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“Their Faces are Not their Own”: Powders, Patches and Paint in Seventeenth-Century Poetry

AS THE LONDON SEASON BECAME established in the late 1630s, and the centripetal power of London drew not only aristocrats but also displaced country dwellers into the metropolis, an interest in fashionable appearance proved tempting to many and engaged the attention of both prose writers and poets, sometimes as promoters of the latest cosmetic concoctions, but more often as detractors of the artificial creation of beauty. Despite religious and political differences, and despite the divisions that would erupt in the civil wars and the Interregnum, there was unity at least on one front: the castigation of those who dressed seductively and used any form of body-decoration. This disapproval, however, was directed principally at women, whose arts (such as fine dressing and face painting) were regarded as deceptive rather than creative. By mid century, anxiety about this proactive role in enticing men, usually expressed in prose pamphlets, moved into Cavalier and coterie poetry and also into the many anonymous verse compilations of the time. Such poems draw on the tradition of invective against painted women established by Plato and St. Paul, and also on the frequent vituperative references to cosmetic usage found in Renaissance drama. But they also express nostalgia for the simplicity of a mythical golden age. The prose of those who advocate physical enhancement advertises its pragmatic justifications, but the poetry of those who condemn it relies on a few well-used scriptural objections and a retrograde aesthetic that fails to engage with changing subjectivities, while recording the efforts of both genders to re-fashion body image in ways which can appear challenging even to the twenty-first-century reader.

In Renaissance drama Drayton, Nashe and Marston all repudiate make-up. In *The Malcontent* Macquerelle asks: "Do you know Doctor Plasterface? By this curd he is the most exquisite in forging of veins, sprightening of eyes, dyeing of hair, sleeking of skins, blushing of cheeks, surfling of breasts, blanching and bleaching of teeth that ever made an old lady gracious by torchlight."¹ Macquerelle encompasses two viewpoints which continued to appear in the poetry of the seventeenth century: that women are principally interested not in the enhancement of their attractions, but in appearing younger; and that men are the chief architects of this deception. Marston's animus has a long pedigree. *The Greek Anthology*, source of much eroticism and wit in Cavalier poetry, also provides the subtext of many poetic objections to women tampering with nature, as in the epigram "On the vanity of concealing age with cosmetics":

Though you smooth the ragged skin of your channelled cheeks and put coal-black on your lidless eyes and dye your white hair dark and hang round your temples curly fire-crisped ringlets, all that is useless; ridiculous too, whatever else you may do.²

Macquerelle nevertheless advises Emilia and Bianca to take potions to maintain and restore their beauty, pointing out that men gain wisdom and discretion in old age, "But when our beauty fades, good-night with us. There cannot be an uglier thing to see than an old woman; from which, O pruning, pinching, and painting, deliver all sweet beauties."³ Macquerelle's speech derives from a 1602 translation of Guarini's tragicomedy, *Il pastor fido*, a pastoral that would prove popular at the Stuart court in its halcyon days and would inspire new translations by Sir Richard Fanshawe in 1647 and Thomas Stanley in 1651. The apparent dichotomy between the natural (expressed as pastoral or rural) and the artificial (linked with court and city) surfaces in some comments by Walter Carey on "The Present State of England" (1627). Carey compares "exces-

¹ John Marston, *The Malcontent*, ed. Bernard Harris (London: Ernest Benn, 1967) 2. 4. 27–31.

² *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip and Some Contemporary Epigrams*, ed. A.S.F. Gow (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968) 125.

³ *The Malcontent* 2. 4. 45–49.

sive Abuse in Apparel" with the sin of drunkenness.⁴ He deplores the cost and the folly of constantly changing fashions. Hats, for instance, mutate from broad-brimmed to plain to ruffed to beaver, leaving the wearer in debt as he tries to remain in fashion. Carey finally admonishes the gentry "in this gilded, not golden age" as being "vain, peevish, childless, thriftless and painted fools" (210). There are numerous condemnations of such activity in Shakespeare, and even more in Ben Jonson's dramatic works.⁵

While it might be expected that satiric dramas and Restoration comedies should continue to comment on the theme of face-painting, and didactic prose (with the weight of biblical authority) to condemn it, the subject is frequently and forcefully present in the poetry of the period where anxieties about the rhetorical and artistic role of cosmetics are articulated along with concerns about the usurpation of nature. Critical attention has been directed towards the references to cosmetics in Renaissance and Restoration drama, and Renaissance conduct manuals provide an easy source of vituperative and misogynist commentary, but the existence of the same negative sentiments towards cosmetics in the poetry of the Stuart court has been neglected—perhaps because the reputation of Cavalier poetry as *libertin* and frivolous obscures its deeper adherence to a sub-text usually regarded Puritan. It is these predominantly negative poetic judgements, produced by poets both obscure and canonical, that I want to examine, within the context of related writings on the subject.

The equation of painted women with witches or devils found in Jacobean revenge tragedies continued to provide a focus of male disapproval.⁶ Often, a woman using cosmetics is equated with

⁴ *The Harleian Miscellany* III (London: John Murray, 1809) 206.

⁵ See Shirley Nelson Garner, "'Let Her Paint an Inch Thick': Painted Ladies in Renaissance Drama and Society," *Renaissance Drama* 20 (1989): 123–39. Jonson includes diatribes on cosmetics in *Cynthia's Revels*, *Sejanus*, *Volpone*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and *The Devil is an Ass*. In *Epicoene*, however, he also allows Truewit to counter Clerimont's attack on female artifice by praising a woman who takes care of her hair, clothes, teeth and brows, who shows herself to advantage and is not afraid to "paint, and profess it." See *Epicoene*, ed. Edward Partridge (New Haven: Yale UP, 1971) 1.1. 94–100.

⁶ Thomas Tuke's pamphlet of 1616 maintains this link between cosmetics and witchcraft by framing the terms "adultery and witchcraft" within his discourse on face painting. See *A Discourse against Painting and Tincturing of Wome: Wherein the Abominable Sinnes of Murther and Poysoning, Pride and Ambition, Adultery*

a whore, or depicted as a consumer not only of fashionable items, but also of men and of their patrimony.⁷ Other poems explore the nature of artistic endeavour and its implicit contestation with the realm of nature. These poems form an interesting counterpart to the many poems which address painters, but fail to consider the possibility of an artist whose virtuosity, as measured by verisimilitude to nature, may be exercised in the form of a woman already painted.

The fear of being bewitched by a seductive female transforms itself into a poetic warning in a pamphlet issued by R. Smith, Gent. The Preface of *A Wonder of Wonders: Or, A Metamorphosis of Fair Faces Voluntarily Transformed into Foul Visages* indicates how fashionable women may be read and interpreted by men:

Phantastick Mad-dames, that are not content
With Gods design, but think to ornament
Your selves with borrowed Foils of Patch and Paint,
(Whereby you shew more of the Witch then Saint)
Striving to charm fond wantons with your looks,
To hang their fancies on their sable-hooks;
You much mistake, for your py'd hew affrights
More honest eyes than amorous Gulls invites.
Those characters but speak your Face a Spell,
A Conjurers book, that summons Sprights from Hell:
Your Paint resembleth you to Posts and Signes,
Under such Visors Thieves obscure their crimes:
The Breast Shop-windows open, and patch skin,
Are Signs hung out to sell the Wares within.
Your Spots are Pluto's marks, who much do please
To send such tokens to his friends as these.⁸

and Witchcraft are Set Foorth & Discoursed, Whereunto is added The Picture of a Picture, or, the Character of a Painted Woman (London, 1616).

⁷ The threat posed to a patriarchal society by conspicuous consumption, and the link between fashion and morality in the mid seventeenth century is explored in Elizabeth Moran, "Hatching Fashion: Consumption, Femininity and Family in Early Modern London," in *The Touch of the Real: Essays in Early Modern Culture, in Honour of Stephen Greenblatt*, ed. Philippa Kelly (Crawley: U of Western Australia P, 2002) 125–42.

⁸ A section titled "Some witty Poems made by some witty and worthy persons in derision and deserved infamy of Black-spotted Faces" contains "On Painted and

Smith links adornment with numerous social and spiritual transgressions: madness, witchcraft, prostitution, pride, vanity and inner corruption. He goes on to interpret the variously shaped patches as indications of giddy brains, gadding heels and "crosse humours." An anonymous contributor to the preliminary material in this publication also gives vent to his objections to the fashion for black facial spots in three quatrains, the last of which reads:

Devils are black, who doubts it? Yet some write
That there are Devils likewise that are white.
Well, I have found a third sort, which are neither,
They be py'd Devils, black and white together.⁹

These lines are taken almost verbatim from the central portion of "Upon the Naked Bedlams, and Spotted Beasts, we see in Covent Garden," which had appeared in print seven years previously in 1655.¹⁰ They illustrate the high degree of intertextuality among publications on the subject, as well as a general lack of imaginative verve in form and content; but perhaps a literature that reviles decorative excess cannot itself indulge in rhetorical ornament.¹¹

Black-Spotted Faces." R. Smith, Gent., *A Wonder of Wonders: Or, A Metamorphosis of Fair Faces Voluntarily Transformed into Foul Visages, Or, an Invective against Black-Spotted Faces: By a Well-willer to Modest Matrons and Virgins, Milospisus* (London, 1662).

⁹ A.B., "Others on the same," in *A Wonder of Wonders*.

¹⁰ This poem appeared in Cotgrave, *Wits Interpreter* (1655) and in *Musarum Deliciae: Or, The Muses Recreation* (1655) 81–83. Both of these are Royalist in sentiment and the former advertises itself at length as a guide to the accomplishments of the English gentry including the "witchcraft of eloquence" for its readers. The poem has been attributed to William Spring (1613–54). See John Wardroper, *Love and Drollery* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) 278.

¹¹ The frontispiece of *Wonder of Wonders* has an illustration of two gentlewomen, perhaps at an apothecary's, with a Greek tag from Euripides which translates as "The mind must contemplate." Exactly the same illustration and quote appear in *A Discourse of Artificial Beauty, In Point of Conscience between Two Ladies by Sir John Gauden* (London, 1692). This itself is a later edition of Gauden's *A Discourse of Auxiliary Beauty: Or Artificiall Hansomenesse, In Point of Conscience Between Two Ladies* (London, 1656). Gauden was a staunch Royalist who wrote a Socratic debate on cosmetics trying to find some justification for their use.

From the 1640s prostitutes, in their unrestrained use of fashion and cosmetics, provoked a confusion of what Stephen Greenblatt terms "somatic signification" at a time when an interest in the language of the body was emerging.¹² Prostitutes painted as a sign of their profession, but stage players were also heavily made up. "You that use public trade must hang out signs," the poem noted above remarks of the ladies of Covent Garden. The writer complains about a "face powdered ermine" and judges that facial make-up is a case of "over-garnishing" the dish, although he admits that this may act as a useful decoy to attract men. As Jacqueline Lichtenstein points out "Of all the metaphors for makeup, that of the courtesan, the woman of easy virtue and venal loves, was doubtless the most frequently invoked."¹³ In turn, the courtesan herself is valued, defined and described by her use of ornament: her face especially enters into a complex relation with the cultural production of meaning. "The Baseness of Whores" objects:

they have in store,
For which I deadly hate'em
Perfumed geare to stuffe each eare
And for their cheeks pomatum
...
Truth to say, Paint and Array,
Makes them so highly prized.¹⁴

But as a poem by Abraham Cowley admits, such activity is part of the armoury of seduction. Military metaphors for love abound in the poetry of this period and the courtly lover can be disarmed.¹⁵ In "The Chronicle: A Ballad," Cowley catalogues nearly twenty women with whom the speaker of the poem has been in love, breaking off in the middle:

¹² Stephen Greenblatt, "Toward a Universal Language of Motion: Reflections on a Seventeenth-Century Muscle Man," *LiNQ* 21.2 (1994): 56.

¹³ Jacqueline Lichtenstein, "Making Up Representation: The Risks of Femininity," *Representations* 20 (1987): 80.

¹⁴ *Choyce Drollery* (London, 1656) 90-91.

¹⁵ The 'arming' of women with cosmetics reaches its *locus classicus* with Pope's description of Belinda in Canto 1 of *The Rape of the Lock* and its echo of the arming of Achilles in the *Iliad*. The tone is satiric and amused rather than condemnatory as in the poems discussed here.

But should I now to you relate,
 The Strength and riches of their state,
 The *Powder, Patches* and the *Pins*,
 The *Ribbans*, *Jewels*, and the *Rings*,
 The *Lace*, the *Paint*, and *warlike things*,
 That make up all their *Magazines*¹⁶

With such extravagance comes a lack of decency (such as is nostalgically assigned to 'fore-mothers') and an indifference to the weather among the wearers of silks and gold. "Your Faces trick't and painted be. / Your Breasts all open bare."¹⁷ The thicker the paint, the thinner the virtue. Women who use ornamentation are, in these poems, regarded as monstrous, voracious and syphilitic. The black patches on their faces are an analogy for the black spots on their innocence. The simple expedient of covering up smallpox scars is discounted. "Spotted faces have but spotted souls," writes R. Smith in his introductory poem, while in the guise of Miso-Spillus he concludes his text with another poem "On black-spotted Faces" in which he writes: "So holy Fathers testifie, that Whores did chiefly use / The practice of Face-painting, in their Brothel-house."¹⁸ Again, outward spots are linked with inward impurity, but the writer also considers them ugly. The authority of these church fathers is invoked and usefully summarised in *A Discourse of Auxiliary Beauty: Or Artificall Hansomenesse*. This book lists and discusses at length thirteen separate objections to cosmetics. These include "Jezebels sad fate urged against all painting the face" and the arguments that such painting is unlawful, superfluous, against the seventh commandment on adultery, a badge of vanity, a sign of dissatisfaction with God's works, scandalous, a mark of pride and "a thing of ill report." In this publication's Preface the author notes that colouring the face is a silent lie and seeks "to reconcile Ladies countenances, with their consciences."

As an epigram in *The Academy of Complements* notes: "Though men can cover crimes with their sterne lookes / Poore womens faces are their fault bookes."¹⁹ The poet takes the mascu-

¹⁶ In Peter Davidson, *Poetry and Revolution: An Anthology of British Verse 1625-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 70-73.

¹⁷ "Tom Bagnall's Ballet," in *Musarum Deliciae* 73.

¹⁸ *A Wonder of Wonders*.

¹⁹ "Modesty of Women," *The Academy of Complements* (London, 1640) 147.

line position of a specular interpreting subject rather than the feminine position of a disguised entity or text which requires interpretation. As an anonymous epigram, "On Women," puts it:

Women are books and men the readers be,
In whom oft times they great Errata's see;
Here sometimes wee a blot, there wee espy
A leafe misplac'd, at least a line awry.²⁰

The woman as text to be deciphered also appears in Richard Crashaw's "Wishes: To his (Supposed) Mistresse." Eschewing fine clothes "That not impossible shee" will have a face "by its owne beauty drest" and one that is:

A face made up
Out of no other shop,
Then what natures white hand sets ope.

A cheeke where Youth,
And Blood, with Pen of Truth
Write, what the Reader sweetly ru'th.

...

In her whole frame,
Have Nature all the Name,
Art and ornament the shame.²¹

The censorious tone of this material suggests that men are rather easily deceived and that the only way they can judge a woman's virtue is by her face:

Why do we love the things which we call women,
Which are like feathers, blown in every wind?
Regarding least those men do most esteem them;
And most deceitfull when they seem most kind,

²⁰ "On Women," no. 116 in *Witts Recreations: Selected from the Finest Fancies of Moderne Muses (with a Thousand Outlandish Proverbs)* (London, 1640).

²¹ *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw*, ed. George Walton Williams (New York: New York UP, 1972) 479–83.

And all their Vertue, that their beautie graces,
It is but painted, like unto their faces.²²

This poem, demanding authenticity and visible essence, seems Puritan in sentiment, but it forms a common topos in Cavalier love poetry. Cavalier love lyrics of the mid century often struggle with the courtly mode of much pre-war versifying. These lyrics negotiate a cultural inversion which courtly verse conceals but the poetry of the seventeenth-century cultural substratum reveals. Only the courtesans have taken to heart the physical standards of the Petrarchan spectrum: the red, the white, the coral, the rubies and the pearls of conventional erotic idealism. In order to meet the literal requirements set out in so much of the verse, that facial and bodily parts become immutable jewels, flowers, precious furs or Arabian gums, it is necessary for the woman to use all the artifice available. In doing so she paradoxically positions herself as a whore, and therefore unworthy of the praise and persuasion directed at ideal mistresses.

Despite the reputation of the Cavaliers for extravagant dress and hairstyles, the attitude that rejects ornamentation links Cavalier, Puritan and Quaker. In his journal George Fox condemns both males and females who dress colourfully and attract the "lust of the eye." In doing so Fox gives a description of contemporary fashion in 1654:

Likewise ye women haveinge their gold, their spots on their faces, noses, cheekes, foreheads, haveinge their rings on their fingers, wareinge Gold, haveinge their cuffes dubell under and about like unto a butcher with whit sleeves haveinge their ribons tyed about their hands and three or fower Gold laces about their Clothes²³

Fox's view, linking cosmetics with fine apparel and general extravagance, is also held by the anonymous author of "Dr. Smiths

²² Robert Chamberlain, *The Harmony of the Muses*, ed. Ernest W. Sullivan II (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990) 26.

²³ *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. Norman Penney (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1911) 176.

Ballet" (1655). This has sixteen vituperative verses condemning women's vanity.²⁴ Paint and fine clothes are the primary target of indignation, and part of a disguise that renders wives unrecognizable to their husbands. But most annoyingly:

Their Faces are besmear'd and pierc'd,
With severall sorts of Patches,
As if some Cats their skin had flead
With Scarres, half Moons and Notches.

In "Upon the Naked Bedlams and Spotted Beasts at Covent Garden," printed in the same Royalist anthology, the anonymous poet complains at length about this fashion for black spots painted or stuck onto the faces of prostitutes. Before its devolution the Caroline court had promoted a trend among aristocratic ladies for wearing facial patches of silk or velvet cut into diamonds and hearts, and this trend had been taken up enthusiastically by women of a lower social order. Patches were utilised by both men and women, and the poems and pamphlets on cosmetics register the authors' dismay at the transmission of style from the court to the city, and from the aristocracy to the "liquorish sluts" of Covent Garden. The styles set by the court were, moreover, derived from the continent, especially France, and carried connotations of foreignness.²⁵

Censure from the Puritans, and attempts to ban face painting and the wearing of patches during the Interregnum, appear to have had no effect, as a sustained poetic attack on the fashion for patches by Eldred Revett indicates. "A Lady soil'd" provides detailed descriptions of the variety of patches worn (moons, stars, coach and horses) while linking the practice with superstition, astronomy,

²⁴ In *Musarum Deliciae, Or The Muses Recreation* (London, 1655) 76–81.

²⁵ Neville Williams, in *Powder and Paint: A History of the Englishwoman's Toilet, Elizabeth I–Elizabeth II* (London: Longmans, 1957) notes that in 1650 an act against immodest dress, paint and patches was to be read (32), but no further mention of it is found. He also quotes a publication of 1613 which finds face painting is almost ubiquitous (5). Near the end of the century an anonymous pamphlet addressing "Court, nobility, gentry, city, and country" on *Englands Vanity... Wherein Naked Breasts and Shoulders, Antick and Fantastick Garbs, Patches and Painting... with a Hundred More Fooleries of Both Sexes are Condemned as Notoriously Unlawful* (London, 1683) indicates that cosmetic and other adornments were not confined to any social stratum or gender.

narcissism, adultery and idolatry among women.²⁶ Revett's poem, with its allusions to classical mythology, to heraldry and to rhetoric is clearly aimed at an educated audience and includes references to the aesthetics of adornment. Like other poets quoted here, Revett is concerned with interpreting the language of the face. The poem addresses "You that can read a face and by't / (Natures Amanuenses) write." Women who use adornment are essentially bad writers. They place "mysterious characters" on the clear vellum of their fronts; they slur "Quaint natures own clean manuscript." They also blur the distinction (available to male artists) between shadow and essence and are "Your own but picture, these the shade, / And some that paint, and keep this coyle, / Are downright counterfeits in oyle."

Despite the scorn it attracted, the wearing of patches continued for some decades.²⁷ R. Smith's 1662 *A Wonder of Wonders* is narrowly aimed at this particular foible: "Proud fools with spots their faces patch thinking Gods work to mend, / But being dead God knows them not, to Pluto they must wend."²⁸ Richard Lovelace's "A Black Patch on Lucasta's Face" absolves his eponymous muse from such criticism. The speaker in the poem, closely observing Lucasta, supposes that a "Court Fly, / Presum'd so neer her Eye: / When twas the 'industrious Bee / Mistook her glorious Face for Paradise."²⁹ The industrious bee draws too close to Lucasta, and the holy flames of her hair cause it to expire, so that unlike other fashionable women:

And that black marble Tablet there
So neer her either Sphere,
Was plac'd; nor foyle, nor Ornament,
But the sweet little Bees large Monument.

Lucasta's patch is thus not decorative but a testimony to the destructive power of her beauty, which needs no artificial additions.

²⁶ *Poems Divine* (London, 1657) 36–38.

²⁷ The fashion for patches began at the end of the sixteenth century, reached its apex at the end of the seventeenth and persisted into the eighteenth. See Williams, *Powder and Paint* 18–20.

²⁸ *A Wonder of Wonders* 30.

²⁹ *The Poems of Richard Lovelace*, ed. C.H. Wilkinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930) 129.

The presumption and fate of the bee is that of the lover who desires too much, perhaps by expecting his mistress to be unaffected by the vanities of the age. Cavalier poetry on the subject generally admits that this tampering with the given state of things may be effective, but insists that it is unnatural.

Edmund Waller defends Sacharissa against "envious tongues" that have misrepresented her as being painted, and stresses the analogy of her beauty to that of nature. Separating art and culture, he insists that "no painted fire / Can scorch men so, or kindle such desire." The poem ends by repeating:

When lavish nature with her best attire
Clothes the gay spring, the season of desire,
Paints her, 'tis true, and does her cheek adorne
With the same art wherewith she paints the morne:
With the same art wherewith she gildeth so
Those painted clouds which forme *Thaumantias* bow.³⁰

Were she to use cosmetics she could not succeed in outdoing nature as the anonymous poet of "To a Lady that Every Morning Used to Paint her Face" suggests:

Preserve what nature gave you, nought's more base
Than Belgian colour on a Roman face,
Much good time's lost, you rest your faces debtor,
And make it worse, striving to make it better.³¹

Similarly, E. Westfield complains: "You party-colour'd faces, not content / With Nature's Skin, nor Dresse's ornament / But borrow'd tinctures crave."³² When John Tatham describes his *Ostella*, she is worthy of praise because art may imitate, but not excel, her beauty and because she has not been tempted to improve it: "Onely without the help of Art as nature / hath ornamented her behold her Feature."³³ Cowley restates his objections in similar terms in "Ode

³⁰ "Of the Mis-Report of her Being Painted," Edmund Waller, *Poems 1645* (Menston: Scolar Press, 1971) 26–27.

³¹ Poem no. 488 in *Witts Recreations*.

³² In *A Wonder of Wonders*.

³³ *Ostella: Or the Faction of Love and Beauty Reconcil'd* (London, 1650) 3.

III: To his Mistris":

Tyrian dye why doe you weare
 You whose cheeks best scarlet are?
 ...
 I would have all my *Mistris* parts,
 Owe more to *Nature* then to *Arts*,
 I would not woe the dresse,
 Or one whose nights give lesse
 Contentment, then the day.
 Shee's faire, whose beauty onely makes her gay.³⁴

Alexander Brome makes a similar plea for naturalness in his Song XXXV, "To a Painted Lady":

Leave these deluding tricks and showes,
 Be honest and down-right;
 What Nature did to view expose,
 Don't you keep out of sight.
 The novice youth may chance admire,
 Your dressings paints and spells:
 ...
 You need no pains or time to wast
 To set your beauties forth,
 With oyles, and paint and druggs, that cost
 More then the face is worth.

The experienced lover will not be fooled, and the final stanza of Brome's poem makes paradoxical male demands explicit:

Nature her self, her own work does
 And hates all needless arts,
 And all your artificial showes
 Disgrace your Nat'ral parts.
 You're flesh and blood and so are we,
 Let flesh and blood alone,
 To Love all compounds hateful be.
 Give me the pure or none.³⁵

³⁴ Abraham Cowley, *Essays, Plays and Sundry Verses*, ed. A.R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1906) 61–62.

³⁵ *Poems*, ed. Roman R. Dubinski (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1982) 1:105–6.

Brome's wish-list is the counterpart to those poems that dwell on women who have in fact allowed nature to take its course. They grow old and ugly; poets abandon them or write detailed catalogues of their faults, following Suckling's model in "The Deformed Mistress." And once they have reached the state described in such detail by Suckling, the religion of beauty avails them nothing.³⁶ Condemnation follows the painted woman; laughter and derision the woman who ventures out unimproved or the older woman who snares a husband.³⁷ Ostensibly deriding women's attempts to "take the pencil out of God's hand," and maintaining art of any kind as a gendered activity, seventeenth-century poets state a preference for the young and unadulterated female presence. A face marked by age produces multiple meanings, and confuses the identity between inner and outer virtue: the blank, white face is more amenable to the poet's reading. Age and ugliness deform identities, and like the face overloaded with cosmetics and decoration, create a semiotic diseconomy. Poetic condemnations of painted women thus pay tribute to their ability to challenge corporeal limits, the propriety of meaning, and the established artistic hierarchy.

Although objections to painted faces range over a multitude of sins, it is specifically one aspect, the improvement on nature, the discontent with the God-given, which publications exonerating and explaining the use of cosmetics address. Though aimed (mostly) at women, these were written (almost exclusively) by men. Wecker's *Cosmeticks*, dedicated "To all truly vertuous Ladies," shifts the battle against the ravages of age into a beneficent domestic sphere presided over by "an eminent physician."³⁸ In his dedicatory epistle Wecker stresses that "These *Secrets of Nature* by which Nature hath taught us how to beautifie, and make her self more comely, coming to my hands, I could not chuse but disperse them" (A2).

³⁶ Waller's epigram "On a Painted Lady with Ill Teeth" depicts a gilded beauty who can attract lovers until they notice the state of her teeth. "The rotten bones discovered there, / Show 'tis a painted Sepulcher." *Poems 1645* 94-95.

³⁷ Typical is the ballad "The Olde Bride, or The Gilded Beauty, To a Dainty New Tune" (London, 1635), which likens the painted woman to a plastered wall which is collapsing.

³⁸ John Jeams Wecker, *Cosmeticks: or, The Beautifying Part of Physick, By Which All Deformities of Nature in Men and Women Are Corrected, Age Renewed, Youth Prolonged, and the Least Impediment, from a Hair to a Tooth, Fairly Amended*, trans. Nicholas Culpeper (London, 1650).

Similarly, John Gauden, a prolific apologist for Charles I, anticipates the criticism of the Precisians (Puritans) "who rail at this innocent Support of Nature's outward form."³⁹ These seventeenth-century versions of the self-help book proved popular, and at least one woman published her own version towards the end of the century. *The Accomplisht Ladys Delight in Preserving, Physick, Beautifying and Cookery* (London, 1692) by Hannah Woolley is careful to remove these activities from the realms of witchcraft or seduction, and to address itself to an improved social stratum. Between chapters on preserving and candying produce, on French and English cookery and on gardening there is a section of medical advice. In this the author inserts: "Some Rare Beautifying Waters, Oyls, Oyntments and Powders, for Adorning the Face and Body, and to cleanse it from all Deformities that may render Persons Unlovely" (Preface). Woolley has absorbed the requirements of the poets, for although she includes advice on minimizing the effects of smallpox, the aim of other treatments is to make the face, neck and hands white and smooth, unblemished, without freckles or sunburn. As Frances Dolan points out, pallor was the standard of beauty.⁴⁰ The effectiveness of these recipes is questioned by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu:

Ye cruel chymists, what withheld your aid?
 Could no pomatums save a trembling maid?
 How false and trifling is that art you boast;
 No art can give me back my beauty lost!⁴¹

The most reprinted book of beauty advice in the seventeenth century, however, is Sir Hugh Plat's *Delights for Ladies*, which went

³⁹ *A Discourse of Artificial Beauty, In Point of Conscience between Two Ladies* (London, 1692).

⁴⁰ "Taking the Pencil out of God's Hand: Art, Nature, and the Face-Painting Debate in Early Modern England," *PMLA* 108.2 (1993): 224–39. A discussion about pallor and its racial and moral undertones can be found in Tassie Gwilliam's examination of two eighteenth-century texts: a cosmetic manual and a comedy. See "Cosmetic Poetics: Coloring Faces in the Eighteenth Century," in *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Veronica Kelly and Dorothea E. von Mücke (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994).

⁴¹ "The Small-Pox," from *Six Town Eclogues*, in *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989) 58.

through fifteen editions between 1602 and 1654. Although a work of prose, the book opens with a few pages of blank verse, providing the only poetic example in this period that does not argue against cosmetics. Plat announces that he writes “remedies of dearth, / That Art might helpe, where nature made a faile” and commends the sweets of the earth in the tone of Herrick:

Of Marmalade, and paste of Genua,
Of Musked Sugar I intend to write,
Of Leach, of Sucket, and Quidinia,
Affording to each Lady her delight.⁴²

After listing the many fruits and flowers that art can preserve, Plat anticipates his readers' real concerns; the preservation of themselves. “And lest with carelesse pen I should omit / The wrongs that nature on their persons wrought, / Or parching Sunne” (A2). It is only after the Restoration that such a manual can openly advise women to avoid a “December look” in order to capture, or retain a partner. The woman who takes the advice in *Artificiall Embellishments: Or Arts Best Directions How to Preserve Beauty or Procure It* (Oxford, 1965) “shall infuse heat into the cold misogynist, and make the stoutest heart a sacrifice to love.”

These genteel prescriptions aimed, perhaps, at discouraging some of the more radical enhancements of nature collected by John Bulwer in his *Anthropometamorphosis: Man Transformed: or the Artificiall Changling* (London, 1650). In its natural state the body is honest, and Bulwer, who was interested in what is now termed ‘body-language,’ catalogues transformations ranging from eyebrow plucking to body piercing to surgical experiments. Although writing prose, Bulwer opens with five pages of rhyming couplets in which he castigates what is done “by Art” in opposition to what nature allows. Men are the principal culprits and Bulwer records that whereas rouge and powder were a female province, eye make-up was not: “What mean these *painted Circles* ’bout each Eye, / ’Mongst other markes of fearfull braverie?” He also inveighs against paints and patches:

⁴² *Delights for Ladies, to Adorn Their Person, Tables, Closets, and Distillatories: With Beauties, Banquets, Perfumes, and Waters* (London, 1608) A1.

There Art with her bold stigmatizing hand,
 Doth *streaks* and *markes* upon their visage brand.
 The *Painter-stainers* here assume a place,
 From whence descended our Face-taking race;
 Their Faces *Red and White, Blacke, Tallow, Blew,*
 Dostain'd, all sorts of an imposed hue.
 And *here* our Gallants al'amode are met,
 With visage full of foule black patches set.

...
Painted with lists, here naked arms behold,
Branded and paunc'd, with colours manifold,
 Rich tinctur'd *red Blacke, Tawny, Yellow, White,*
 All badges of the gallants gay delight.⁴³

Bulwer relates how individuals of both sexes treat their bodies as a canvas, painting and tattooing themselves so clothes as a signifying system become unnecessary. His tract (reprinted in 1653) suggests that earlier writings on the subject had not been effective. In 1616, Thomas Tuke, a supporter of Charles I who suffered sequestration and imprisonment for his loyalty, had written *A Treatise against Painting and Tincturing of Men and Women*. Despite his title Tuke addresses his admonishments principally to women. A decorated and painted face is, according to Tuke, "the devil's looking-glasse."⁴⁴

Tuke raises a point which has not been explored in the critical literature on the topic of face-painting. The increasing availability and better quality of mirrors from the early seventeenth century on would have made complex dressing of person and hair and the application of patches, cosmetics, tattoos and tinctures possible for a greater range of consumers.⁴⁵ Caroline poetry discourages women

⁴³ *Anthropometamorphosis: Man Transformed: or the Artificial Changling Historically Presented, In the Mad and Cruell Gallantry, Foolish Bravery, Ridiculous Beauty, Flthy Fineness, and Loathsome Loveliness of Most Nations, Fashioning and Altering their Bodies from the Mould Intended by NATURE* (London, 1653) 3–4.

⁴⁴ Thomas Tuke, "New Essays: Meditations and Vowes," in *The Seventeenth-Century Resolve*, ed. John. L. Livesay (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1980) 47–63.

⁴⁵ By the mid seventeenth century the manufacture of mirrors in London had increased to the extent that local producers hoped to inhibit the import of mirrors from the continent. See Williams, *Powder and Paint* 12.

both from cosmetic artistry and from their looking-glasses. Stanley, Heath, Kynaston, Shirley and Cowley, amongst others, deplore the narcissism that results in women no longer seeing themselves in their lovers' eyes. They inform part of a long tradition of looking-glass poems in which the mistress pays more attention to her reflection than to her lover, but which also engage with a gendered discourse of individuality and subjectivity.⁴⁶ (Some writers, Tertullian for example, had accused Eve of inventing the mirror; Milton, in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, removes Eve from gazing too long at her reflection in the pool.) Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, writing after she had contracted smallpox, confirms the thriftlessness of a woman with a mirror. She cannot bear the sight of a painting which bears her lost resemblance and instead addresses her glass:

And thou, my toilette, where I oft have sat,
While hours unheeded passed in deep debate,
How curls should fall, or where a patch to place;
If blue or scarlet best became my face⁴⁷

A woman busy with her mirror, not content to be simply the reflection of man (as man was of God), was likely not to be simply viewing, but also *creating* an image for herself and for the world. Perhaps, as Thomas Randolph complains in "To a Painted Mistress," she might be doing her face in her morning glass: "How durst you venture that adulterate part, / Belabour'd with your fucus and best art."⁴⁸ Randolph places himself in the position of the deluded lover who is expected to kiss "Pomatum and vermilion." He objects: "That lip, that cheek by man was never known, / Those favours you bestow are not your own." At the poem's conclusion beauty becomes a commercial transaction: sold by druggists and sold on by women. Randolph's wistful lover is one berated by Marston:

⁴⁶ E. Westfield in *A Wonder of Wonders* is unusual in thinking that mirrors can be a corrective: "And can you view your Glasses, and not shame / To patch those faces God himself did frame?"

⁴⁷ *Six Town Eclogues* 57.

⁴⁸ *Poetical and Dramatic Works of Thomas Randolph*, ed. W. Carew Hazlitt (London: Reeves and Turner, 1875) 640.

If *Lauras* painted lip doe daine a kisse
 To her enamor'd slauē, ô *heavens blisse*
 (Straight he exclaimes) *not to be match'd with this!*
 Blaspheming dolt, goe three-score sonnets write
 Vpon a pictures kisse, ô rauing spright!⁴⁹

The woman's face is so painted that kissing her portrait is analogous to kissing the woman. Randolph, like other poets inveighing against mirrors and face painting, articulates the contention in the ekphrastic tradition between a visual medium and what it represents: between graphic stasis and narrative momentum; between the word and the image as rival modes of expression.⁵⁰ This rivalry is most often activated in poems to painters (influenced by *The Greek Anthology* and by Marino), where the poet's pencil takes precedence over the artist's brush. According to poets, the painter is never able to convey the essential truth of the female sitter's beauty and virtue. In such poems the (always male) viewer, connoisseur, artist, or commissioner of the painting is active; the female is passive and silent. A woman using cosmetics, however, injects female agency into this constellation of relationships; she adds the language of artifice in a way Cavalier poets avoid in their insistence on access to unmediated reality.

Despite what Shirley Garner sees as a diverse range of objections to the use of cosmetics, both the poetry and prose written against ornamentation share a common anxiety about the loss of boundaries: between male and female, ladies and prostitutes, nakedness and clothing.⁵¹ The imaginative excess that shapes the body as text also resists interpretation at a time of conflict in which individual positions sought a space in literary discourse. What appears to be a call for bourgeois moderation is part of a reaction against the Babel of new voices unleashed during the Interregnum.⁵² Of the texts that inveigh against decorative extremes, prose

⁴⁹ "Inamorato Curio," from *The Scourge of Villanie*, in *The Poems of John Marston*, ed. Arnold Davenport (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1961) 154.

⁵⁰ See James A.W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poets of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashberry* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993) 39.

⁵¹ Garner, "Let Her Paint an Inch Thick" 133.

⁵² See James Holstun, *Pamphlet Wars: Prose in the English Revolution* (London: Cass, 1992).

tends to include men and to call for moderation on religious grounds. The poetry however, especially that produced by Royalist sympathizers, targets women. As such it can be seen as part of that deep discontent with gender roles noted by critics such as Marjorie Swan.⁵³ It also tends to, however, focus nostalgically on Lockean “things as they are” and to place poetry not only at the apex of literary and artistic activity but also of epistemology. It is in this cultural substratum of minor verse that the swan-song of Caroline poetry is revealed: its longing for the youthful and untouched, its nostalgia for a perfection of beginnings, its desire for a courtly pastoral haven so artificial that no artifice is perceived.

⁵³ Marjorie Swan, “Cavalier Love: Fetishism and its Discontents,” *Literature and Psychology* 42.3 (1996): 15–35.