Mary Trye, in her little-known treatise of 1675, *Medicatrix: or the Woman Physician*, provocatively states that ‘prolixity is a woman’s crime’..[1] While gendered critiques of language have long been a feature of written discourse, there is an overarching notion that endures even to this day: the sexist adage that women are prolix, that they operate flowery language, and take far too long to reach their point. At face value, this would seem to be the single connection that could be made between pamphlets as diverse as Trye’s *Medicatrix* the 1662 work *This is a Short Relation* women of other religious groups during the 1600s.[7] While the Friends emphasise spiritual equality between the sexes, gender and representations of it, are apparent throughout the text.[8] In semblance to the ‘universality of discourse’[9] David Norbrook refers to, their ‘short’ relation is over a hundred pages long, demonstrative of the importance of their topic, but also how religion gave these women a voice, without which they may have been just another two prisoners of an estimated 70 000 -100 000 held in the name of the Inquisition.[10]

Much like Mary Trye, Evans and Cheevers operate a prolix rhetoric, serving to redefine the female archetype: ‘My Dear Husband, my love, my life is given up to serve the living God, and to obey his pure Call in the measure of the manifestation of his love’.[11] While letters to husbands would seem irrelevant at surface value, they go some way to resolve the contentious question: to whom do they owe the greatest obedience? Beginning the letter in such a way exemplifies her prioritisation of God over that of domestic responsibility, pointing to the forthright attitudes of Quaker missionaries. Justifying her behaviour, Cheevers shifts potential criticism away from herself, devoting her life to God’s higher purpose. While the contemporary Thomas Collier described Quaker writing as ‘filthyness, pride and abomination’, Cheevers’ eloquence and integrity characterises the ‘revolution’ Susan Wiseman alludes to, epitomising their revaluation of the definitions that seek to bind and enclose them, providing a counter

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undermined in her 'absurd identification of Stubbe with Cicero'.[26] Over four pages of Section I, Trye aligns Henry Stubbe with the Roman statesman before apologising to a reader: 'but I have been much longer on this parallel than I intended', only to continue in her assessment for three pages more.[27] Certainly, this section would adhere to her notion that prolixity is a woman's crime, but then again, we cannot ignore her sarcasm. Perhaps, as may have been the case, Trye simply articulated the voice of those men who would condemn her testimony as a work of female sensationalism?

Yet the notion that Trye's entire writing style is mere caricature is a tad overreaching. There is great irony in her censure of Stubbe's lengthiness, of course, but the extent to which it renders her own long-windedness permissible is less so. As Apetrei and Smith make the case, women's language of the seventeenth century was 'shaped by their own, and others, conception of gendered norms'.[28] In an attempt to invert such assumptions assigned her gender, Trye's classical allusions epitomise a desire to project her intelligence and be taken seriously by the medical community. Yet for Wiseman, these references are not only a marker of education, but a component of Restoration genre *per se*. As she goes on to argue, classicism 'bears the moral and historical authority of antiquity': a linguistic mechanism used by women of the period to claim authority on their own terms.[29] While we can censure Trye in her assuming the language of the 'learned, learned' she so disparages, this must be seen in the context of the period, Mary Trye simply used the methods available to her.[30]

Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers' *A Short Relation* also makes lengthy classical reference, albeit to differing effect. As a religious pamphlet printed with the intention to spread the Quaker message, what may be considered prolix, is in fact a message saturated with religious politicism. Biblical allusion is sustained for over two pages in one section of the text: 'And in the time of our great trial […] The sun was darkened, the moon was turned into blood and the stars did fall from heaven and there was great tribulation ten days, such as never was from the beginning of the world [Revelation 6.12-13]'.[31] Here, the factual narrative takes a metaphorical turn, demonstrative of the biblical stature of their suffering.

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Catholicism

silence, the effects of which laying the foundations for female authorship, the reverberations of which being felt to this day.

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