writing. Tyler’s self-effacing address to her readers was fairly typical of authors publishing secular imaginative literature during this period. Excessive apology is a time-honored authorial pose, not a peculiarly feminine approach to publication. This is a minor lapse in an elegant edition that brilliantly introduces Tyler’s translation to a new generation of readers.

When I edited the facsimile edition of Margaret Tyler’s romance twenty years ago as a graduate student, reading the Mirror was my first extended exploration into the Blackletter font. I found it hard to believe that this font was the Helvetica of its day, considered easier to read than Roman, which had yet to be used for more popular texts. And I had a sinking feeling that, while in theory my facsimile edition made Tyler’s popular romance available to students and scholars, few readers beyond specialists would actually plough through the unfamiliar font to discover Tyler’s romance. Boro’s edition provides an affordable text for instructors teaching women writers, prose romance, or translation; the volume includes a glossary of less familiar vocabulary in an appendix. Along with her excellent introduction, Boro provides annotations in her footnotes to difficult passages and clarifies Tyler’s changes to the original text throughout. And while this edition will be of special interest to scholars working on early modern English literature, it will also appeal to scholars in gender studies, European history and religion, comparative literature, as well as to those working on the history of the book. Most importantly, Boro’s edition makes it likely that Tyler’s daring authorship of a secular romance will receive the same scholarly attention as her bold prefatory materials already have.

Kathryn Coad Narramore
Hunter College

Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics. Lisa Walters.

It is a pleasure to read a book on the work of Margaret Cavendish which needs no special pleading for its topic. This is largely thanks to the steady work over the last twenty years of the Margaret Cavendish Society, which through its scholarly network, annual meetings, and the books and articles of its members has multiplied the contexts in which the varied works of one of England’s most
prominent women writers can now be situated — and understood. Lisa Walters is the society’s current president, as have been the authors and editors of previous books on Cavendish: Lisa Sarasohn, James Fitzmaurice, Brandie Siegfried, and Sara Mendelsohn. The Society’s annual international meetings have supported collections and monographs by many others, not to mention a body of periodical literature by ambitious historians and critics of the early modern, and chapters or sections of important monographs. Thus, I want to begin this review by congratulating the scholarly matrix which made possible Walters’s serious and wide-ranging contribution to a field one can now simply refer to as Cavendish studies. It was not easy to overturn three centuries of defensive and misogynist ridicule of Cavendish in order to find this gold mine and map the ways to it for the larger fields of early modern studies, history of the novel, feminist literary history, and the history of science. Walters’s incisive book is the fruit of that success and an example of the conceptual intricacy of its subject’s success as a thinker and experimental writer.

Anna Battigelli’s Exiles of the Mind (1998) was a major reorientation of Cavendish studies in its emphasis on the writer’s fascination with subjectivity and her experiments with representing it, described by Battigelli as “displaying a thinking life aware of its role as a thinking life” (10). The historian of science Lisa Sarasohn’s more recent Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish (2010) is a strong account of Cavendish’s “ironic” natural philosophy as a feminist contestation of the “scientific revolution.” Sarasohn points out that Cavendish’s Observations on Natural Philosophy has recently been included in the Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy series — something which would have been unimaginable twenty years ago.

These works have been useful to Walters, but hers is even more synthetic than Battigelli’s. Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics is an effort to consider the whole opus, from Poems and Fancies to Observations upon Experimental Philosophy, both literary and philosophical (to the degree that they can be distinguished), as a kind of life-work investigating, critiquing, and reimagining an episteme, from a point of view Walters persuasively presents as both radical and modern. As she puts it more modestly than need be in the Introduction: “the aim of this study is to reconsider assumptions that Cavendish was a royalist” (5). Elsewhere: “The Blazing World explores free will alongside Paracelsian understandings of creativity and liberty, [providing] a . . . revolutionary and republican understanding of the individual’s relationship to the cosmos”
and “[f]urthermore, Cavendish invests the poor with great agency and power within a commonwealth in her characteristic comparison of governmental policies with natural bodies. . . . The ‘meanest’ member of society can cause a revolution in the same way that ‘one single action’ of a body part can cause the death of the entire body” (94). And, finally, “Cavendish also widens the political scope and significance of emerging republican ideas, demonstrating how anti-monarchy polemics can equally apply to patriarchal modes of oppression and can reconceptualize female subjectivity” (196). Walters likens Cavendish’s insights to those of the contemporary epistemologies of Foucault and Butler: “Although Cavendish theorized in the seventeenth century, her science leads towards a . . . target [similar to Butler’s]. It places bodies or body parts that were often defined as inferior in early modern physiology within a different signifying chain, while radically questioning and altering what is a valued or non-valued body” (49).

Because it is ambitious to knit together, as Cavendish did, the seemingly varied perspectives of epistemology, natural philosophy, political and social history, fiction, and folklore (my favorite chapter is the one on fairies, magic, and atoms), Walters’s argument for Cavendish as a Butlerian republican is hard to summarize briefly. It is not one presented as an articulated logical structure or a polemic against any one perspective or ideological investment. It works by accretion rather than combativeness, describing and locating rather than sallying and defending: it offers what Sedgwick approvingly designates as “weak theory.” The best I can do in a short review is to point skeletally to her modus operandi.

Walters presents her portrait of Cavendish the republican in two stages, the first an account (based on both her poetry and philosophy, in relation to Paracelsus, Descartes, Hobbes, the Cambridge Platonists, and perennial philosophy) of her materialist, anti-binarist theory of gendered matter and, within that, of the self-moving atoms and “parts” that we next see as actors in the politicized arena of individual free will. From this Walters moves to a pair of chapters discussing the fiction in relation to the period’s political and legal history, providing contexts from several relevant debates and discourses for the significance of the major actors (“parts”) in her fictions, especially The Blazing World, “Assaulted and Pursued Chastity,” and “The Contract.” Walters highlights the importance of the tropes, during the tumultuous years of Cavendish’s adulthood, of love, marriage, and familial relations (especially filial) to the period’s political discourse. For instance, “the story [of ‘The Contract’] ends with the law overthrowing the Duchess’s marriage contract, without heed to her superior social position. Since
the marriage contract is an analogy for the political contract, this indicates that the king is not above the law” (243). This habit of reminding us of the political salience and fraught legal status of the plot situations within which Cavendish locates her characters permits Walters to make many more connections between the fictional work and the philosophical, and between both and the cultural and constitutional dilemmas of the English Reformation, Civil War, and Restoration.

I was persuaded by the elegance with which Walters’s conceptual work of situating tropes, attending to an analogical method not yet defunct in Cavendish’s time, and drawing allegorical parallels, restored a philosophical and political coherence or largeness to her thought, such that the necessity of reading her as inconsistent or fickle in her shifting philosophical allegiances over the course of her career simply melted away. More than that, what emerged is the writer I have always felt, without being able to articulate, as a rebel soul: one who not only rejected and deconstructed binaries and authoritarian principles of relation but also delighted in playful and often hilarious critique of the habits and feints of power, even or especially on the royalist side in which she found herself as a member of the Duke of Newcastle’s family. Having read Walters’s book I am no longer able to imagine Cavendish as fundamentally conservative, royalist, or anti-feminist, and the experience of undoing my own unwilling assumption of those critical chestnuts was still more broadly instructive.

I have three small complaints to register: one is the lack of adequate copy-editing or proofreading evident in the last three sections of chapter three, “The politics of free will in The Blazing World: Hobbes, Paracelsus and absolute rule,” which makes those sections hard to read. I blame this on the press, which I also hold responsible for limiting Walters to a brief “Index of topics” — such a wide-ranging work, which situates the texts under discussion in relation to so many others, early modern and contemporary, absolutely cries out for an index. Finally, there is one aspect of Cavendish that I feel escaped the powerful intuitions and generous field of reference of this author: in my experience and that of most of my women students, the sublime violence of the Empress in Part II of The Blazing World is thrillingly, if guiltily, enjoyable, although I concede the likelihood that Cavendish is exploding the myth of absolutism for which Charles I lost his head. Perhaps in future work Walters will go beyond her considerable achievement here to look at the affordances of guilty pleasure in the fiction of Margaret Cavendish, even for female readers living under democratic constitutions in societies committed to gender equality. But it is the sign of a stimulating and useful
book that it leaves you wishing you could ask the author her thoughts on topics not addressed.

MARY BAINE CAMPBELL  
BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

*Lady Hester Pulter’s Poems, Emblems, and The Unfortunate Florinda.*  

Alice Eardley’s edition of Hester Pulter’s writings is a landmark event: not simply the first modern edition, but the first full print publication of a major, hitherto largely unknown, seventeenth-century writer. The literary quality and diversity of Pulter’s writings—including poems both personal and political, poetic emblems reworking common tropes, and a prose romance—mean that her works will not only contribute to, but also change the conversation about mid-seventeenth-century writing. In addition to continuing to make the case (unfortunately not yet settled, in the minds of some critics) for the literary merit of lesser-known early modern women writers, the edition raises important methodological questions about the impact of manuscript studies on larger narratives of literary history. Written in the 1640s and 1650s and compiled in the 1660s, Pulter’s manuscript remained almost unread until, in a scene that could have come from a novel, Mark Robson discovered it in the Brotherton Collection of the University of Leeds in 1996. Since the manuscript’s recovery, Pulter’s poems and prose have garnered increasing scholarly interest, with a few selections of her writings appearing in articles and anthologies. For the entirety of her works, however, scholars have needed to consult the sole manuscript or rely on its microfilm or digital reproduction. Eardley’s edition, part of the series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (which has done a great deal to make early modern women’s writing available), thus introduces Pulter to a new audience while affording specialist scholars a richer sense of her oeuvre.

Eardley begins the edition with an excellent introduction that details the historical, religious, scientific, biographical, and literary contexts for Pulter’s work. The edition then follows the format of Pulter’s manuscript, which organizes her writings in three categories: poems, poetic emblems (unillustrated), and a prose romance. Pulter’s writing in each genre shows a keen awareness of literary history,