

riages," must reform and confess their utter dependence on God before general redemption will come (Rowlandson, *Narrative*, 105–6).

45. Rowlandson, *Narrative*, 112.

46. This section on Short is an abbreviated discussion of Janice Knight, "Telling It Slant: The Testimony of Mercy Short," *Early American Literature* (winter 2002): 39–69. Mather's *Brand* is composed of inseparable, yet somewhat distinct narrative structures—all mediated his act of transcription. We know only the sketchiest of details about Short—that upon her release in Boston she found herself in a strange town, with no family, no property, no friends, and presumably with no hope for bettering her circumstances.

47. Mather, *Brand*, 260.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*, 275, 284, 276.

50. *Ibid.*, 275.

51. *The Bay Psalm Book: A Facsimile Reprint of the First Edition of 1640* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

52. John Winthrop, *Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649*, ed. Richard Dunn and Lactitia Yeandle (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), claims that "At Aquiday also Mrs. Hutchinson exercised publicly, and she and her party (some three or four families) would have no magistracy . . . Mrs. Hutchinson and some of her adherents happened to be at prayer when the earthquake was at Aquiday, etc., and the house was being shaken there, they were persuaded (and boasted of it) that the Holy Ghost did shake it in coming down upon them, as he did upon the apostles" (155). Winthrop also reported that after her excommunication Hutchinson declared to a detractor, "The Lord judgeth not as man judgeth, better to be cast out of the Church then to deny Christ" (Winthrop, "Short Story," 307). For a recent account of Hutchinson's last days, see Winship, *Times & Trials*, ch. 9.

53. See Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 392, for reports of Hutchinson's continued rejection of the judgment of the Massachusetts authorities.

54. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Tales and Sketches* (New York: Library of America, 1996), 18–24. Hawthorne's view of Hutchinson in this "sketch" evidences a peculiar mix of admiration and contempt of the sort he lavished on Margaret Fuller and on his character Zenobia. He extols Hutchinson as a "woman of extraordinary talent and strong imagination" (19) and is critical of her persecutors. However, his ambivalence about strong women is in full view in his final paragraph: "Perhaps here she found the repose, hitherto so vainly sought. Secluded from all whose faith she could not govern, surrounded by the dependents over whom she held an unlimited influence, agitated by none of the tumultuous billows which were left swelling behind her, we may suppose that, in the stillness of Nature, her heart was stilled" (24).

55. These last words contained in S. G., *Glass for the People of New-England*, 137, supposedly transcribe a letter from Hutchinson to Leverett. This full passage reads: "If it were the True Light, in which you say I did once shine in, I am sure the Author thereof, and the Maintainer of it is God, and it shall break forth more and more unto the perfect day." Here, as in her trial, her words blend imperceptibly with Scripture: "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). I do not think that we can know whether *Glass* actually transcribes Hutchinson's words, but I believe these words fully resonate with what we know of her spirit.

Chapter 9

"With All Due Reverence and Respect to the Word of God": Aphra Behn as Skeptical Reader of the Bible and Critical Translator of Fontenelle

MARGARET FERGUSON

"Translation," Eve Sanders has written, "carved out an intermediary zone between reading and writing in which it was possible for [some early modern women] to claim position as [authors]." I want to explore the intermediary zone that Sanders identifies in order to consider translation not only as a textual field in which we can discern traces of female authorship but also as a significant resource for students of the history of reading. Translation is often devalued in ideological schemes that privilege some kind of original creation and ownership of one's own literary property. Such schemes are already evident in early modern discourses about textual production—think, for instance, of Florio's famous dedicatory epistle in which he characterizes his translation of Montaigne's *Essais* (1603) both as a "defective edition" and as a species of writing "reputed femelle," as "are all translations."¹ While it is still easy to see translation as a defective or at least a secondary form of writing, some recent critics have invited us to theorize and historicize translation as a cultural act only partly interpretable with reference to modern or even early modern concepts of the (literary) author.² Danielle Clarke, for instance, has recently analyzed Mary Sidney's translation of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine* (*Antonius*, 1592) as a complex political intervention in which the translator is neither a "handmaid" to the original nor a rebellious subverter of it.³ A romantic overvaluation of authorship considered as originality underlies the tendency to construe the relation between a translation and its (chief) original in terms of a Bloomian theory of agonistic influence. Although such a critical paradigm may work for part of the early modern terrain of translation—best, perhaps,

for the type of translation John Dryden identified as "imitation" and wittily defined as that kind in which "the translator (if he has not lost that Name) assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sence, but to forsake them both, as he sees occasion"⁵—the paradigm is inadequate for many early ways of understanding the relation between translation and original, and for understanding the concept of "fidelity." As Luther's amazing theory and practice of biblical translation indicate, the notion of "fidelity," in Renaissance and Reformation contexts, may raise complex questions about a subject's competing allegiances; for Luther, fidelity to the German language and to his own vision of biblical truth takes precedence over any notion of fidelity to the Greek or Latin or even the Hebrew texts of the Bible.⁶ Dryden's verb "forsake," when we consider it in relation to Aphra Behn's writing practice, turns out to have multiple meanings inflected by different textual traditions (classical and Judeo-Christian) and by the reader's awareness of the writing-subject's gender. Wives are enjoined by Genesis to forsake their parents in order to cleave to their husbands, but Ovidian nymphs are forsaken by their lovers (rarely also husbands) and Christ—a model available to both male and female writers—famously felt himself, on the cross, to be forsaken by his Father. As these examples indicate, we cannot ascribe a simple moral valence to a woman writer's act of "forsaking" her source.

Aphra Behn, whose various noms de plume arguably derive neither from her biological parents nor from her (alleged) husband,⁷ made a somewhat paradoxical contribution to the volume of translations that Dryden presented to English readers. The paradox of Behn's contribution opens my path toward discussing other paradoxes in her (several) personae as translator. While Dryden's 1680 volume is a collection of translations of Ovid's epistles done in "several hands," the lone female contributor (Dryden somewhat ambiguously suggests) is also the only translator who does not actually know Ovid's original language: "I was desir'd to say that the Authour, who is of the Fair Sex, understood not Latine. But if she does not, I am afraid she has given us occasion to be asham'd who do."⁸ Who "desired" him to say this? The coy phrasing invites skepticism.⁹ Might Behn have known enough Latin to read it (as many modern academics do) with the aid of others' translations? She may well have desired not to reveal the whole truth and nothing but the truth about the nature of her education, which is a process that involves cultural appropriation in some of the same ways that writing does. In Behn's oeuvre there are no clear lines between original, imitated, adapted, and translated material.

The text on which I focus in this essay—Behn's translation, including a preface on "prose translation," of Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle's

Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes—seems to follow its original closely.¹⁰ However, the question of the translator's fidelity is, as I hope to show, quite complex. To whom or what is Behn the translator—and theorist of translation—faithful? Her own statement on the matter goes as follows in her translator's preface: "I have endeavoured to give you the true meaning of the Author, and have kept as near his Words as was possible; I was necessitated to add a little in some places, otherwise the Book could not have been understood."¹¹ In this formulation Behn seems to place her work modestly in the second of the three categories of translation defined by Dryden. She offers neither "imitation," the most libertine mode of translation, as we have seen, nor what Dryden calls "metaphrase," "turning an author word by word."¹² Instead, like a good Anglican seeking the "via media," she is offering "paraphrase," which Dryden describes as "Translation with Latitude," that is, "where the Authour is kept in view by the Translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly follow'd as his sense, and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not alter'd."¹³ How exactly one can "amplify" a text without altering it is an interesting question, however—especially if among the amplifications is a preface that instructs the reader on what she/he should think about the translated work's merits in particular and, in general, about the enormously vexed relation between the New Science of Copernicus and Galileo, on the one hand, and God's divine Word, on the other hand.¹⁴

Fontenelle's text in its first edition, which Behn translated, consists of five dialogues or "conversations" between a learned and courtly male—the Fontenelle figure—and a high-ranking, curious, but somewhat naive and certainly badly educated "Marquise." Behn is critical of this figure; she also appropriates some of the Marquise's intellectual interests, particularly her fascination with the moon, for the persona of the female translator constructed in the preface. This text, which has only recently begun to be discussed by critics, advertises the translator's presence while completely failing to mention the fact that there is also a preface by the work's "author"—a preface that takes second place in the structure of Behn's book. Translation, like Eve, may be defective and secondary in the view of some early modern writers, but some women who were readers as well as writers did not accept such analogies.

Behn's translation of Fontenelle dramatizes several ways in which theories and practices of translation illuminate the historical emergence of the female reader in the early modern period. Translation is, to be sure, not the same as an act of reading either phenomenologically or materially; on the contrary, translation represents, in writing, multiple readings of a source text and, in many cases, other acts of reading as well that leave their traces in the translation as a written object. Because, however,

translation points so interestingly to complexities in acts of reading that cross linguistic and cultural boundaries, and because translation is so central to an international field of early modern cultural debate sutured (and fissured) by theological, political, and sexual problems pertaining to ideas about fidelity, it seems worthwhile to discuss what one prolific early modern woman writer has to say on the topic of translation. Her reflections lead us toward questions about the workings of censorship—including self-censorship—in the practice of translation considered as the representation (not the same as a record) of layered acts of reading. Her reflections also raise questions about the relative prestige of different languages and about the competition between science and religion as sources of cultural authority. Moreover, and more practically, her take on science and religion focuses attention on both phenomena as sets of texts aimed at, and bought by, particular groups of gendered readers with particular kinds of education and hence different amounts of linguistic capital.

Modern anglophone critics and translators usually refer to Fontenelle's work (now shelved under the category science fiction in one Berkeley bookstore) as *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*. Mary Baine Campbell describes it as a "tremendously dense, witty, and also smug proto-Enlightenment dialogue [on cosmology] . . . that put the plurality of worlds on every European coffee table (including some Russian ones)."¹⁵ The first of the work's many French editions appeared in 1686; later editions were amplified and corrected as Fontenelle the "amateur" scientist learned more about his subject. Ironically, it was this work of popular science—married, one critic has suggested, to the genre of romance—that got him elected, in 1691, to the post of secretary of the Académie des Sciences.¹⁶ Behn's translation, which would buy her no such prestigious position, came out with remarkable speed in 1688, in a year when she desperately needed money.¹⁷ She remarks at the end of her translator's preface that she would have preferred to give her readers "the subject" of the "plurality of worlds" "quite changed and made my own," but she had "neither health nor leisure" to do so (86). Instead she hopped on the bandwagon of Fontenelle's engaging synthesis of astronomical ideas drawn not only from Copernicus and Galileo but also from Kepler (*Somnium*, 1634) and from Cyrano de Bergerac, who explored hypothetical worlds on the moon and the sun in texts of 1657 and 1662.¹⁸

The long title of Behn's 1688 volume stresses that in her preface, at least, she is offering her English reader something "Wholly new":

A Discovery of New Worlds,
From the French.

Made English

By Mrs. A. Behn.

To which is prefixed a Preface, by way of Essay on Translated Prose: wherein the Arguments of Father Tacquet, and others, against the System of Copernicus (as to the Motion of the Earth) are likewise considered, and answered: Wholly new.

Behn or her printer changes Fontenelle's title in a way that dramatizes her project's affinity to New World travel narratives. For one critic, this change occludes the text's status as a scientific treatise while suppressing "both the conversational quality of [Fontenelle's] text and its uncomfortably provocative idea about the possible existence of many other worlds."¹⁹ It seems to me, however, that an English text purporting to represent a "discovery of new worlds" (in the plural) would not necessarily have seemed tamer or even less "scientific" than the original title stressing "conversations" about "other worlds." Behn's title recalls, after all, not only works such as Sir Walter Raleigh's *A Discoverie of Guiana* (1595), which provocatively likened a new world landscape to a female body that "hath yet her maidenhead";²⁰ Behn's text might also have reminded English readers of texts such as John Wilkins's *Discovery of a World on the Moon* (1638) and perhaps also of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). Milton's angel Raphael "sails between worlds and worlds" on his descent from heaven to meet Adam and Eve, and Raphael opens Adam's mind (but not Eve's) to the possibility that his universe is Copernican rather than Ptolemaic; it is Milton's Satan, however, who most explicitly recalls (or anticipates) the figure of the New World discoverer as he seeks first to "spy" and then to destroy God's "new created World."²¹

Any description of a world different from that limned in the Bible could lead readers astray, as Behn slyly acknowledges when she praises Thomas Creech for translating Lucretius and for thus lifting the prohibitions on women imposed by their education and, implicitly, by Christianity. Most women lacked knowledge of classical languages, and this denied them access to the "Divine Mysteries" of ancient epics: "We are forbid all grateful Theams, / No ravishing Thoughts approach our Ear," writes Behn, arguably alluding to Milton's portrait of Satan bringing a false dream of temptation to the ear of the sleeping Eve.²² In Behn's revisionary scenario of the biblical ur-story of the Fall, Creech becomes a revalued version of Milton's Satan, beneficently freeing latter-day Eves from their fetters:

So thou by this Translation dost advance
Our Knowledge from the State of Ignorance:
And Equallst Us to Man! Oh how shall We
Enough Adore, or Sacrifice enough to Thee! ("To the Unknown

Daphnis on his Excellent Translation of Lucretius," 1682, in *Works*, 1:26, lines 41–44)

In the preface advertised as "wholly new," she undertakes the task of defending Copernicus's new system of astronomy against Ptolemy's old one and against those who say that "this new Opinion was expressly contrary to the holy Scriptures, and therefore not to be embraced; nay, it was condemned as Heretical" (78). No one in England in 1688 was in danger of Galileo's fate for hewing to Copernican teachings, but the Church of England had not officially embraced them. Behn does so both in her translator's preface and in her decision to bring Fontenelle's dialogues to English readers. She does so in part, I suggest, because in Copernicus's system she arguably finds allegorical support for a newly complex relation of equality between earth and moon (both often figured as female) and a sun traditionally figured as male—and, to ordinary vision, as moving around a stationary earth. The Copernican system, as expounded by Fontenelle in a series of dialogues between a male philosopher who purports, like the sun, to enlighten a noblewoman who allies herself with the night and the moon, offers fruitful matter to a writer concerned to revise the traditionally stable hierarchy in which male is superior to female as author is superior to translator. Behn, I argue, wishes to destabilize such hierarchies with the help of Fontenelle and Copernicus.

She begins by acknowledging that "the Novelty of the Subject in vulgar Languages" is one of her motives for undertaking the translation of Fontenelle's dialogues about astronomical matters most often debated in Latin treatises. Other motives include the "General Applause" the French original has garnered and the appealing (and unusual) fact that Fontenelle introduced "a Woman as one of the speakers . . . for I thought an English Woman might adventure to translate any thing, a French Woman may be supposed to have spoken" (*Works*, 4:73). The female translator here opens space for a nationalist competition with Fontenelle's marquis and with his text more generally. She admits, however, that she found the translator's task "not so easie as I believed at first" (73). There is a parallel, I suggest, between the difficulties of translation and the difficulties of believing in a scientific system that counters the evidence of a stationary earth and a moving sun given by the body and particularly by the human eye. Emphasizing the theme of difficulty, Behn claims, implausibly, that Italian and Spanish are both "closer" to English than French is, and thus French is "of all the hardest to translate into English" (74). The argument lacks persuasive force, but it does have wit, especially when it encompasses the foibles of the French people in its (rather low) estimate of their language. The French, Behn

remarks, are so enamored of the sound of their language that they "will go against all the Rules of Sense and Grammar" rather than produce a sound they consider ugly. The example she selects shows the French breaking a rule of grammatical gender to produce an acceptable sound effect: "Speaking of a Man's Wife, they say, son Epouse, whereas in Grammar, it ought to be sa Epouse; but this would throw a French Man into a Fit of a Fever" (75).

The translator's tone, here and throughout the preface, is urbane, and evidently designed to reassure the reader that this writer can weigh evidence on both sides of an argument with cool rationality even as she is using her rhetorical skills to win a contest. She does not, however, show her full hand about the nature of the contest and its stakes. Though she seems to be scoring easy points against the French, she is also, I would suggest, setting the stage for her later arguments in favor of an "allegorical" reading of the Bible to support the ideas of Copernicus over those of Ptolemy. The French way of breaking a rule in order to achieve an effect "against all the Rules of Sense and Grammar" foreshadows the way that the Copernican system apparently breaks rules of common vision, and common sense—and of a literal reading of the Bible—for the sake of a higher truth.

Behn's aim of challenging conventional hierarchies of value and ways of seeing is also apparent, early in her preface, when she presents the cultural difference between the French and English languages in terms of the cultural relativity of ideas of personal beauty—specifically, the fact that "what we think a Deformity, they may think a Perfection; as the Negroes of Guinney think us as ugly, as we think them" (76). Here she seems to degrade and distance the French—England's age-old rival and erstwhile conqueror—while also adopting the position of cosmopolitan tolerance that Montaigne had famously limned in his essay on cannibals. She also anticipates and obliquely allies her writerly perspective with the view that Fontenelle's Marquis expresses on the first night of her conversations with the philosopher. Despite her own "fairness," which Fontenelle praises, she finds a beauty "of a brown Complexion" "more charming" and "a true Emblem of the Night" (94).

From differences of opinion about languages and complexions, Behn moves to differences of opinion that her readers may have about the merit of the specific work she is choosing to bring to England from France—a place you might think is just across the channel but which she has already begun to suggest is "another world," as far from England as West Africa and perhaps wonderful rather than inferior. She offers a brief critical assessment, a "Character," as she calls it, of the text she is translating and also of its male French producer, who, she remarks with apparent disapproval, writes "as if the universe he is describing were

entirely the product of Nature"; he "says not a word of God Almighty, from the Beginning to the End; so that one would almost take him to be a Pagan" (77). Pagans, we know, abound in Africa, but do they also inhabit England's old rival France, which was marked, as England was, by deep rifts between Catholics and Protestants? By her criticism and choice of epithet, Behn establishes, on the surface at least, a judicious, almost ethnographical perspective on a text she has distanced from her readers as if she were using the scientific instrument of the telescope. The rhetorical gesture that separates Behn and her English readers from alien pagans, however, masks a problem inherent in translation, a potentially pleasurable problem: it involves an erasure of boundaries, a promiscuous mixing of the kind Behn will explore in many of her fictions that deal with erotic liaisons that cross lines of hair or skin color, of social status, of nationality, and of religion. Behn seems well aware of the censorious comments that she may prompt by merging her writerly identity with that of a Frenchman who may be (mis)taken for a pagan. In the dialogues her "I" will indeed become at times indistinguishable from that of her male Author. When the Marquise asks for "some sensible Sign, by which we might discover the turning round of so vast a Body [as the Earth]," the philosopher, here a composite version of Fontenelle/Behn, replies: "The Motions (answer'd I) which are most natural to remove, are the least perceptible" (110).

In the second part of her translator's preface, Behn seems to extend her critique of Fontenelle as insufficiently Christian, but she also continues the task of making common cause with him on potentially dangerous matters of religion and science. Her defense of Copernicus and his followers against literal readers of the Bible swiftly turns into a defense of the Bible—or rather, a defense and illustration of a certain way of *reading* the Scriptures that allows (English) reverence to marry (French or foreign) skepticism. Behn's argument and method of allegorical reading preserve the Scriptures from the appearance of contradicting the findings of modern science. Behn takes Copernicus's part, she says humbly, only "as far as a Woman's reasoning can go" (78); and she deploys a similar modesty formula, the one cited in my title, when she intervenes in learned debates about the Scriptures. "With all due Reverence and Respect to the Word of God," she writes, "I hope I may be allowed to say, that the design of the Bible was not to instruct Mankind in Astronomy, Geometry, or Chronology, but in the Law of God" (79). Neither of Behn's modesty formulas fully hides the audacity of her undertaking, for despite repeated assertions that she is venturing to say "nothing but from good Authority" (85), her way of citing authority produces something she is quite aware may be judged "too Bold" (85). What she sets out to do is not only to show that certain scriptural pas-

sages held to confute a Copernican cosmology can in truth be interpreted as supporting it; she also ventures to tell us what God's true "design" was in producing the Bible. His design, as she describes it in the passage quoted above, is an important but severely limited pedagogical one: not aiming to instruct his people in "Astronomy, Geometry, or Chronology," God, as Behn describes him performing his authorial act, focused solely on teaching his readers his law, to "lead us to Eternal Life; and the Spirit of God has been so condescending to our Weakness, that through the whole Bible, when anything of that kind [that is, pertaining to science] is mentioned, the Expressions are always turned to fit our Capacities, and to fit the common Acceptance, or Appearances of things to the Vulgar" (79).

Her account of God's authorial design draws an uncanny line of resemblance between his verbal practices and those she describes as governing Fontenelle's cosmological dialogues as well as her own work as a translator. Recall the passage quoted earlier in which she professes to have translated her source closely except when "I was necessitated to add a little" in order to make the work understood, in order to translate the esoteric, that is, into something exoteric. To Fontenelle, she ascribes exactly the same aim of turning his expressions to "fit the Capacities" of the vulgar reader: his "Design," she writes, is to treat the astronomical part of "Natural Philosophy in a more familiar Way than any other hath done, and to make every body understand him" (77). She seems highly self-conscious about the fact that such translation entails kinds of "turning" or troping that may have serious intellectual consequences.²³ Indeed, immediately after stating her own aim to give us the "true meaning of the Author," she acknowledges that her work may require accommodations to the reader: "I was necessitated to add a little in some places" so that the book could be understood. The examples she offers are not self-evidently supportive of her claim, however: one example is of how she added a Latin word that *differs* from what English readers might ordinarily have expected; the second example is of how she has "retained" a French word rather than anglicizing its orthography or finding an English equivalent. Significantly, both of her examples of the translator's ostensibly truthful and helpful art consist of words connoting kinds of *turning*: both call attention to the translator's learning—over and beyond what she read in her source text—and to her creativity.

Her first example of what she as translator has added to her original is the word "axis"; the second is the French word *tourbillion*. In the case of "axis," she has indeed added a word to Fontenelle's French: when he describes the moon as turning "sur elle-même," for instance (Second "Entretien," ed. A. Calame, 54), Behn writes that the moon "turns upon her own Axis" (114). She repeatedly adds this foreign but not French

word, which, as she explains, "is Axle-Tree in English, which I did not think so proper a Word, in a Treatise of this nature; but 'tis what is generally understood by every Body" (76). Her second example is even more perplexing because, as I noted, it shows her not adding but keeping a French word used by Fontenelle. This word was "very uneasy to me," she writes (76); it is "Tourbillion ["Tourbillon" in Fontenelle's text], which signifies a Whirl-wind, but Monsieur Des Chartes understands it in a more general sense, and I call it a Whirling; the Author hath given a very good Definition of it, and I need say no more, but that I retain the Word unwillingly, in regard of what I have said in the beginning of this Preface" (here she is evidently referring to her earlier comment that most translators avoid printing a French word in an English text "till use has rendered it more familiar to us" [75]).

This passage tortuously explaining and justifying her procedure with words connoting "turning" in a text that argues for recognizing the turning motions of the moon and the earth suggests that the practice of translation itself involves constant negotiations, on the translator's part, between the needs of the reader, on the one hand, and the demands of the original text on the other. Because no single "rule" of translation governs all of Behn's decisions about language, she herself is involved in a constant "whirling," we might say, between her source (and other authorities such as Descartes) and her readers. In this whirling, the question of the translator's agency and hence her degree of creativity is always problematic, as Behn suggests through formulations balancing active and passive aspects: "I was necessitated to add a little." Who or what is the higher authority invoked here but also left curiously unspecified?

Behn's persona in her preface is dramatically complex; she wishes, she confesses, she describes herself as being in difficult situations without hope of rescue: "If one endeavours to make [a French text] English Standard, it is no Translation. If one follows their Flourishes and Embroideries, it is worse than French tinsel" (76). Nonetheless, Behn's persona moves on, turning and mediating among alternatives: French and English at the beginning of the preface; and the Copernican and the Ptolemaic systems in the treatise's second (longer) part, which, as I have suggested, also engages with an opposition between religious fundamentalists, on the one hand, and (by implication) atheists or "pagans," on the other. From these oppositions she constructs a defense of allegorical reading and, by implication, of allegorical writing too as a *via media* among extremes.

Her preface works from beginning to end to ally the practice of translation to the dynamic epistemology of the new astronomy and its accompanying implications for the social order. In Christa Knellwolf's succinct

formulation, "the major threat of the new theory, related to the dissolution of a single perspective and the subsequent impossibility of imagining a universe with the earth as its centre and rationale[,] . . . went hand-in-hand with changes in social order"; among these changes was "the perception of women's role in the propagation of knowledge."²⁴ Behn allegorizes a new role for women in general, and for the female translator in particular, by suggesting that the traditional relation between sun and moon, whereby "the Moon receives her Light from the Sun, which she restores again by Reflection" (83), is supplemented, in the Copernican system, by a more dynamic relation between moon and earth than has heretofore been acknowledged. Adherents of both astronomical systems agree, Behn writes, that "the Moon is the nearest Planets [*sic*] to the Earth, and subservient to it, to enlighten it, during the Night, in Absence of the Sun" (83). However, Behn's description of the moon makes its quality of subservience less and less visible. Indeed, she construes the moon as mysterious: its nature, movements, and powers are not yet fully known even to those who accept Copernicus's view of the universe. The moon becomes, in Behn's prefatory essay, an allegorical emblem for the scientific project understood as a quest to find, see, and understand that which exists but is not yet known: "[T]he Moon has other strange Effects, not only on the Earth it self, but upon all the living Creatures that inhabit it; many of them are invisible, and as yet unknown to Mankind" (83).

What are the moon's "effects" on "unknown" creatures? How might such effects be understood in relation to those effects that are "most apparent" but nonetheless unpredictable? The moon, whose powers are always relational, with respect both to the sun and to the earth, plays a key role both in Behn's preface and in Fontenelle's night-time dialogues; in her preface the moon figures not only the as-yet-unknown but also the translator's mediating role, with its potential for producing new knowledge rather than simply reflecting or conveying it according to the translator's conventionally subservient role in the universe of discourse.²⁵

Fontenelle's dialogues gender the emergent domain of science as masculine while figuring the audience for a popular science as female. In this figuration, however, as Knellwolf rightly insists, "woman was not simply a figure for ignorance, any more than man was simply a figure for knowledge. Women occupied an ambivalent mediating role, and consequently were not entirely powerless."²⁶ In her own formulation, Knellwolf moves from discussing a textual figure of "woman" to discussing "women" who had the power to interpret "the figure of the marchioness in much more positive terms" than Fontenelle implies. Knellworth infers the existence of such historical readers both from her

knowledge of French salon culture and from Fontenelle's addition in 1687 of a sixth "entretien" that seeks to stabilize the highly fluid relation between the marquise and the philosopher in the first five dialogues. The new dialogue shows the philosopher "no longer playfully patronizing" his female interlocutor but instead "demonstrating his superior authority."²⁷ Behn did not include this sixth dialogue in her version, perhaps because she did not see it in time or perhaps because it did not suit her purposes.

These arguably include complicating the boundaries that usually separate different types of textual authority. She presents God, Fontenelle, and herself as writers who all advance translation as a mediating—but also, potentially, socially leveling—activity requiring labors of interpretative reading. Translation, whether of classical or biblical texts, made materials heretofore readable by only a few available to the many. Opponents of biblical translation, of course, saw this as a key political as well as epistemological problem. The many might (mis)interpret translated texts in politically disruptive ways. Exploring different kinds of readers' ability to confer meaning and value on a variety of writerly projects including God's, Behn insists that she intends nothing unconventional and certainly "no Reflection on Religion by this Essay"; she leaves the political significance of her writing finally to the reader to assess. If her translation of Fontenelle is "approved of by the World," she may "hereafter venture to publish somewhat [that may] be more useful to the Publick" (85).

Her preface makes some surprising claims on behalf of vulgar readers, especially but not only those females who are represented (inadequately, in Behn's view) by Fontenelle's figure of an ignorant but curious Marquise. Behn's argument is tricky, however, in its political implications because she does concede an "esoteric" dimension—and hence a livelihood for the learned elite—to those parts of the Bible that deal with things "material to the Salvation of Mankind" but that do not deal with matters "indifferent," such as astronomy, geometry, and chronology. The problem is that her own analysis of the latter parts as "allegorical" makes the distinction between critical and indifferent matters in the Bible hard to grasp. Although she concludes her biblical exegesis with a pious bow to the authority of the learned and of the established church, she has herself asserted precisely the kind of allegorical reading she mentions, apparently disapprovingly, as a necessary product of the "Age" in which she lives: "We live in an Age, wherein many believe nothing contained in that holy Book, others turn it into Ridicule: Some use it only for Mischief, and as a Foundation and Ground for Rebellion: Some keep close to the Literal Sense, and others give the Word of God

only that Meaning and Sense that pleases their own Humours, or suits best their present Purpose and Interest" (85).

Behn, I contend, belongs in that latter group, on the evidence of what she actually does with passages of Scripture. Her preface implies that giving the word of God a sense that pleases the humors of those who prefer Copernicus to Ptolemy is a relatively small price to pay to keep such people within the pale of religion at all. If there appears to be any contradiction between the divine words and what Behn regards as true science, the former, she decrees, shall be read as allegorical. She illustrates this point by choosing and interpreting, among others, a scriptural passage (from Psalm 19) about the sun that others had cited in support of a Ptolemaic theory of the universe: "In them hath he set a Tabernacle for the Sun, which is as a Bridegroom coming out of his Chamber; and rejoices as a strong Man to run his Race." Behn states that it is "most plain" that these words are "Allegorical": "Does not the Word *Set* impart stability, Fixdness and Rest, as much as the Words *run his Race*, and *come forth of his Chamber*, do signifie motion or turning round: Do not the Words *Tabernacle* and *Chamber* express Places of Rest and Stability? And why may not I safely believe, that this makes for the Opinion of Copernicus, as well as for that of Ptolemy? For the Words of the Scriptures favour one Opinion as much as the other" (82). Her technique of reading Scripture here (re)presents the Bible as agnostic on, indifferent to, sublimely undecided about the opposition between Ptolemaic and Copernican universes and, by implication, ideas about the male as active rather than passive.

Her strategy of reading the Bible as neither proving nor disproving either major theory of the universe contrasts strikingly with the use of Scripture to support a single correct view that we find in many of her major opponents' writing, both the representative Catholic she names (the Jesuit mathematician Father Andreas Tacquet) and the conservative English Protestants whom she tactfully does not name (among them, for instance, Alexander Ross, author of *The New Planet No Planet: or the Earth no Wandering Star, Except in the Wandering Heads of Galileans*, 1646). She uses Scripture to open a space for entertaining new hypotheses while remaining nominally faithful to the Bible's authoritative spirit if not its letter. She aims at saving the appearances of the national English religion while also delimiting its truths, or truth claims, into an area clearly separate from those ruled by empirical science. Although her discussion of the Bible is never overtly skeptical, her preface moves away from orthodoxy in some of the ways her poems do; consider, for example, her "paraphrase" of the Lord's Prayer, which elaborates as follows on the line "Lead us not into Temptation": "But if without some Sin we cannot move. May mine proceed no higher than to love: And

may thy vengeance be the less severe, / Since thou hast made the object lov'd so fair" (*Works*, 1:171–74). The sin, the paraphrase suggests, is not really a sin at all, and the prose commentary works similarly to suggest that it is not really a sin or an error to believe in a view of the universe that appears to be contradicted by Scripture. Behn's reading works to distance us from the idea of the Scripture as God's voice and to stress instead the text's status as a material object. She lets us know that she has consulted "the best Edition of the English Bible, which is printed in a small Folio by Buck, in Cambridge" (83). Glossing Joshua's command that the sun should "stand still," she remarks that a marginal note in the English Bible puts an "asterism" by the word "stand" to inform even the non-Hebrew speaking reader that the original verb is "to be silent": "if it be so in the Hebrew, *be thou silent* makes as much for the Motion of the Earth, according to Copernicus, as for the Motion of the sun according to Ptolemy" (83).

Behn's prefatory argument could be paraphrased as follows: Render unto God the things that are his; by all means keep the things in the Bible that pertain to really important theological matters—but do not mind me if as a mere woman I expound a theory of allegory that blurs the line between the parts of the Bible that concern salvation—the Sun/Son "moving," as it were, in his work for mankind—versus "indifferent" parts that concern astronomy, geometry, or chronology—matters that show the Sun/Son at rest (as it were) in his tabernacle. At those times the moon comes out to illustrate a different mode of enlightenment, one that calls the distinction between literal and figurative language into question. In her theological views as in her practice of translation, then, Behn appears to adopt a certain "latitude" as she quietly turns others' interpretations of biblical passages to serve her own purposes. Under the rubric of modesty and moderation, her text actively explores passages of Scripture that have generated doubt in previous readers; she mentions, for instance, Bishop Vitalis's perplexity about how Solomon could have begotten a son at the age of eleven as recorded in 1 Kings 14:21 (81). Citing authority selectively while also demonstrating her method of reading allegorically, she insists, in a perfectly orthodox way, that "the Letter of the Scripture does often kill, but the Spirit enlivens" (81). The Spirit, however, as her text figures it, seems quite often to be turning or whirling in an unorthodox direction.

Her way of reading the Bible to suit her purposes is not dissimilar from her way of reading Fontenelle's secular text. With the latter, however, she feels free, as she does not with the Bible, openly to voice disagreement. The meanings of her criticism may, however, be partly hidden. For all her interest in expanding the cultural territory of those readers traditionally seen as "vulgar," she is also and sometimes contra-

dictionarily interested in creating new secret societies, new elites limned in multiple media including spoken, handwritten, printed, and theatrically performed words. We have seen Behn criticizing her French original by calling Fontenelle a "pagan" even as she slyly changes his text—as Line Cottegnies puts it—to make his "covert skepticism more radical."²⁹ While it is hard to know what degree of prudence and/or irony may be lurking at certain points in her preface, it seems clear that her distancing gestures are part of a dialectic that includes also expressions of admiration: "The whole book is very unequal," she remarks; the "first, fourth, and the beginning of the fifth Discourses are incomparably the best" (77). The reader is thus enticed to proceed into the translation proper, to see for herself or himself what the "incomparable" parts look like (compared to the others). One of Behn's most interesting extended passages of mixed but enticing judgment on her source occurs in her description of Fontenelle's decision to introduce the Marquise in order to aid in his "design" of rendering science "familiar" to "everybody":

For this End, he introduceth a Woman of Quality as one of the Speakers in these five Discourses, whom he feigns never to have heard of any such thing as Philosophy before. How well he hath performed his Undertaking you will best judge when you have perused the Book: But if you would know before-hand my Thoughts, I must tell you freely [note the paradoxical language of forced freedom], he hath failed in his Design: for endeavoring to render this part of Natural Philosophy familiar, he hath turned it into Ridicule; he hath pushed his wild Notion of the Plurality of Worlds to that height of Extravagancy, that he most certainly will confound those Readers, who have not Judgment and Wit to distinguish between what is truly solid (or at least, probable) and what is trifling and airy; and there is no less Skill and Understanding required in this, than in comprehending the whole Subject he treats of. And for his Lady Marquiese, he makes her say a great many very silly things, tho' sometimes she makes Observations so learned, that the greatest Philosophers in Europe could make no better. His way of Arguing is extremely fine. (77)

This passage holds up a contradictory mirror to Fontenelle's lady: she is at once made to say "silly" things and appears as a font of "learned" observations better than any made by Europe's male philosophers. Behn herself, preemptively shaping the reader's judgment, models a female reader who is skeptical of, indeed resistant to, the author's design even as she appreciates and appropriates it.

Neither a faithful handmaid to Fontenelle's text (in Dryden's terms, a maker of "metaphrase") nor a rebellious deviator from it (in Dryden's terms, an ambitious "imitator"), Behn may indeed fairly be called a translator, or reader, who paraphrases the original text—and who does so with richly paradoxical effects, reminding us that the root meaning of "paraphrase" is "saying-beside." Perhaps the best short way of describing Behn as a critical reader of Fontenelle and of many other

male precursors, including Shakespeare and Ovid, from whom she borrowed extensively, is to think of her as entering into a quasierotic triangular relation not only with her source text but also with the new readers she hopes to gain through the work of translation. Behn's predecessor Katherine Philips had denounced "paraphrasers" as writers who exhibited a lack of modesty and fidelity toward the original they were claiming to translate.²⁹ Behn, it would seem, embraced the dubiously faithful role of the paraphraser—a moonlike role—partly because it encouraged a kind of translation in which the question of fidelity was never fully answered.

Notes

1. Eve Sanders, *Gender and Literacy on Stage in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 101.

2. Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. John Florio (London, 1603), sig A2r.

3. See, for instance, Joseph Graham, ed., *Difference in Translation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985); Yehudi Lindeman, "Translation in the Renaissance: A Context and a Map," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 8.2 (1981): 201–16; and Glynn P. Norton, "Humanist Foundations of Translation Theory (1400–1450): A Study in the Dynamics of the Word," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 8.2 (1981): 173–203. For further information on recent works dealing with women as translators, see Danielle Clarke, "The Politics of Translation and Gender in the Countess of Pembroke's *Antonie*," *Translation and Literature* 6. 2 (1997): n1.

4. See Clarke, "Politics of Translation," and also her *The Politics of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Harlow, U.K.: Longman, Pearson Education Imprints, 2001), 88–95. See also Douglas Robinson, "Theorizing Translation in a Woman's Voice," *Translator* 1.2 (1995): 153–75. His discussion of Behn on pp. 170–71 is interesting, but he errs in ascribing to Behn a bold "faithlessness" to her source text; the error arises because Robinson takes Fontenelle's "author's preface" to be Behn's original work.

5. Preface to *Ovid's Epistles, Translated by Several Hands* (1680), cited from *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. Edward N. Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg, Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), 1:114.

6. See "Defense of the Translation of the Psalms" and "On Translating: An Open Letter," in *Luther's Works*, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Nulenberg Press, 1960), 35:177–223.

7. For Behn's biography, see Janet Todd, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1977). For Behn's pen names, see M. Ferguson, "The Authorial Ciphers of Aphra Behn," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1650–1740*, ed. Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 225–49.

8. *Works of John Dryden*, 119.

9. Elizabeth Spearing refers to Behn's "alleged ignorance of Latin," citing this passage; see "Aphra Behn: The Politics of Translation," in *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 155. See also Line Cottegnies, "Aphra Behn's French Translations," in *The Cambridge Companion*

to Aphra Behn, ed. Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 221.

10. See Cottegnies's judgment that Behn's version of Fontenelle's *Entretiens* is "on the whole, very faithful" ("Aphra Behn's French Translations," 227). However, Cottegnies notes (227) that Behn "corrects" errors in its original and calls attention to one of those corrections (concerning the height of the atmosphere) in her preface.

11. Aphra Behn, *A Discovery of New Worlds*, in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd (London: William Pickering, 1993), 4:70–165. All quotations from Behn's version of Fontenelle and from her "Essay on Translated Prose" will be cited henceforth by page number in the text; this one comes from p. 76. For Fontenelle's original text, I have used the critical edition prepared by Alexandre Calame (Paris: Librairie M. Didier, 1966).

12. *Works of John Dryden*, 119.

13. *Ibid.*

14. See Clarke, "The Politics of Translation and Gender," 149–66.

15. Mary Baine Campbell, *Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 141.

16. On Fontenelle's development as a scientist, see *ibid.* On the *Entretiens* as a "scientific romance," see Christa Knellwolf's important article "Women Translators and the Scientific Revolution," in *Translation and Nation: Towards a Cultural Politics of Englishness*, ed. Roger Ellis and Liz Oakley-Brown (Clevedon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters, Ltd., 2001) 65–119, esp. 87–91.

17. In the last decade of her life, her theatrical career stymied, Behn was forced to rely for her living on intermittent patronage and on what she could glean from those who printed her books. For her pleas to her publisher for money, see Todd, *Secret Life*, 324–25. Mary Ann O'Donnell suggests that Behn's translation was "rushed into print in competition with another translation," probably the one by Joseph Glanville printed in London in 1688. W. D. Knight had already published his translation, *A Discourse on the Plurality of Worlds*, in Dublin in 1687. See O'Donnell, *Aphra Behn: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources*, 2nd ed. (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004), 216.

18. For discussions of Fontenelle's dialogue and its sources, see Nina Rattner Gelbart, introduction to *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*, trans. H. A. Hargreaves (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Campbell, *Wonder and Science*, 143–49; Knellwolf, "Women Translators," esp. 86–102; and Erica Harth, "The 'véritables Marquises,'" in *Actes de Columbus: Racine, Fontenelle—Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes, histoire et littérature: Actes du XXI^e colloque de la North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature, Ohio State University, Columbus, 6–8 avril 1989*, Biblio 17, 59, ed. Charles G. S. Williams (Paris: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1990), 149–60.

19. Knellwolf, "Women Translators," 104.

20. See Louis Montrose, "The Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery," *Representations* 33 (winter 1991): 1–41.

21. Quotations from John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Merritt Hughes, in *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose* (New York: Odyssey, 1957), 5:268, 4:937.

22. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 4:801–3.

23. I owe this observation about troping to a conversation with Jody Greene.

24. Knellwolf, "Women Translators," 96.

25. See *ibid.*, 92, on Fontenelle's similar concern with whether translation from learned to popular representation modes might produce an "altogether different message."

26. *Ibid.*, 101.
27. *Ibid.*, 100.
28. Cottegnies, "Aphra Behn's French Translations," 229.
29. Katherine Philips, "Letter of Orinda to Poliarchus," September 17, 1663, cited in Robinson, "Theorizing Translation," 167.

Chapter 10

Female Curiosities: The Transatlantic Female Commonplace Book

SUSAN M. STABILE

Antiquities, or remnants of history, are when industrious persons, by an exact and scrupulous diligence and observations, out of monuments, names, words, proverbs, traditions, private records and evidences, fragments of stories, passages of books, that concern not story, and the like, preserve and recover somewhat from the deluge of time.

—Francis Bacon, *De Augmentia Scientiae*

She herself was a relic of the past!—and while the young hung with delighted attention, on her glowing and beautiful recitals of a by-gone age, and cherished deeply in their hearts, those lessons of wisdom, which had been the result of experience, the aged and middle-aged alike, were charmed with her eloquence.

—Deborah Norris Logan's Obituary, *The Friend*

The Curiosity Cabinet

Indian arrowheads and hatchets from Philadelphia's outlying pastures; an ancient iron coat of mail unearthed along the Susquehanna River banks; a sliver of William Penn's door frame at Pennsbury; a relic box comprised of wood fragments from Columbus's house in Haiti and from the mythical Treaty Elm under which Penn negotiated with the Lenape Indians; a bundle of Cherokee newspapers resisting Andrew Jackson's Indian removal policies; a transfer print of Nicolas Scull and George Heap's 1752 map of Philadelphia on white satin; a newspaper clipping recounting the oddity of Siamese twins; another announcing the October 1835 reappearance of Halley's comet of 1305; an engraving of the newly famous Fairmount Waterworks; pottery shards from a pre-Revolu-