scenery and stage properties. All of these factors that cater for readers

37 Findlay, *Playing Spaces*, 44–53, and Lisa Hopkins, "Play Houses," 24–44.

do not mean that *A Pastorall* was not performed: it has stage directions, uses shortened speech prefixes, and includes some stage properties, such as the broomsticks the witches in 1 Antemasque speak of riding when they "oynt and make a flight."[38] Moreover, the stage directions of *A Pastorall* show that attention was paid to the performance of the work, as in the opening stage direction: "Witches the nombre being five / The Hagg being first."[39] Since only three witches speak in 1 Antemasque, the authors apparently thought through how the work would appear on stage.

Yet the differences between *A Pastorall*'s dedication and *The concealed Fansyes*' prologues substantiate the argument that *The concealed Fansyes* is far more explicitly presented as a performance text than *A Pastorall*. As discussed above, *A Pastorall* begins with two signed dedications to Newcastle from the two sisters. These dedications are not part of the performance text but instead seek the approval of Newcastle as a reader. Cavendish's dedication to *A Pastorall* even refers to the experience of the reader of the volume. She writes: "After the deuty of a verse / Give leave now to rehearse / A Pastorall."[40] Here, Cavendish appears to guide her reader through the transition from reading the volume's poems to the masque that is to follow. *The concealed Fansyes*, in contrast, begins with "A Prologue to the Stage" that directly addresses audience members, seeking their applause or "hands Plays."[41] The prologues speak only to a performance context and make no effort to engage a reading audience. Of Newcastle in the prologue specifically dedicated to him, the sisters seek his smile, a form of endorsement that itself has a performative dimension. They ask for his "smile, that all may truely see / You like, & doe approve, of what wee say."[42] *The concealed Fansyes* also dispenses with the attribution of scenes to J.C. or E.B. and leaves its running header blank after the first page. Following its prologues, *The concealed Fansyes* includes a blank chart that takes up a full page labeled "The Actors." That the chart is blank may indicate that the play had not been performed at the time the manuscript was produced (if it was ever performed). But that the compiler saw fit to rule and leave a space for the performers to be listed here at all is notable, and it demonstrates that performance was certainly envisioned as a possibility when the manuscript was transcribed. There is no commensurate page in *A Pastorall*.

It may also be worth noting in this context that there are significant differences between the transcription of *The concealed Fansyes* from the Beinecke manuscript and the rest of the Bodleian manuscript that may have some bearing on how *The concealed Fansyes* was a work that was written to be performed. As became very apparent to me when transcribing the two plays, the language of *A Pastorall* features far fewer contractions and short forms than that of *The concealed Fansyes*. Although *The concealed Fansyes* is in the same hand as the rest of the Bodleian manuscript and the Beinecke

38 Osborn MS b.233, 55.

39 Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 52.

40 Osborn MS b.233, 43.

41 Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 87.

42 Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 88.

manuscript, it consistently features short forms and contractions, particularly for the words "yo^{r}" and "y^{e}," in a way the rest of the Bodleian manuscript does not. These elements are seen at a high rate of frequency throughout *The concealed Fansyes* and rarely in the Beinecke manuscript or in the parts of the Bodleian manuscript that were probably copied from the Beinecke manuscript. Compare, for instance, the use of contractions at the end of Act 1 of *The concealed Fansyes*:

> Co: Give mee leave then passionately to begg a salute, & I will never see you more unlesse I may be answered wth more mildnes, for now every word you speake is a rack unto my soule, therefore give mee once more leave to begg the favour of yo^{r} Lipps.
>
> l u: When did you heare my Lipps were soe rude, as to come wthin distance of yo^{r} sex, & to confirme you there is noethinge I hate more then a Country Gentleman, who must ever salute comeing & goeinge, or else hee will whisper to his next—Neighbour. I am proud, & I sweare, I would rather cut my Lipps of then sufferr you a salute.[43]

Conversely, in both the Beinecke and Bodleian manuscripts, *A Pastorall* does not use contractions for the word "your," as here:

> Cha: Tell hir noe more your fancyes dreame
> Nor in your Cupps hir health in flame
> But if you speake let it bee witt
> Soe by you shee, may darr to sitt.
>
> I would not have you hir prophane
> With formall speeches which proves lame
> For in love sure it is a sinn
> If not by sword your Mistris winn[44]

The Beinecke manuscript does sometimes use the contraction "w^{ch}" and often shortens Lordship to "Lo:^{pp}." It uses contractions for "yo^{r}" only very rarely, and the few instances these contractions are used are mostly in the titles of poems. For instance, a contraction is used in "A Songe in answeare to yo^{r} Lo^{p} Sayter," where it helps make room for the full title of the poem to be included in its ruled header.[45]

While it is difficult to state with any certainty what the significance of this difference between *The concealed Fansyes* and the rest of the two manuscripts might be, I suggest that the large number of contractions may indicate that the play was written with performance rather than playreading in mind. The contractions are less formal

43 Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 81.

44 Rawlinson MS Poet. 16, 81. These passages are identical in the Beinecke manuscript, Osborn MS b.233, 74.

45 Osborn MS b.233, 7.

and more closely mimic the natural patterns of speech. Interestingly, the dedication at the start of the Beinecke manuscript also uses some of the same contractions. It is written in prose and not verse, and thus may lend itself to this more informal mode of writing as well. The contractions could also be evidence of the scribe's evolving style, or they could be evidence that the hand that wrote the source material the scribe used for *The concealed Fansyes* used more contractions than the hand of the source material for the volume's other works.[46] But the relative informality of *The concealed Fansyes* and its success as a performance text is reinforced by the more casual language used within it, so perhaps this subtle yet very real difference between the two texts speaks to the sisters' design of their work for performance. Taken together, all of these contrasts between *A Pastorall* and *The concealed Fansyes* show some important differences between how the two works envision their audiences' experience of them. The circumstances that led to these differences—the passage of time, the growing skill of Cavendish and Brackley as writers, or the particular factors that made *The concealed Fansyes* more likely to be performed than *A Pastorall*—are unknown, but the textual details that emerge from a comparison of the two manuscripts help make even clearer the importance of performance to the design of *The concealed Fansyes*.

My aim in pulling together these readings of the Bodleian and Beinecke manuscripts is to draw out and preserve the complexities found within Cavendish and Brackley's two manuscript collections, particularly in terms of what the manuscripts reveal about authorship and performance. In doing so, this discussion of elements of the two manuscripts sheds light on some of the key areas of discussion and debate in current scholarship of Cavendish and Brackley's works and helps to ground these conversations in the texts themselves. It also, through describing the sometimes startling inconsistencies between the two volumes, helps recover the complicated contexts in which these manuscripts were produced. Embracing an understanding of these manuscripts that recognizes that they reveal themselves at once to be the product of a single mind *and* an equal collaboration between two sisters serves as a reminder that these are works that evolved over time and that had the potential to be shaped not just by their author/authors but by their scribe, compiler, and audiences. Moreover, discussing the ways in which the two manuscripts' dramatic works at once foreground playreading *and* envision household performance opens up new possibilities for understanding Cavendish and Brackley's evolution as dramatists and suggests that, whatever their circumstances may have been when they wrote *The concealed Fansyes*, perhaps it was possible to for them to envision a reality where performance of their play was possible. Or perhaps they just wished to write as if a performance was possible, an understandable desire for anyone living in such difficult circumstances. Whatever the explanation for the inconsistencies between the two manuscripts, by focusing on them, I hope to have shown that we can open up new ways of understanding these works. In doing so, we both attend to the realities of the production of the manuscripts themselves and also preserve the remarkable achievement that both manuscripts represent.

46 Hulse, "The King's Entertainment," 361–64 describes Rolleston's evolving style in detail.

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Sara Mueller is a Senior Fellow with Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, where she also works with the Office of the Vice-President Research. She has published articles on early modern women's household theatre, progress entertainments, and receipt books. With Marta Straznicky, she recently published a critical edition of women's household plays, *Women's Household Drama: "Loves Victorie," "A Pastorall," and "The concealed Fansyes."*