Rachel Speght and the Muzzling of a King:

The Beginning of the "Calvinist Revolution" in the Pamphlets of a Spinster

Crystalina Peterson

University of Virginia

Department of History

Introduction

The first half of the seventeenth century highlighted tensions between different religious sects and opposing political factions. Fears surrounding the involvement of religious radicals in government, and concerns about a foreign and possibly tyrannical ruler eventually culminated in the English Civil War. Sometimes referred to as the 'Calvinist Revolution,' it has been largely framed as a male revolt against the Stuarts and their inner circle of favorites, and while there is literature regarding women's work and actions during the war, there is less available about women's role in more subversive actions leading up to the 1640s.

During this period, religious and political tensions were also punctuated with suspicion of women who acted in the public sphere. Womanhood and religion combined into controversy when Joseph Swetnam published his pamphlet *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* in 1615, triggering the publication of three responses and a satirical play, in which Swetnam's character, pseudonym "Misogynos," is caned in a public trial by several women.[1] Swetnam's pamphlet argued that women were inherently immoral, deviant, and merely a necessary evil because of the sin Eve brought onto all of mankind.[2] The "full fed Beast," roaring like "a Devill,"[3] faced his most notable critic, a young woman named Rachel Speght, two years after his first edition was published. Speght's response, *A Mouzell for Melastomus*, is not unknown, and much work has been done on the Swetnam controversy and Speght's role in it, but

[1] Svvetnam, the vvoman-hater, arraigned by women A new comedie, acted at the red bull, by the late queenes seruants (London, 1620).
[2] Joseph Swetnam, *The araignment of lewde, idle, froward, and vnconstant women: Or the vanitie of them, choose you whether with a commendacion of wise, vertuous and honest women. pleasant for married men, profitable for young men, and hurtfull to none* (London, 1615), 2.
[3] Rachel Speght, "A Mouzell for Melastomus, Or an Answere to That Pamphlet Made by Jo. Sw. "The Arraignement of Women,"" (1617) in *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght*, ed. by Barabara Lewalski (Oxford University Press, New York, 1996), 58.

I intend to reframe Speght's writings as an example of a woman sharing her political and religious opinions, instead of strictly as a response to an assault on the character of women. Through a textual analysis of her publications and an exploration of the writings of those in her closest sphere of influence, I will provide an example of women's role in subversive actions and female participation in the religious movement that later exploded into the English Civil War.

Calvinism and Religious Politics

After the rise of Elizabeth I and the finalization of Anglicanism as the state religion, the separation between state religion and popular practice escalated into political tensions driven by, but not exclusive to, religious differences.[4] In early modern England, the parish was an essential part of community organization.[5] Parishes defined social boundaries and the parish church is where all the rituals that marked life events, such as infant baptisms, marriages, and funerals, took place.[6] And while the parish was an inherently religious space, popular piety contained expressions of faith that did not always align with the accepted state religion.[7]

Mark Kishlansky argues in his book *A Monarchy Transformed* that the Elizabethan church was Catholic in structure, but doctrinally Calvinist, calling it a "mingle-mangle" liturgy that both allowed for popular toleration while simultaneously breeding suspicion between neighbors who practiced differently and were directly competing with each other for resources.[8]

After the crowning of James I, discomfort with a Scotsman on the throne and his display of favoritism towards his fellow Scotsmen fueled further suspicion of the new king and his inner

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[4] Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britian 1603-1714* (Penguin Press, London, England, 1996), 70.
[5] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 7.
[6] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 7.
[7] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 8.
[8] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 74.

circle.[9] When he reinstated members of the Catholic Howards to the court, followed by an alliance with old English and Irish aristocracy, religious tension between Catholics and Protestants heightened, along with an overall distrust of the English government.[10] His personal life echoed the hodge-podge style of the Anglican Church, as he personally professed a belief in Calvinism but was surrounded with Catholics. His parents followed the Catholic faith, as well as his wife, Queen Anne, and his first lover, Esmé Stuart, Duke of Lennox.[11] James I also expressed that he believed the Catholic Church could – and should – be redeemed through reform, not by removal.[12] His Calvinist-influenced beliefs were instilled by the Scottish Presbyterian instruction he received from a very young age, along with his penchant for theological debate, which was fostered by his extensive education.[13]

Calvinism in the 1600s was a Protestant doctrine based on the teachings of John Calvin and the primary concept of predestined salvation or condemnation of individuals, determined by God before Creation.[14] This ideology set Calvinists apart from other Protestant sects, many of which followed Martin Luther in his doctrine of salvation by faith.[15] Other points of contention included Calvin's interpretation of the supreme authority of the Bible instead of the Pope, and the prohibition of pilgrimages, papal feasts, fasting, and mass.[16] The resulting violence between

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[9] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 70.
[10] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 70.
[11] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 74. There is a notable amount of evidence and secondary work on the sexual inclinations of James I. While his wife gave birth to seven children that were presumably all genetically his, James had an "attraction to handsome boys" and several male lovers throughout his lifetime. (Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 69, 74)
[12] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 74.
[13] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 75.
[14] Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Reformation: Towards a New History* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 2011), 182.
[15] Wandel, *The Reformation*, 97.
[16] Wandel, *The Reformation*, 104, 105.

already established Catholic and growing Calvinist populations was a precursor for the religious undertones of the pursuant revolution.[17]

In seventeenth-century England, most Protestants sought to reform the Anglican Church from within, but all Protestants wanted reform of the state's handling of religion.[18] Popular piety focused on self-discipline and an understanding that salvation was serious – the belief that they were chosen for eternal life meant that they were the godly ones, and that they were required by Scripture to take themselves seriously, as well.[19] As such, those with a Calvinist bent spent time seeking out lecturers and preachers, took positions as local officials, tried to convert their neighbors and friends, and enacted control of non-converts through legal avenues.[20] And with these efforts, the Presbyterians and other Calvinist-adjacent sects were the groups most capable of getting under King James I's skin, despite their long presence in his spiritual life.[21]

The scholar king equated his old Presbyterian friends with "rebels" and announced that he would "harry" the Puritans (a Separatist offshoot of English Calvinism) from England altogether – but his bark was harsher than his bite, and action was slow and sparse.[22] Only a limited number of Puritan clergy were removed from their posts, and the 1606 Oath of Allegiance "allowed obedience to coexist with conscience," encouraging an air of toleration, not expulsion.[23] After all, James sought to make peace and pursued the most committed men of faith to hold positions of authority in his church.[24] No matter what faith label they carried, those with

[17] Wandel, *The Reformation*, 130-133.
[18] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 75.
[19] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 76.
[20] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 76.
[21] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 76.
[22] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 76-77.
[23] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 77.
[24] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 77.

Calvinist inclinations and Anglicans alike were shown favor, and even some Catholics were granted favor.[25]

The disparity between James's rhetoric of "Stuart Anglicanism or Bust" and his actions of toleration, coupled with his child-like overspending, gave an air of discontent to popular opinion of the king and his court.[26] The Church of England was supposed to represent stability, but national religious controversy was a reflection of local contentions that had been exacerbated by perceived favoritism, primarily to Catholics and those with Calvinist proclivities, on the part of the king.[27]

Christopher Hill's book chapter, "God and the English Revolution," links the religious tensions of the Civil War to class hierarchy and a drive for social order.[28] Hill argues that Calvinist doctrine encouraged revolt if it was led by the "respectable classes," and that the ethics they wanted to enforce on the lower classes – sobriety, frugality, monogamy, and discipline – were based on their interpretation of Biblical text.[29] As previously mentioned, the Calvinist belief in Scriptural authority over all things is what was believed gave those with a penchant for Calvinist thought the right to enforce Scriptural compliance as a means of mitigating social chaos.[30] Hill claims that Calvinist inclinations led these believers to internalize an obligation to educate the masses, to prevent and correct any unguided reading of the Bible that resulted in the incorrect conclusions and misinterpretations of other religious sects.[31]

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[25] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 77.
[26] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 83.
[27] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 40, 70.
[28] Christopher Hill, "God and the English Revolution," in *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, ed. by Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, and Raphael Samuel (Routledge, New York, 1987), 394.
[29] Hill, "God and the English Revolution," 394.
[30] Hill, "God and the English Revolution," 394.
[31] Hill, "God and the English Revolution," 394.

Hill cites John Milton as one writer with a Calvinist bent who emphasized political revolution as a part of the Second Coming, one infamous writer in a line of authors who used Biblical lore for class analysis, to demonstrate God's approval for revolt against the king, and corrective action against corrupt society.[32] These "Parliamentarian revolutionaries" identified royalists as anti-Christian, and therefore as traitors to England's calling as a Christian nation.[33]

Part of these corrective actions was the advancement of religious education for both boys and girls.[34] Previously, primary schools for the lowest classes taught only basic literacy and primarily to boys up to adolescence.[35] Once public girls' schools were opened, they were taught wifely duties, how to keep house and how to raise their children to be God-fearing English folk.[36] Finishing schools, which taught more refined skills and higher levels of literacy and writing, were reserved for gentlewomen of the upper classes.[37] But even these institutions were not for the purpose of academic betterment – they were intended to train the wives of the gentry and aristocracy.[38] Religious reform came in the form of ensuring all women could read – but only in "better preparation for their traditional roles."[39]

By the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618, the Jacobean church was "more Calvinist than Lutheran" with educated ministers who were more concerned with anti-Catholicism than they were with picking a single brand of Protestantism.[40] James's son, Charles, took up with the English Calvinists' competing fringe group of Arminian followers, which

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[32] Hill, "God and the English Revolution," 397, 399.
[33] Hill, "God and the English Revolution," 399.
[34] R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Modern Europe: Culture and Education 1500-1800* (Routledge, New York, 2002), 21.
[35] Houston, *Literacy in Modern Europe*, 14
[36] Houston, *Literacy in Modern Europe*, 21.
[37] Houston, *Literacy in Modern Europe*, 21.
[38] Houston, *Literacy in Modern Europe*, 21.
[39] Houston, *Literacy in Modern Europe*, 22.
[40] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 126.

Kishlansky posits was due to Charles's obsession with order and aesthetic.[41] As Arminian doctrinal thought had replaced Calvinist rhetoric as the "popular" form of Protestantism by this time, the prince's favor was not out of place, but it was disconcerting for a kingdom that would soon be under his rule.[42] Thus, with a mutable monarch preparing to marry off his rebellious heir to an enemy faith, Protestant English subjects began to express their political and religious criticisms of the Stuart monarchy in new ways.

Speght, Swetnam, and the Calvinist Case Against the King

While Speght is best known for her involvement in the Swetnam controversy, which revolved around Joseph Swetnam and the repeated republishing of his pamphlet *An Arraignment*[43], there may be more to Speght's motivations for responding than has been previously thought. While Swetnam initially published in 1615 under the pseudonym "Thomas Tel-Troth,"[44] his identity was revealed later that same year in the second edition printing. After Speght's response in 1617, two more responses were printed later that year under female pseudonyms, Ester Sowernam with *Ester hath hang'd Haman* and Constantia Munda with *The Worming of a mad Dogge*. Both of these texts carry a more confrontational tone, leading some historians to argue that they may have been authored by men with the intention of reinforcing stereotypes of unruly women running amok.[45] Speght's earnestly pious defense of "all other of Hevahs sex fearing God,"[46] and her immediate use of her given name, separates her from the

[41] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 128.
[42] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 127.
[43] The pamphlet had dozens of printings and ten separate editions by 1667, and another six editions by 1880. The repeated printings, multiple editions, and longevity of *Arraignment* speaks to the prevalence of the debate about women in Stuart England.
[44] Barabara Lewalski, *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1996), xiv.
[45] Christina Luckyj, "Gender Controversy in Women's Writing," in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, Cham) https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01537-4_104-1
[46] Speght, "A Mouzell," 3.

other participants of the controversy, and provides a gendered perspective to the debates both about women and the monarchy.

Biographical works on Speght are sparse; I only located one article that contained more than a very rudimentary picture of who she was outside the context of the Swetnam controversy. Rediscovering the writer, Rachel Speght, and finding the religious activist within is a challenging task, largely due to the fact that records were not often kept of women independently from their husbands – in Speght's case, this would be William Procter, a fellow Calvinist pamphleteer and minister. My intention is not to separate Speght's activism from her womanhood, but to identify how her femininity and her faith informed her activism. This essay is a reframing of the works of James Purkis, Helen Speight, Christina Luckyj, and Barbara Lewalski, and puts them in conversation with scholars of the English Civil War. By analyzing all of her texts, apart from the Swetnam controversy, and within the greater context of the socio-political tensions of the early seventeenth century, women's activism as an action of popular piety and Christian womanhood can be revealed.

What makes Speght particularly unique is that her writings give us a beautifully painted picture of how her faith influenced the way she viewed her life and the world around her, at least up to the point where she ceased writing. While she does not detail the daily happenings of her life, Speght outlines her particular frame of reference for how she interacted with her world, and especially how her faith and identity as a woman defined that experience. Throughout her writings, Speght uses Biblical texts and theological rhetoric to advance her arguments against Swetnam, to defend women's education, and, I will argue here, to stand against James Stuart's monarchy as a violation of God's purpose. Her heavy reliance on scripture to support her assertions about authority, as well as to instruct men and women on their proper roles in society

and the home, demonstrates the importance that her religious beliefs held for Speght in forming both her individual identity and her view of early seventeenth-century England. Her implementation of polemical debate also provides a place to identify the language of the "Calvinist revolution" before the revolution itself took shape.

Rachel Speght as Author and Activist

As previously mentioned, Speght's biography is extremely difficult to reconstruct. Helen Speight's 2002 article, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," is largely speculative in nature, but since it is the best that is currently available and is based on primary source material, I will be using Speight's reconstruction of Speght's life here.

Speight states in her introduction that Rachel Speght's life was relatively unknown among scholars until Speight's own research, and while this is partially true, it is more accurate to say that Speght was regarded as an early English woman writer, and therefore was more known in literary scholarship, although primarily for her response to Swetnam and not for her other works. The lack of information about the finer details of Speght's life is, of course, largely due to the fact that most early modern women simply did not record the details of their lives - keeping diaries and journals was not particularly something that daughters and wives of ministers did – or if they did, those records were very unlikely to be preserved.

This is what has been pieced together thus far. Rachel Speght was born to James Speght and his wife, whose name was not recorded in the sources found thus far, around 1597.[47] He was a minister of two London churches and a scholar with Calvinist inclinations, as evidenced by the

[47] [47] Helen Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 65, no. 3/4 (2002): 449, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3817984.

bequest of a Calvinist translation of the Latin Bible to Speght's husband upon his death in 1637, as well as his authorship of two sermons based on Calvinist marriage doctrine in 1613 and 1615.[48] [49] Despite his humble title, Father Speght earned a healthy living as the rector at Milk Street in the Cripplegate ward of North London, as well as at St. Clement's in Eastcheap, another London neighborhood, and Speght was raised in a comfortable lifestyle in a house next to the Milk Street church.[50] This affluence is highlighted by the family's circle of influence – Speght's godmother was Mary Moundford, wife of the court physician, Thomas Moundford.[51]

Speght's education was quite unusual for a young girl of her social status, and perhaps even for one with her financial backing. Speight states that Speght was trained "on a classical curriculum," and suggests that Speght was being educated away from home, possibly in France.[52] In her poem *A Dreame*, she implies that she was away from home when an unexpected event cut her time short and forced her to return home early; Speight posits this was a reference to an education abroad, most likely where adequate girls' schools were more plentiful.[53] Regardless of where Speght was educated, she was well-trained in "Latin, classic and vernacular

[48] Christina Luckyj, "A Mouzell for Melastomus in Context: Re-Reading the Swetnam-Speght Debate." *English Literary Review* (2010): 121. Barabara Lewalski, *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght*, Oxford University Press, 1996, xi-xii. Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 450.

[49] James Speght was the parson of two rectories simultaneously until he retired. (Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 450) He raised Rachel and her surviving siblings at the parish at , and he was able to accumulate a sizable estate. (Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 450) Father Speght was well known in London and gave the Epiphany address for the Lord Mayor and Alderman in 1611. (Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 450) He later published that sermon in 1615, as well as "a defense of Calvinist soteriology" two years earlier. (Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 450) His parishioners included the court physician and mercer (fine clothmaker) Sir Baptist Hicks, whom James I knighted in 1603, and was a member of the House of Commons. ("Sir Baptist Hicks Middlesex County Records: Vol. 4, 1667-88. 329-349." *British History Online.* Middlesex County Record Society 1892.) Father Speght's friends were also stationed at notable parishes, and he had a family member who was a proctor of the Court of Arches. The Speghts were well-situated to rub elbows with the political elites of the Stuart court. (Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 450)

[50] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 450.

[51] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 450.

[52] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 452.

[53] Speght, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 57.

literature, historical and Biblical studies, [as well as] logic and rhetoric."[54] As her education clearly continued after "I therefore to that place return'd againe,/ From whence I came, and where I must remaine," Speight speculates that Speght was tutored by her father, citing the fact that she was the only one of his children to receive bequests from his personal library and not merely the clerical tomes for a fellow minister or the "virginall books" left for his other daughter.[55] [56]

Speght first published her writing in 1617, as we now know, in response to Joseph Swetnam, with her pamphlet *Mouzell*. After this, she released a second pamphlet, *Mortalities Memorandum*, with her poem *A Dreame* attached as a prefix, in 1621. Later that year, she married William Procter, a minister with Calvinist tendencies like her father, and gave up publishing for the rest of her life.[57]

While marriage may have halted Speght's publishing career, it did not stop her from leaving her mark in other ways. Procter was assigned to a rectory in Stradishall in 1631, another sufficiently affluent parish, although a good distance from London, but his pay was nearly what James Speght was paid.[58]

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[54] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 451.
[55] Speght, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 57.
[56] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 451-452.
[57] Lewalski, *Poems and Polemics of Rachel Speght*, xviii. Lewalski cites a marriage license issued in August of 1621, naming Procter as a cleric, Rachel as a spinster, and her father, James, parson of St. Mary Magdalen on Milk Street in London. Lewalski also posits that Procter is the same Procter who published the tract entitled *The Watchman Warning* in 1624, a sermon initially preached to the parish at Paul's Cross in September of that same year, and warning the city officers of the destruction their sins were inviting to the kingdom of England, and frames ministers such as himself as the watchmen of the city, enacting reprobation against those violating God's laws. (Lewalski, *Poems and Polemics of Rachel Speght*, xix)
[58] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 457.

Christmas of 1643 proved a pivotal time for the Speght-Procters. A soldier of parliament started a debate with Procter, and threatened to imprison the minister.[59] The following spring, Procter was one of dozens of clergymen arrested by Charles I's commissions investigating clerical scandal, authorized and oversaw by the earl of Manchester.[60] Procter's indictment was the longest of any minister in the county, with thirty-five accusations leveled against him.[61] Twenty witnesses from twelve families came forward to support the charges, despite the initial charges coming from only five individual parishioners.[62]

One might think that her husband's imprisonment would leave Speght and her children on their own and quite homeless in unfriendly company, but our dear writer had not lost her savvy. Speght petitioned the committee that had sequestered her husband for one-fifth of the rectory income on November 29, 1645.[63] She was granted this, but nearly eleven months later, the same committee attached further conditions to further maintenance payments – that she move three miles away and never bring any faction against the man who had replaced her husband, a Mr. John Pindar.[64] She made things more bothersome for Pindar when she petitioned to remove her liability for the excise payments of the parish house, but still, her punishment was heavy; only one other woman out of over a thousand cases was found to have had a similar request made of her.[65] Speght had been causing trouble for the newly-instated Mr. Pindar by preventing

[59] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 458.
[60] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 458.
[61] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 458.
[62] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 458. Speight argues this indicates underlying dissidents within the community who worked together to unseat the more traditional Calvinist. She states that the new minister, John Pindar, was a leading member of the "godly" dissidents and implies that Pindar gathered support in the parish before sending the royalists after Procter. (Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 459)
[63] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 461.
[64] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 460.
[65] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 462.

him from moving into the parish house.[66] Unfortunately, the documentation we do have does not tell us exactly why she was singled out in this order, although it does not appear that the family followed the directions of the order – records indicate her children and grandchildren still present in Stradishall.[67] However, Speght filed an additional petition in 1647 – "Rachel petitioned in March 1647 for the transfer of liability of excise payments from herself to Pindar" – her education and stiff spine came to good use, and her petition was successful.[68]

Procter was released after sixteen years in prison, and he kept a school in their home, also accumulating several houses, all of which are listed in his will.[69] Our last record of Speght alive is her petition in 1647; however, more recent research has revealed a burial record that places someone with the last name Procter name being laid to rest at All Hallows, Lombard Street in 1653, which would have made her age of death somewhere near 56.[70] As William Procter's burial record marks his death in 1661, the 1653 record is safely not his.[71]

Political Polemics/ Polemical Politics

By way of her excellent education and continued life in spaces that encouraged her engagement with Biblical text and discussion, Rachel Speght combined the disciplines of polemics and rhetoric into a platform on which she bolstered godly women, admonished prideful men, and instructed all of her contemporaries in the ways of a Biblical life. In the following analyses of her writings, I will identify the ways in which Speght utilized her education and her

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[66] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 462.
[67] Speight indicates that over a thousand clergymen were sequestered and their wives removed from the rectories they previously served. Only Speght and one other woman, Mrs. Childrens of Speldhurst, were forced to move out of the parish completely as a condition of maintenance payments. (Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 461)
[68] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 460.
[69] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 460.
[70] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 460.
[71] Speight, "Rachel Speght's Polemical Life," 462.

faith to display her own understanding of the place of women in society, as well as the role of godly authority.[72] This will demonstrate how she engaged with political conversations that were already occurring in her religious and social circles. While her interpretations of Biblical texts were not unique, her use of contemporary philosophical and theological rhetoric shows us how important her faith practice was to her own experience of femininity and how those aspects of her identity united to form her political opinion and move her to action.

A Mouzell for Melastomus

Speght herself states that she wrote *Mouzell* as a direct response to Swetnam's *Arraignment*, and although it has not been definitively proven who sponsored her publication, it is likely that she, at the very least, had her father's support, if not encouragement, in her authorial endeavors. Her expansive education, unconventional as it was, became her rite of passage into the world of public debate. Much of the previous scholarship surrounding Speght's publications views her as a defender of women, but I contend that she was also a member of a larger series of political debates.

Christina Luckyj analyzes *A Mouzell* through a political lens in her article for the English Literary Renaissance, "*A Mouzell for Melastomas* in Context." Luckyj states that she wants to avoid reading Speght primarily as a woman writing against men, but instead as a member of a "community of writers, preachers, and publishers" who related through their religious politics – and a community that included even Joseph Swetnam.[73]

[72] Lewalski, *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght*, xxxii.
[73] Christina Luckyj, "A Mouzell for Melastomus in context: Rereading the Swetnam-Speght Debate," English Literary Renaissance (2010), 114.

Luckyj cites Zachary Lesser, who argues that Swetnam and Speght were only in opposition in a superficial sense – he states that it was uncommon for printers such as Archer to print opposing pieces because it was thought there would be no money in publishing a debate.[74] Therefore, he claims that the two pamphlets worked in tandem, giving both men and women a space to air their grievances while still agreeing on the general hierarchy of the family.[75] However, Luckyj expounds on Lesser's conclusion, suggesting that the commonalities of the Swetnam-Speght discourse are based in the political and religious debates of the time.[76] She claims that Swetnam and Speght shared a "reformist agenda," identifying Swetnam's political affiliations as critical of James I and Speght's parallel, though perhaps more covert, criticisms.[77]

Historians such as Alastair Bellany claim that Prince Henry, son of James I and original heir to the throne before his death at age eighteen, was building a "court within a court," surrounding himself with men like Swetnam, who claims to have tutored the prince "in the skill of weapons."[78] This special "court" of the prince was a place for men who were interested in expanding into foreign territory, and who had a penchant for Protestant militancy.[79] Swetnam's pamphlet confirms his association with the prince, as well as his beliefs in aggressive foreign policy and his "commitment to the radical Puritan cause."[80]

One of the primary issues that both Swetnam and Speght seem to agree on are the implications of James I's decision to marry his new heir, Charles, to a Catholic Spaniard, along

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[74] Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama of Publication: Reading in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge, England, 2004) 118-119. Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 115.
[75] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 115. Lesser, *Renaissance Drama of Publication*, 124.
[76] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 115.
[77] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 115, 117, 125.
[78] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 116-117.
[79] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 117.
[80] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 117.

with James's involvement in the Overbury affair, which David Underdown posits was the inspiration for *Arraignment* and Speght's response.[81] The language Swetnam uses to admonish women is on par with other tracts of the era that more directly addressed Frances Howard, the primary woman held responsible for the Overbury Scandal, and these allegations against women could also be a commentary on the corruption of the court and the monarchy.[82] There is also a direct criticism of James I within Swetnam's gendered excoriation – in identifying "female extravagance" as the cause for a household's suffering, the pamphleteer also hints at the king's frivolous spending habits, which had put the financial security of the nation at risk.[83]

Luckyj also argues that Swetnam's text is aligned with conduct books of the time and singing the praises of a godly marriage, seeing the corruption he saw in the court as something that could be corrected by marriages in line with Scripture.[84] The king's desire to marry his son, the future king, to a Catholic and a Spaniard, someone who was perceived as unchristian and whose home nation was in direct competition with England, was seen as both a risk to the nation and an affront to godly marriage.[85] James's desire to be seen as a new King David, chosen by God and accountable to no one but God, also associated him with the darker implications of David's affair with Bathsheba and his perceived willingness to infringe on the liberties of his subjects.[86]

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[81] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 118. David Underdown, *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford Press, London, 1996), 64.
[82] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 118.
[83] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 119.
[84] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 120.
[85] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 120, 119.
[86] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 120.

Swetnam and Speght seem to agree on this point, that marriage is a joyous institution and ungodly behavior risks corrupting it.[87] Luckyj specifically identifies their mutual choice to publish marriage sermons as a key indicator that the Swetnam debate was less debate and more concurrence.[88] She particularly notes that Speght was taking a notable risk in choosing to publish a tract that reads as a sermon instead of adopting the more established rituals of the existing debate on women.[89] Luckyj argues that Speght's risk was due to her circle of influence, especially her father and husband, and the "radical religio-political import" her writing carries in the context of its time.[90] With the nation serving as a metaphorical family, the expectation for monarchs to act as fathers and not tyrants was a top priority; and as the family was where the individual relationship with God was planted and where it was fostered, it was the monarch's obligation to act like a godly father and husband to the nation they ruled.[91]

Marriage and politics in a symbiotic analogy could possibly provide the fundamentals of resistance theory, Luckyj claims.[92] Even early Puritans accepted the principles of monarchial rule, as it mirrored the accepted structure of the marital hierarchy.[93] Luckyj cites other contemporary literature, such as William Whately's *A Bride-bush* and Robert Cleaver's *Godlie form of householde government*, and sets them as examples of the political overtones of discussions regarding morality and faith.[94] In fact, Whately's second printing expanded on the

[87] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 120.
[88] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 120.
[89] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 120. Here, Luckyj specifically references the *querelle des femmes*, a debate that began in France in the sixteenth century and featured the works of such notable writers as Christine de Pizan.
[90] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 122.
[91] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 122.
[92] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 122.
[93] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 122.
[94] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 123.

political metaphors, resulting in him being called to appear before the High Commission in 1621, and the second edition was officially censored.[95]

Luckyj's analysis of Speght's *Mouzell* identifies similar themes. Beginning with a more militant tone based on a defense of gender, Speght shifts her rhetoric as she starts the main body of *Mouzell*, focusing instead on patriotic claims, in direct contrast with the king's penchant for inaction.[96] Luckyj identifies "an oblique criticism" of James's desire to marry his son Charles to a Spanish Catholic wife within Speght's discussion of Abraham's search for a wife for his son Isaac, taking "affectionate care" to "provide him one of his own kindred."[97] Similar citations were made in 1613, in response to the Princess Elizabeth's marriage to a Protestant royal husband – this time congratulating the king on his good matchmaking – by one Andrew Willett.[98] When Willett reiterated the point in 1618 in protest to the "Spanish Match," he was imprisoned.[99] Luckyj also includes William Whately's *A Bride-Bush* in her analysis, placing Speght into a larger conversation that centers on a Calvinist criticism of James I.[100]

Luckyj argues that Speght's politicism fades out for the rest of *Mouzell* until the end of her missive, when Speght suggests that men's God-given right to rule was tempered by the obligations and responsibilities they had because of that position of authority.[101] There is an emphasis on male rule as something that is earned by living a godly life, not a natural right given to all men indiscriminately, and that this authority is subject to "renegotiation" in order to

[95] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 123.
[96] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 125.
[97] Lucky, "A Mouzell in Context," 125. Speght, "A Mouzell for Melastomus," 12.
[98] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 125.
[99] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 125.
[100] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 121-124.
[101] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 126.

mitigate abuses of power.[102] Luckyj calls this a "manifesto of the obligations of the ruler" and states that Speght identifies a wife's right to "enforce" the husband's obligations and to influence the way he practiced "good government."[103] The rhetoric of this symbiotic, mutually responsible relationship frames the husband as the "fallible monarch," and the wife as an idealized example of political participation by godly Englishmen.[104] Luckyj posits that the language of the "reciprocity and mutuality of the marriage contract" as described by Speght, Swetnam, and Whately is a direct reflection of the way a monarch was intended to relate to their subjects, suggesting "a domestic symbiosis equally applicable to the political realm."[105]

There is a covert subversiveness to the utilization of polemical marriage tracts as political commentary, making *Mouzell* and other pamphlets like it passable as "pious, apolitical paeans" in the event that the political overtones were not well received or if the movement cooled down faster than expected.[106] One example of this approach that Luckyj addresses is *The Crowne Conjugal or the Spouse Royall*, published by preacher John Wing in 1620, which points to the most common verse of Proverbs that was used in wedding sermons, and utilizes Biblical rhetoric as a tool to discuss the economic, political, and personal.[107] Speght's approach is slightly more direct, using the language of political conversation immediately when discussing the same Proverb: "A vertuous woman, saith Salomon, is the Crowne of her husband; By which metaphor hee is to make of her: For a King doth not trample his Crowne under his feete, but highly esteemes of it, gently handles it, and carefully laies it up, as the evidence of his Kingdome."[108]

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[102] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 126.
[103] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 126.
[104] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 127.
[105] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 127.
[106] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 127.
[107] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 127. The Proverb cited in many wedding sermons in this period was Proverbs 12:4, "A virtuous woman is the Crowne of her Husband." (Proverbs 12:4, KJV)
[108] Speght, "A Mouzell for Melastomus," 22.

This association of the crown with the wife (whom James identifies explicitly as representative of the nation) reinforces the "family as nation" narrative that both the king and the Calvinist-inclined dissenters were engaging in, but it also frames the wife as the "symbol of sovereignty" of her husband, as the object that provides his right to rule.[109]

These interpretations of Proverbs 12:4 are pressed further by Speght, as she argues that "Man is the Womans Head; by which title yet of Supremacie, no authoritie hath hee given him to domineere" his wife or to treat her as a servant, but instead "is he taught the duties which hee oweth unto her."[110] In this way, Speght chastises tyrannical rule on the part of a husband – or a king – and demands that these male authorities treat their obligation to enact good government as a service done in deference to their wives or subjects, respectively.[111] Speght seems to be stating that a ruler's entire reason for being is for the benefit of his subjects – which is a direct contrast to James's statement that his subjects were "without resistance" because a king answered only to God.[112] Rather, Speght urges wives to submit to their husbands *only if* the husband is following Scriptural instruction; in the event that he is not, she states that "if a wife fulfill the evill command of her husband, shee obeies him as a tempter."[113] As such, Speght explicitly states that defying tyranny is the duty of a Christian Englishperson; although she stops short of calling for open revolution, her male peers, Swetnam and Whately, did not.[114] Perhaps their hotter style of Protestant activism inspired her husband later in life.

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[109] Speght, "A Mouzell for Melastomus," 22. Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 127.
[110] Speght, "A Mouzell for Melastomus," 23.
[111] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 128.
[112] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 128. Luckyj cites page 72 of the Sommerville edition of *The Political Works of James VI and James I* for this section of her discussion.
[113] Speght, "A Mouzell for Melastomus," 24.
[114] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 128.

Luckyj further argues that Calvinist-aligned imagining of a wife submitting to a "good husband" while prepared to rebel against tyranny, allowed them to engage in their own deference to what they perceived as a just king while still maintaining primary allegiance to God.[115] There is also scholarship that Luckyj points to as having examined the "domestic texts" of the early seventeenth century and the political rhetoric written within the instructions for husband and wife, but she posits that the framework these scholars use to examine male writers of the period is not extended for women writers.[116] Luckyj assumes that this is due to an assumption that women were more focused on the private sphere, as this was the space they had the most stake in.[117] But one must remember that just because the texts of women writers have been preserved does not mean that the original intention of the writers has been retained properly.[118] Indeed, within the scholarship on Rachel Speght, with a heavy focus on the surface arguments she makes and a lack of greater historical examination, Luckyj fears that the original historical meaning of *Mouzell* and her other publications may have been erased.[119] My own research supports this concern, as I struggled to form an argument that cohesively linked the gender debate across all of Speght's writings. Including Speght in the conversation with Swetnam, Whately, and other contemporaries places them in a position of coherent agreement within broader political controversies – the gendered debate that Speght and Swetnam exchange words in takes shape as a metaphor for the disparate interventions in government functions they each deemed appropriate.[120] Swetnam's approach relegated the political to the personal, while Speght

[115] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 129.
[116] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 129-130.
[117] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 130.
[118] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 130.
[119] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 130.
[120] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 130.

highlights the personal and domestic sphere as representative of the state of the nation.[121] While coming to the defense of women and providing good advice for godly English wives, the spinster daughter of a Calvinist minister simultaneously laid out parameters for the godly governance of the king himself.[122]

The language that Luckyj identifies in Swetnam, Wing, Whately, and Speght's *Mouzell* as anti-Stuart rhetoric is the template with which I will approach the remainder of Speght's works, starting with *Certaine Quares to the bayter of Women*, originally published as an appendix to *Mouzell*.

Certaine Quares

Framed as a series of direct criticisms for Joseph Swetnam to duly respond to, Speght maintains language that is consistent with her earlier critiques against King James I. In her dedicatory section, addressed "To the Reader," she states: "but a crooked pot-lid well-enough fits a wrie-necked pot, an unfashioned shooe a mis-shapen foote, and an illiterate answere an unlearned irreligious provocation."[123] Obviously a direct assault on Swetnam's pamphlet-writing skills, this quote can also be read as an admonition to the foreign-born king, framing his type of rulership as "crooked" or ill-made, and positioning the king's writings as "irreligious provocations" that merit responses from all of his subjects – even the "illiterate" ones. I argue that this was a commentary on James's uncivilized background and his regressive ideas about governance, particularly that Speght is remarking on the king's ideas about a monarch's divine right to rule, perhaps finding it reminiscent of the Catholic pope's self-proclaimed divine right to

[121] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 130.
[122] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 131.
[123] Rachel Speght, "Certaine Quares to the bayter of Women," in *The Polemics and Poems by Rachel Speght*, ed. by Barbara Lewalski (Oxford Press, New York, 1996), 31.

intercede between God and his people. Read as such, the link between English quasi-Calvinist anti-monarchical writers and Rachel Speght becomes more evident.

Speght carries on in the preface, again cutting across her debate with Swetnam in a way that implies a parallel between Swetnam's aggressive arraignment of women and James's tyrannical reinterpretation of the Bible. As mentioned previously, Calvinist doctrine taught that the Scripture was the only and absolute word of God, and Speght carries this doctrine forward in her reprimand to any who would twist the words of God for their own gain. "With edged tooles (saith the old Proverbe) it is ill sporting; but farre more dangerous: yea damnable is it to dally with Scripture, the two-edged Sword of the Eternall: for so to doe is a breach of the third Commandment."[124] Here, Speght describes the Bible as a tool and dangerous weapon that would cause irreparable harm to any fool who tried to manipulate its words for their own purposes. Here is another address to the king's use of Scripture to support his own authoritarian aspirations – interestingly, Swetnam published his pamphlet a mere four years after King James's commissioned version of the Bible was published.[125] *The Arraignment* gave Speght the *modus operandi* via which she could also respond to this new version, while publicly providing an example of the merits of the Calvinist-inclined vision of an educated populace.

Speght also makes a bold argument that Swetnam, and the king by proxy, are committing blasphemy. Her reference to the third Commandment is regarding taking the name of the Lord in vain – and her statement that "to dally with Scripture" is to violate that commandment infers that she saw James's reinterpretation of Scripture as a sacrilegious grab for power.[126] Further on, Speght says that "hee may answer for himselfe" – while she claims that she is addressing

[124] Speght, "Certaine Quares," 32.
[125] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 73.
[126] Exodus 20:7, KJV.

Swetnam directly, Speght also heavily insinuates that anyone partaking in the perversion of Scripture will be held accountable for their "impious blasphemies," by other Christians and by God himself.[127] The proclamation that the king could be held accountable by his subjects and by God is a direct contradiction to James's claim that he was accountable to God alone.[128] Speght says there are "many examples serving to confute your universall rule [that] might be produced," at which point it seems clear she is no longer addressing Swetnam alone.[129] Swetnam never claims to have authority to rule; however, King James I did, his own writings reflecting the divine right of monarchs to rule with no recourse from their subjects.[130] Speght's confrontation of this assertion reads as a refutation of "divine right" and of James's authoritarian approach to monarchial rule. She is stating plainly that a king is still responsible to his subjects, and she continues "you thereby shew your selfe an usurper against the King of heaven" by shunting his accountability – and by his insinuation that he knew better than his Christian subjects and Scripture, that he was putting himself in a position for more severe punishment.[131]

To further her accusation of blasphemy, Speght continues: "the Scripture verifieth, that God made woman and brought her to man; and that a prudent wife cometh of the Lord: yet have you not feared blasphemously to say, that women sprung from the divell."[132] The wife was used as a metaphor for the "family as nation" model in James's writings; it seems here that Speght found Swetnam to be in agreement with the king when the pamphleteer argued that women were prone to evildoing and must be ruled with a firm hand, paralleling the royal author's own claims

[127] Speght, "Certaine Quares," 33.
[128] James Stuart, VI of Scotland, "The trve law of free monarchies, or, The reciprocall and mutuall duty betwixt a free king and his naturall subjects," (Edinburgh, 1598), 15-16.
[129] Speght, "Certaine Quares," 34.
[130] Luckyj, "A Mouzell in Context," 128. Stuart, *Political Works*, 72.
[131] Speght, "Certaine Quares," 34.
[132] Speght, "Certaine Quares," 35.

of his "wifely" subjects and their need for strict rulership.[133] Swetnam's assertion that this role was to be filled by the husband, and James's assertion it was to be filled by the king (presumably both seeing themselves in these respective roles), is seen by Speght as contradictory to Scripture and the Biblical explanation of the origin of women.[134]

The punishment for blasphemy "ought by [God's] law, to die" and so Speght calls upon Swetnam to answer for his alleged crime.[135] Citing Leviticus 24:14-16, she demands that the "Bayter of women" be held accountable for his words, that he be brought forward and "ergo, he ought to die the death."[136] She goes on to warn her fellow polemicists, that if they went too far in their writings, they may commit blasphemy like Swetnam – or be subject to retaliatory punishment from the king.[137] However, there is another caution that seems directed at the king, "Beware of making too great a fire, lest the surplusage of the fires effect which you intended for others, singe your selfe."[138] This phrasing seems to hint that James should tread lightly, or he may be held to account under the penal code that he intended to enact on his subjects. A warning to James, but perhaps also a call to her fellow polemicists to pay attention to the king's actions and prepare to use his own laws against him.

Speght anticipated an unfriendly response to her pamphlet, and as *Certaine Quares* was published as an appendix to *Mouzell*, she likely anticipated responses from more than just Swetnam. She concludes the collection with this poem:

> *F ret, fume, or frumpe at me who will, I care not,*
> *I will thrust forth thy sting to hurt, and spare not:*

[133] Swetnam, "An araignment of vvoman," 2; Stuart, "A trve law of free monarchies," 14.
[134] Speght, "Certaine Quares," 35.
[135] Speght, "Certaine Quares," 38.
[136] Speght, "Certaine Quares," 38.
[137] Speght, "Certaine Quares," 38.
[138] Speght, "Certaine Quares," 38.

N ow that the taske I undertook is ended,
I dread not any harme to me intended,
S ith justly none therein I have offended.[139]

Here, Speght's stance is offensive, stating that she has no fear of repercussions because she views her words and actions of publishing them as justified. Her choice of these words "who will, I care not" carries the implication that she was expecting someone with more authority than Swetnam to balk at her words – after all, Swetnam alone would not cause her much "harm," but a disgruntled king very well could. Her stiff spine in the face of possible backlash implies that she was aware that her publication was a more dangerous risk than a simple response to a fellow Protestant.

A Dreame

The poem *A Dreame* was published in 1621, as a prefix to the longer poem *Mortalities Memorandum*. Speght dedicated the piece to her godmother, "Mrs Marie Moundford, wife unto the worshipfull Doctour Moundford," who, as previously mentioned, was a prominent physician to members of the court.[140] While this piece does not seem to directly address the politics of the day, Speght does discuss her encounter with Swetnam and mentions the other responses that were published in response to *The Arraignment*, as well as her motivations for publishing her own response.[141]

Speght's dedicatory passage explains that she has in some way been muted, "having bin toucht with the censures," in response to "my mouzeling Melastomus."[142] It seems the censure

[139] Speght, "Certaine Quares," 41.
[140] Rachel Speght, "A Dreame," in *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght*, ed. by Barbara Lewalski (Oxford Press, New York,1996), 45.
[141] Speght, "A Dreame," 45, 54, 58-59.
[142] Speght, "A Dreame," 45.

may be related to suspicions of *Mouzell* being written by her father, which she vehemently denies: "I am now, as by a strong motive induced to produce and divulge this off-spring of my indevour, to prove them further futurely who have formerly deprived me of my due, imposing my abortive upon the father of me." As such, she states she is publishing another piece in order to prove she was the rightful author of *Mouzell*, both in capability and in action.[143] While she does not seem to be addressing the king directly here, Speght is asserting that her publications were censured and thus, seen as a threat by someone, thus the effort to dismiss her contribution as fraudulent. Existing scholarship and current available records have not revealed the exact circumstance of this censure – yet. Speght also acknowledges that "Censure to be inevitable to a publique act," which indicates that she was well aware of the risks of publishing a potentially controversial pamphlet as she set out on her endeavor.[144] This is a clue that the censure was potentially called down from someone more influential than her father – despite her family's affluency and proximity to court notables.

The remainder of the poem has very little political commentary in it; however, Speght does make some statements that seem to confirm she spent time abroad for her education – and perhaps for other reasons:

> I, as a stranger in this place abide…
> Yet know I not, nor can I give a guesse,
> How short a time I in this place shall spend.
> For that high power, which sent me to this place,
> Doth onely know the period of my race.[145]

[143] Speght, "A Dreame," 45.
[144] Speght, "A Dreame," 45.
[145] Speght, "A Dreame," 49.

If the poem is genuinely chronological, Speght's being sent away may be entirely unrelated to *Mouzell* and the Swetnam debate. However, the poem does not seem to be strictly chronological, and Speght's comment of being sent away by a "high power" may be related to her experience with the censures of London. Her mention of the censures is adjacent to the beginning of the poem in which she mentions being sent away. I posit that this phrase may be evidence that Speght's missive caught the attention of other members of the royal court. And while Speght describes her travels as being "sent" to another place where she was "as a stranger," this could be the case of her being sent off for school – or, as she seems to imply by positioning it closely to mentions of censure, that she was sent away to avoid backlash for her response to Swetnam.[146]

Speght sets aside even scanty insinuations of her political opinions throughout *A Dreame*, only hinting in her closing lines at a battle against "this mortall foe" and that she intends to "shew how it to tyrannize begun," aiming to expose the ways her perceived adversary is domineering England.[147] Speght ends the first poem with a Latin phrase that has more foresight than anyone may have imagined in 1621: "Esto Memor Mortis" or "Be mindful of death."[148] As a transition to her poem *Mortalities Memorandum*, or as a warning to the king, the phrase bears a sense of foreboding, reminding readers that Death left no one untouched.[149]

Mortalities Memorandum

The main body of Speght's second publication is primarily a discussion about death, warning of its inevitable coming and how a Christian ought best to prepare for it. Her political

[146] Speght, "A Dreame," 49.
[147] Speght, "A Dreame," 60.
[148] Speght, "A Dreame," 60.
[149] Speght, "A Dreame," 60.

persuasions are again less prominent, but still present. Her more demure approach may have been due to the censure she mentions in *A Dreame* and its introduction, or perhaps to her impending marriage and the four years of maturity she had earned since publishing *Mouzell* – which of these, there is no way to know for sure.

But one thing is for certain, and that is, Speght's polemical talents had not faded with age. She continues to reference myths and Scripture in her writing; she fills the stanzas of her work with moral and philosophical arguments meant to impress the importance of living a godly life on her readers. After sharing the Biblical tale of the origin of sin, Speght explains that there are three different types of death: the death of the soul, then separation of soul and body, and then of the spirit, or eternal separation from God.[150] In describing the ways one falls into these types of death, she explains, "their life in pleasure caus'd their soules to die."[151] This is in reference to the death of the soul, being trapped by sin while still alive. Speght is admonishing a life lived surrounded by frivolity, which can be read as a reproach of the king's hapless spending habits, as he lavished gifts on his friends.[152] Irresponsible financial habits are marked here as a sign of a wayward, or even corrupted, soul.[153] Since James I was facing much scrutiny in the face of a struggling royal budget and his proclivity for spending exorbitant amounts of money on his favorites, the connection between Speght's admonition and royal expenditure becomes more clear.

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[150] Rachel Speght, "Mortalities Memorandum," in *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght*, ed. by Barbara Lewalski (Oxford Press, New York, 1996), 62.
[151] Speght, "Mortalities," 62.
[152] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 68.
[153] Speght, "Mortalities," 62.

In regard to the second death, Speght argues that "the separation/Of soule, and bodie from the love of God" is evidenced by living in an ungodly way.[154] If one was living incorrectly, it effectively doomed them to eternal separation from God.[155] In keeping with Calvinist predestination doctrine, this outward evidence of eternal damnation was also evidence that one was not a member of the pre-chosen heirs of the kingdom.[156] And if one did not take accountability for their actions and change their behavior, the results could be disastrous: "To some the Lord in mercie graunteth space/For true repentance of committed sinne/…And other some, who sinne as earst before/He takes away, that they may sinne no more."[157] I've already argued that Speght accused the king of blasphemy and stated he should be put to death for it in *Mouzell*. Here, I would contend that she is subtly warning the king, hinting at his possible demise if he did not change his unchristian behavior.

Speght also has something to say about James's paranoia and his involvement in high-profile scandals: "Yet some mens feare doth issue from mistrust,/That they shall never shine among the just."[158] My reading of this passage is that Speght found the monarch's constant fear of regicide and involvement in public missteps to be evidence of his unrighteousness – that a king who behaved as such could never be divinely selected by God himself.[159] She discusses at length the fact that no one can escape death "but when we may not know./…the impartialitie of it/…Where Death arrests it will admit no Bayle/…But makes Kings subject to its aweless power."[160] Since she states that no one is exempt from death, or the judgment of God, Speght

[154] Speght, "Mortalities," 63.
[155] Speght, "Mortalities," 63.
[156] Speght, "Mortalities," 89.
[157] Speght, "Mortalities," 66.
[158] Speght, "Mortalities," 73.
[159] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 79, 82.
[160] Speght, "Mortalities," 78.

also seems to be arguing against James's claim that he would be above the law – since she sees the law as the enforcement of morality and Christian behavior, Speght would expect all humans, and especially Christians, to be held accountable to it.[161]

While Speght's political leanings may not be obvious throughout her writings, the implications of many of her statements are clear once they are contextualized in the political and religious environment she and her counterparts lived in and moved through. Her association with polemicists and members of the court put her in a unique position to be privy to information and to bring her own voice into the conversation without a high risk of repercussion – or at least she would have protections in place against them. In utilizing her status to push back against the men and power structures at play in early seventeenth-century England, Rachel Speght became a foundational member of the women writers and activists that would change the religio-political landscape of England for generations to come.

The Aftermath

Once he was crowned king in 1625, Charles I revoked a series of land grants that resulted in contentious infighting at court and multiple suits were brought against the commissioners by the Privy Council.[162] He was effective at centralizing the monarchy but alienated his social and political allies in the process.[163] This, along with a botched public trial, fed discontent against Charles.[164]

By the winter of 1645-46, all parliamentarians would be labeled traitors, and a new push for a reformed national church with strict doctrinal conformity came from a "growing Puritan

[161] Speght, "Mortalities," 78-79.
[162] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 131.
[163] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 136.
[164] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 131.

underground."[165] The more radical Independents balked at conformity and hierarchy in religion, and fought to establish self-governed congregations with overall uniformity in practice – theologically the same, this church would encourage conformity over toleration, although there would not be a church head to enforce this.[166] It is in the wake of these events that Speght's husband, William Procter, and dozens of other Parliamentarian allies would be arrested.[167]

Nicholas Tyacke expands on the religious undertones of the Civil War in his book chapter, "Puritanism, Arminianism, and Counter Revolution." century, the collapse of the central government provided a key opportunity for them to take over England's religious spaces.[168] Tyacke posits that religion became a pressing issue in English politics due to the rise of Arminianism in the 1620s, as England was "steeped in Calvinist theology" and Arminianism was a direct assault on the core foundation of that theology – predestination theory.[169]

With Charles's support, the Arminians became what Tyacke calls the "religious revolutionaries," as those with Calvinist inclinations were in the majority and were initially aiming to maintain order.[170] As the latter were slowly pushed out of positions of authority and isolated from the court, censorship efforts from the king muted their voices from popular press while the Arminians were allowed to publish freely.[171] This Arminian press included the assertion that all predestinarians were, in fact, radical Puritans – aligning the parliamentary

[165] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 137, 168.
[166] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 169.
[167] Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, 168.
[168] Nicholas Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism, and Counter-Revolution," in *The Origins of the English Civil War*, ed. by Conrad Russell (Macmillan Press, London, 1973), 119.
[169] Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism, and Counter-Revolution," 119.
[170] Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism, and Counter-Revolution," 121.
[171] Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism, and Counter-Revolution," 137.

majority with anti-monarchical radicals, and the Arminian minority with the royalists.[172] Heightened prosecution of those who fit this new definition of "Puritan" throughout the 1630s led to new Puritan militancy into the early 1640s.[173] Tyacke states that Charles's parliament was "antagonistic" and that his Arminian clerics were "very hostile" to popular intervention in the church, possibly due to overcompensating for a sense of "social inferiority" due to Calvinist-aligned blood connections to the gentry and the Arminians tendency to be from the lower classes.[174] But at the end of the day, the Arminians had King Charles I on their side, and thus could effectively fracture the remnants of calm that his father had attempted to put in place.

On the eve of the outbreak of revolution, the Parliament was itself accused of being anti-Christian, and even the suggestion of a national church was deemed unbiblical.[175] The search for certainty and stability in a climate of political contention and religious infighting fed the desire to enforce a new morality, especially in the lower, uneducated classes.[176] The royalists sought a more permissive approach, claiming that internal faith overcame all sin.[177] The English "Calvinist" (now called Puritan) conservatives, who sought to maintain parliamentary control, "began to feel that freedom could go too far," and after the removal and beheading of Charles I, they restored press censorship and took suppressive action against monarchists.[178] They also

[172] Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism, and Counter-Revolution," 134. This is not to say that English politics were divided neatly along religious lines during the civil war. These assertions are referencing a typical overview, not a hard and fast rule, and there are exceptions to be found on all sides. For our purposes, however, we are focusing on the norm, not the exception.
[173] Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism, and Counter-Revolution," 139.
[174] Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism, and Counter-Revolution," 139-140.
[175] Hill, "God and the English Revolution," 399.
[176] Hill, "God and the English Revolution," 401.
[177] Hill, "God and the English Revolution," 401.
[178] Hill, "God and the English Revolution," 403.

reestablished the Church of England, mostly under Puritan leadership, reversing Charles's attempt at a decentralized church.[179]

I do not mean to argue that Rachel Speght was a singular igniting voice of the Revolution. I instead contend that she was one person involved and taking part in the movements that led to these explosive events. Speght shed the strictures of her time to enter a conversation dominated by men, driven by her faith, and a desire to share how she hoped to see that faith politically expressed.

Conclusion

Despite her short writing career, and her rather obscure later life, Rachel Speght Procter accomplished something the vast majority of women in her time never would, and she was able to use her education and sharp mind to her advantage, first to earn honorable income as a single unmarried woman, as well as defend her sex, and later to procure funds and housing for her and her children when her husband was suddenly ripped away from them. Her life is a demonstration of personal agency, advocacy, and resilience in a time that greatly restricted women's ability to operate in the public sphere, despite the criticism she would be subject to, and the potential risk to her soul such an action could pose. The events of her life took place during a time of rapid expansion of women's writing, but the style and content of her writing pushed was not within the accepted women's genre. Instead of instructional manuals and conduct books for young women and girls, Speght was addressing an audience that crossed gender, age, and class lines. Speght's unwillingness to sit demurely by in the name of propriety when faced with a challenge is a bold example of how the early modern Englishwoman may have seen her obligations both to her

[179] Hill, "God and the English Revolution," 403.

fellow women and to the English nation. Indeed, Rachel Speght's duties were not just to her family and home, but also to her country and to all "good women." As an early seventeenth-century woman in England, Speght was certainly unique in her interpretations of husbandly and wifely obligations, and her writings helped lay the foundations for egalitarian relationship structures in Christian homes. But above all, Rachel Speght cracked open the door for English women of the middling classes to engage in educated, critical, rhetorical debate with men in a public forum without risking their reputations as upstanding Christian women.

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