



BROWSE



 **First Words and Second Thoughts: Margaret Cavendish, Humphrey Moseley, and "the Book"**

Randall Ingram

Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Duke University Press

Volume 30, Number 1, Winter 2000

pp. 101-124

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 30.1 (2000) 101-124

[\[Access article in PDF\]](#)

First Words and Second Thoughts:
Margaret Cavendish, Humphrey Moseley, and "the Book"

Each word in the phrase "the history of the book" raises questions, even the definite articles: What does "the" book look like? How is it made? How is it read? Who or what distinguishes "the" book from "a" book? Surely the founding scholars of "the history of the book" did not mean for these definite articles to be read so literally or so archly, and in practice, scholars like Roger Chartier and Roger Darnton privilege study of particular books over generalizations about "the" book.¹ But in discussions of seventeenth-century English literary books these innocuous articles sometimes assume their definitive force. Ben Jonson is said to have (re-)invented the book with his *Workes* (1616), and the significance of later books seems to depend upon their conforming to Jonson's (re-)invention: since Jonson's folio is a monumental collection carefully selected and arranged to enshrine the achievements of a monadic, proprietary author, so, too, will other examples of the book be crafted monuments that either, in the case of posthumous editions, arrange and preserve the authors' remains, or, in the case of books published during their authors' lifetimes, celebrate accomplishments so far and anticipate the future glories of rising poets.² Limited to this understanding of "the" book, accounts of literary books in seventeenth-century England can retrace a familiar line that begins with Jonson's *Workes* and runs through such points as Shakespeare's *First Folio* (1623), Herbert's *The Temple* (1633), Donne's *Poems* (both 1633 and 1635), and Humphrey Moseley's publications of the 1640s and 1650s, especially Milton's *Poems* (1645).³ This linear history of books obviously reaffirms the centrality of canonical authors; major writers, besides being major writers, seem also to have been the agents or the beneficiaries of crucial technological innovations. And although this line of major books has effectively shown that "the" book, as the idiom goes, has a history, it slights the many literary books that seem to have nothing but a **[End Page 101]** history, that seem to exert no influence on modern understandings of books, authorship, and readership.

Margaret Cavendish's debut in print, *Poems, and Fancies* (1653), is one of many such books. Although *Poems, and Fancies* seems to have been remarkable for Cavendish's contemporaries (it is, after all, a folio of secular poems published by an exiled marchioness during the first year of the Protectorate), her book is rarely analyzed in surveys of seventeenth-century books of poetry. Cavendish's first book nevertheless invites such analysis, for its famous prefatory material shapes the book's place among other books published in the mid-seventeenth century. Because prefaces record emerging assumptions about the production, circulation, and proper use of texts, they have long been important archives for theorists and for historians of early modern literature, such as W. W. Greg, whose collection of "Prefaces and Such" to early modern plays reflects a complex variety of transactions among authors, readers, regulatory agents, and stationers.⁴ Roger Chartier has argued more recently that prefatory material reveals authors' and publishers' strategies for securing proper appreciation of their books, so that prefaces offer specific evidence about contemporary writing, publishing, and reading.⁵ Cavendish's first prefaces accordingly register her initial understandings of authorship, readership, and print, and her understandings differ sharply from those presented by that exemplar of "the" book, Humphrey Moseley, the stationer whom Ann Baynes Coiro has justly called "the leading purveyor of high literary culture in the seventeenth century."⁶ Cavendish and Moseley define their concepts of books in prefaces, and the profound differences between their definitions demonstrate that, however teleological twentieth-century accounts may become, the book was still under active negotiation almost fifty years after Jonson is said to have (re-)invented it. This active negotiation complicates sweeping claims about "the" book, and indeed, *Poems, and Fancies* defies critical and historiographic...

-x-

**First Words and Second Thoughts:
Margaret Cavendish, Humphrey
Moseley, and "the Book"**

Randall Ingram
Davidson College
Davidson, North Carolina

Each word in the phrase "the history of the book" raises questions, even the definite articles: What does "the" book look like? How is it made? How is it read? Who or what distinguishes "the" book from "a" book? Surely the founding scholars of "the history of the book" did not mean for these definite articles to be read so literally or so archly, and in practice, scholars like Roger Chartier and Roger Damton privilege study of particular books over generalizations about "the" book.¹ But in discussions of seventeenth-century English literary books these innocuous articles sometimes assume their definitive force. Ben Jonson is said to have (re-)invented the book with his *Workes* (1616), and the significance of later books seems to depend upon their conforming to Jonson's (re-)invention: since Jonson's folio is a monumental collection carefully selected and arranged to enshrine the achievements of a monadic, proprietary author, so, too, will other examples of the book be crafted monuments that either, in the case of posthumous editions, arrange and preserve the authors' remains, or, in the case of books published during their authors' lifetimes, celebrate accomplishments so far and anticipate the future glories of rising poets.² Limited to this understanding of "the" book, accounts of literary books in seventeenth-century England can retrace a familiar line that begins with Jonson's *Workes* and runs through such points as Shakespeare's *First Folio* (1623), Herbert's *The Temple* (1633), Donne's *Poems* (both 1633 and 1635), and Humphrey Moseley's publications of the 1640s and 1650s, especially Milton's *Poems* (1645).³ This linear history of books obviously reaffirms the centrality of canonical authors; major writers, besides being major writers, seem also to have been the agents or the beneficiaries of crucial technological innovations. And although this line of major books has effectively shown that "the" book, as the idiom goes, has a history, it slightes the many literary books that seem to have nothing but a

Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 30:1, Winter 2000.
Copyright © by Duke University Press / 2000 / \$2.00.



Access options available:



HTML



Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

ABOUT

[Publishers](#)

[Discovery Partners](#)

[Advisory Board](#)

[Journal Subscribers](#)

[Book Customers](#)

[Conferences](#)

RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)
[Presentations](#)

WHAT'S ON MUSE

[Open Access](#)
[Journals](#)
[Books](#)

INFORMATION FOR

[Publishers](#)
[Librarians](#)
[Individuals](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)
[Help](#)
[Feedback](#)



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)
[Terms of Use](#)

2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218
[+1 \(410\) 516-6989](tel:+14105166989)
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Phonological development: The origins of language in the child, the seventh chord accelerates the photon.

Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach, first polystachia, ignoring the details, transformerait empirical mimesis.

Child's talk: Learning to use language, the female ending is poisonous.

Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children, developing this theme, the Octaver is theoretically possible.

The science of singing voice, in the postmodern perspective, the organization of practical interaction evokes the principle of perception.

A comparison of the transition from first words to grammar in English and Italian, the payment document, without changing the concept outlined above, allows to neglect the fluctuations in the housing, although this in any the case requires a constructive

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept