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Emily Smith

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“I WOULD WRITE, TOO, IF HE WOULD BRING ME A PEN, INK AND PAPER”

**Katharine Evans,
Sarah Chevers,
and the
Publication of Pain**

Emily Smith

I imagine a heroine enforcing a regimen of self-imposed starvation who conceals paper in her clothing, writes letters in the darkness and unsure of how they will be sent to her intended readers, and experiences brutal methods of psychological and physical torture from a patriarchal figure. Then imagine that this heroine is not Samuel Richardson's eponymous heroine *Clarissa* (1747–48) but rather a pair of actual seventeenth-century women who wrote a series of letters while imprisoned in Malta. Arrested on a missionary trip to the Middle East, Katharine Evans (c. 1618–1692) and Sarah Chevers (c. 1608–1664) produced several interrelated documents while in the Inquisition. Their works elicit a profound degree of empathy from

readers by calling on ethical sensibilities as well as by translating a very real sense of human suffering onto the page.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate what it meant for Evans and Chevers to put their testimony to the press and how, by publishing a very real account of physical pain, the women developed a particular imprint of pain made visible by but never limited to the machinery of the printing press. Anticipating the tactics used by later novelists like Richardson, Evans, and Chevers craft what might be termed material testimony, because it is as rooted in the everyday realities of inkhorns and parchment as it is in Quaker doctrines.¹ Their writing is fully engaging with the material realities of their own position in networks of print culture and other related conventions of material and social practices in ways that allow them to publish their physical sufferings as necessary adjuncts to their spiritual beliefs.

Evans and Chevers were Quaker missionaries and pamphleteers whose missionary work began during the Interregnum. Evans, the more prolific writer of the two, has left records of her own sufferings during the 1650s. She was stripped and whipped at Salisbury in the 1650s, and endured other forms of persecution because of her beliefs. But the women's collaborative writings are the direct result of their later period of imprisonment. In 1658, Evans and Chevers left their families in England and embarked on a pilgrimage and missionary trip to Alexandria and Jerusalem. Before they reached their destination, they were arrested under the aegis of the Inquisition in Malta, and they were not released until 1663. Although torture and public burnings were not standard practices in Malta during the Inquisition, there was definitely enough of a pattern of public burnings to instigate fear in people imprisoned there. Floggings and lengthy jail terms (like the three and a half years that Evans and Chevers spent in prison) were fairly common,

¹ Jeffrey Masten concludes a study of Margaret Cavendish by suggesting that an account of Cavendish's feminism should be "attentive to both the specific discourses (political, marital, etc.) and the material social practices (having plays read, printing, cutting and pasting, etc.) of its time." His point holds equally true for the writings of early Quaker women like Evans and Chevers, whose form of testimony must be approached through a combined lens that pays attention to specific religious and political discourses as well as to material social practices, like the smuggling of papers from a prison to the printing press in London. See Masten, "Material Cavendish: Paper, Performance, 'Sociable Virginity,'" *Modern Language Quarterly* 65.1 (March 2004), 68.

and the interrogation practices used by the Inquisitors were certainly not compassionate.

The women's arrest in Malta was not the last time they were imprisoned for their beliefs. After returning to England, the women were again arrested on their return from a missionary trip to Scotland and Ireland. Chevers died shortly after this arrest, but Evans continued her missionary work until her death in 1692 and was imprisoned at least twice more—once in Welshpool, Montgomeryshire, and later at Wicklow.² Evans and Chevers's major contribution to our understanding of seventeenth-century women's writing, religious testimony, and Quaker history comes in the form of their collaboratively written publication, *This Is a Short Relation of Some of the Cruel Sufferings (For the Truths Sake) of Katharine Evans and Sarah Chevers, in the Inquisition in the Isle of Malta* (which appeared in an expanded format as *A True Account of the Great Tryals and Cruel Sufferings undergone by those two faithful Servants of God, Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, In the time of their above three years and a halfs Confinement in the Island Malta in 1663*).³

The process by which *This Is a Short Relation* was put to the press bears many features of what would later become hallmarks of eighteenth-century epistolary fiction, such as fictions of concealing letters, hiding them, and sending them to their destination through the aid of intermediary characters. The women smuggled their writings to their fellow Quaker Daniel Baker, a ship captain who transported the multifarious documents the women produced to a London publisher and provided the prefatory material of the printed text. It should not therefore come as a surprise that paper, pens, ink, and books play crucial roles in the narrative, and that the women express much self-consciousness about how they are to go about embodying their ideas and beliefs in a public format. The resulting text valuably provides an

² Biographical information about Evans and Chevers (especially concerning their later years) has been drawn from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

³ In addition to these two texts on the time she spent imprisoned with Chevers in Malta, Evans also published *A Brief Discovery of God's Eternal Truth; and, A Way Opened to the Simple Hearted, Whereby They May Come to Know Christ and His Ministers, from Antichrist and His Ministers* (London, 1663), which was written while she was in prison in Malta. Evans and Chevers were not the only pair of Quaker women who wrote collaboratively from prison during the period. Priscilla Cotton and Mary Cole, authors of *To the Priests and People of England, We Discharge Our Consciences and Give Them Warning* (1655), probably provided them with a model of sorts for producing and printing religious testimony from prison, although Cotton and Cole were imprisoned much closer to home (in Exeter) than Evans and Chevers.

example of what Margaret J. M. Ezell has called the women's "lived experience of the scripture."⁴ Beyond providing evidence of the women's spiritual work, the text serves as an example of the multigeneric tactics utilized by seventeenth-century autobiographers.⁵ Additionally, *This Is a Short Relation* serves as a valuable example of a phenomenon typical of the public textual output of radical seventeenth-century religious sects and gives a sense of precisely how the medium of print played a role in the development of a strategy for writing reading pain during the period.



The publication history of *This Is a Short Relation* is replete in drama worthy of any novel. Of course, *This Is a Short Relation* is not a novel,⁶ so the significance of Evans and Chevers's active attempts to subvert their captors through writing demands attention as a part of a fascinating generic strategy, as a form of material resistance, and as a form of material testimony. As Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby, and Helen Wilcox have suggested, the women's "struggle over meaning" functions as part of their actual, material struggle⁷ to conceal their writings, give them to Baker, send them with him back to London, and produce more literary representations of their sufferings and their beliefs. There is an element of the fantastical in the way that the women

⁴ See Margaret J. M. Ezell, "Introduction—*This Is a Short Relation* by Katharine Evans and Sarah Chevers" (September 1999), for the Brown Women Writer's Project, available online.

⁵ As Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby, and Helen Wilcox have shown in their introduction to *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), the text is not simply a source of "factual, documentary evidence" but rather a carefully crafted text designed as a part of the women's "attempt to make their meanings 'stick'" (18).

⁶ Theories of the origins of the novel in English, especially studies influenced by the work of Ian Watt and Michael McKeon, often point out that the rise in autobiographical writings during the seventeenth century paralleled trends in the development of the novel as a genre. See for example Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York: Norton, 1990); and John Richetti, *Popular Fiction before Richardson: Narrative Patterns, 1700–1739* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

⁷ See the introduction to Graham, Hinds, Hobby, and Wilcox, *Her Own Life*, 18.

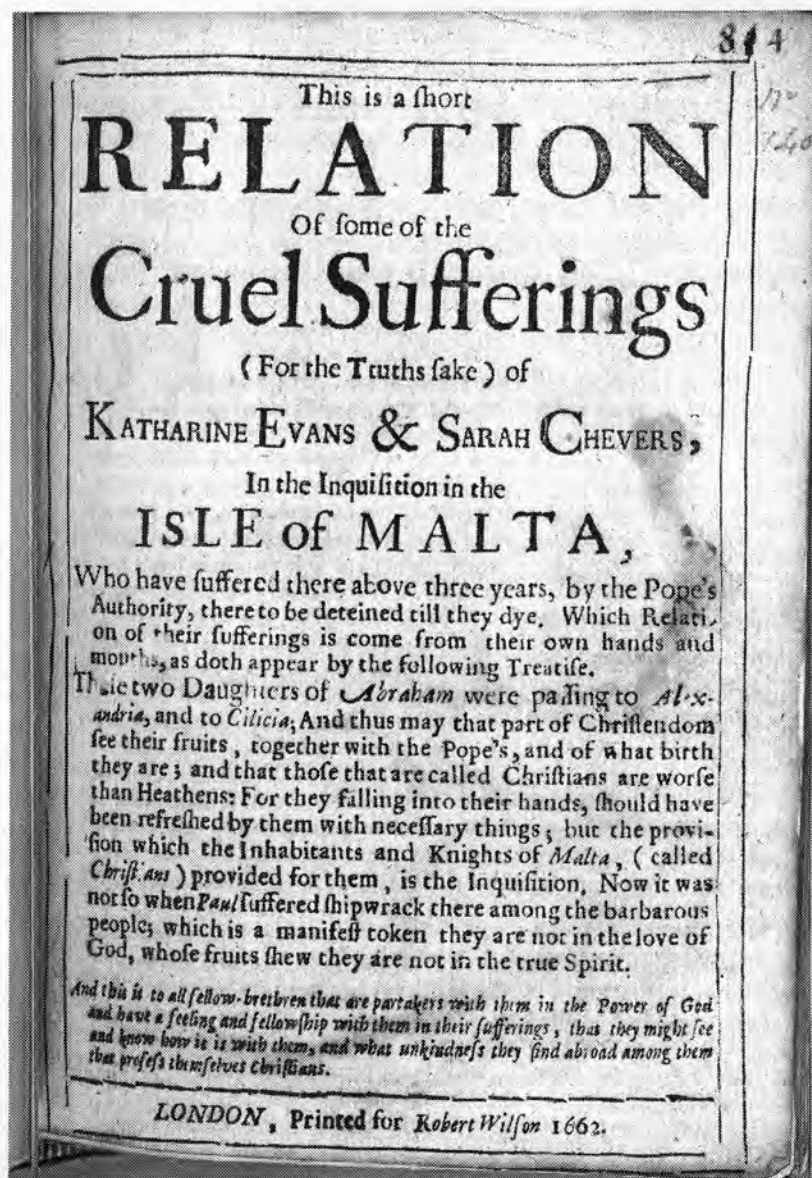


Figure 1: Title Page, Katharine Evans's and Sarah Chevers's *Relation* (1662)

dispensed their writings to Baker, a captain who ensured that the pages made their way back to London even while the authors remained imprisoned.

The act of concealing pages and attempting to convey meanings (and materials) from their cells to a broader readership in England figures prominently in the women's narrative, lending the narrative an element of intrigue and making the text almost addictively readable. This addictiveness is predicated on the women's addiction to writing, an addiction that they frequently place in opposition to the desire for food. Repeatedly, they make reference to their fasting: "I said, I could not eat any thing at all"; "The last day of my fast I began to be a hungry, but was afraid to eat, the enemy was so strong"; and "But we were afraid to eat, and cryed to the Lord, and said, We had rather dye, than eat any thing that is polluted and unclean."⁸ The relationship between fasting and writing is most salient when the friar entreats Katharine to eat her words:

As I was weak in my bed, the Fryar came to me, and said, We did deny the Scriptures: I told him, they did deny them, we did own them, and hold them forth, thou dost know it: He was in a rage because I said, they denyed the Scriptures, bid me eat my words again, and threatened death upon me. I said, Christ Jesus was the Light of the World, and had lighted every one that cometh into the World, which Light is our salvation that do receive it, and the same Light is the World's condemnation that do not believe in it. (G1v)

Here as elsewhere in the text, the language that Katharine employs to cast her testimony into language involves a high degree of stylized rhetoric, in which eating one's words is metonymically linked to three interrelated processes: that of revoking a truthful testimony, of eating in a way that is unacceptable to God, and of satisfying physical needs at too high of a spiritual cost.

⁸ Katharine Evans and Sarah Chevers, *This Is a Short Relation of Some of the Cruel Sufferings (For the Truths Sake) of Katharine Evans and Sarah Chevers, in the Inquisition in the Isle of Malta* (London, 1662), C1r, C2r, and D4v. Subsequent references to the foliated page numbers of *This Is a Short Relation* are made parenthetically in the text.

Evans and Chevers do not eat their words. Instead, they present their words on scattered pages to Baker, who transforms the fragments into a highly readable narrative that tempts readers hungry for religious testimony and intrigue to devour it. Through paratextual apparatuses and editorial interventions, Baker helps give their narrative an appearance of fictionality, thereby rendering the book comparable to popular narratives rather than to less romantic religious testimonies. As the title page indicates, *This Is a Short Relation* invites readers to think of the narrative as an almost authorless text. The full title—*This Is a Short Relation Of some of the Cruel Sufferings (For the Truths Sake) of Katharine Evans & Sarah Chevers, In the Inquisition in the Isle of Malta*—suggests that the narrative offers the women's story without necessarily situating them in the role of author. All signs of authorship in the text are buried in the prose, which includes frequent references to the physical process of writing and—in Baker's intermediary comments—the physical process of compiling and printing the book.

How different this tactic seems from the published writings of Evans and Chevers's near contemporaries like Francis Kirkman, whose narrative *The Unlucky Citizen* is prefigured with an image of a bust of Kirkman on top of the words "FK: Citizen of London / Ætat: 41 1673,"⁹ or Margaret Cavendish, who relied on paratextual configurations and frontispieces to represent herself as different styles of author for a range of audiences.¹⁰ As Jody Greene has suggested, Kirkman innovatively used the printing press to develop a counterfeit identity. He managed to publish and circulate material that authorized a version of himself as a man with a particular kind of authority. This ability to produce and reproduce one's self through print probably began in the Renaissance with the posthumous publication of the collected works of

⁹ See the frontispiece of Francis Kirkman, *The Unlucky Citizen: Experimentally Described in the Various Misfortunes of an Unlucky Londoner* (London, 1673). Jody Greene has provided a stunning analysis of Kirkman's strategies of self-production through print in "Francis Kirkman's Counterfeit Authority: Autobiography, Subjectivity, Print," in *PMLA* 12.1 (January 2006), 17–32. Mihoko Suzuki has also discussed how Kirkman and others figured into the self-representation of the infamous Mary Carleton in "The Case of Mary Carleton: Representing the Female Subject, 1663–73," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 12.1 (Spring 1993), especially 61.

¹⁰ James Fitzmaurice has discussed the frontispieces of Cavendish's published writings and other features of the paratexts of her works (specifically her 1656 compilation *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life*) in his study "Front Matter and the Physical Make-Up of *Natures Pictures*," in *Women's Writing* 4.3 (1997), 353–67.

Ben Jonson in 1616;¹¹ during the Interregnum and Restoration periods, authors, editors, and publishers worked—at sometimes collaboratively and at other times with less connection to one another's goals—to provide the reading public with particular versions of authors that somehow complement, supplement, or even subvert facts about the authors' lives or material in the published texts.

Rather than provide a clear image of Evans or Chevers, either in the form of a frontispiece picture or distinct authorial imprint, the paratext of *This Is a Short Relation* presents them as subject matter rather than subjects in their own narrative. Baker's editorial interventions in the text compound this representation of the women as characters in a story rather than as active authors of their own lives and words. Despite the textual and material strategies by which Baker and the publisher (Robert Wilson) have formatted Evans and Chevers as types or signs of religious suffering, the paratextual apparatuses of the book provide the women with a matrix in which they elaborate their own clear sense of self-authorization.

The paratext gives a basic form to *This Is a Short Relation*, but Baker's interventions in the text and the mediatory role that he plays in the published text extends into the body of the narrative, in which Baker helps point up ways in which the women have developed rhetorical tactics for articulating pain and for incorporating the body and material culture in a paradigm of religious testimony.¹² Throughout the narrative, the body serves as an undeniable vehicle for testimony, and Baker helps to ensure that this vehicle is always linked to the publication process and

¹¹ Wendy Wall has discussed the power conferred by authors, editors, and publishers by paratextual apparatuses in *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), especially chapters one and two.

¹² Although Rachel Warburton is correct in asserting that the "circular, fragmentary, and repetitive quality of the narratives suggests that the various documents were written and published in haste," she is perhaps overstating her point by suggesting that the texts were organized "with little editorial intervention." Baker's role as a compiler of the texts cannot be discounted. See Warburton, "The Lord hath joined us together, and wo be to them that should part us: Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers as Traveling Friends," in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 47.4 (2005), 402. Rosemary Kegl addresses this point clearly in "Women's Preaching, Absolute Property, and the *Cruel Sufferings* (for the Truths Sake) of Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers," in *Women's Studies* 24 (1994), 64, by noting that Baker takes on a position of authorizer and recorder. Suzuki has addressed the issue more broadly by suggesting that during the decade following the Restoration, representations of female subjects often existed in multiple public texts by male authors, compilers, and editors. See "The Case of Mary Carleton," 61–62.

to Quaker beliefs. These women's bodies are a part of how they achieve, articulate, and transmit their message. Bodies are (to borrow obliquely from Judith Butler)¹³ treated as matter that is writeable in *This Is a Short Relation*, insofar as bodies enact and intervene in the physical production and reproduction of meaning through letters and forms of corporeal self-styling like self-starvation. For example, in one of the final sections compiled in *This Is a Short Relation*, Daniel Baker adds a letter of his own and then writes:

And when this, with other Papers I had through no little difficulty communicated to their hands, over the heads of our Enemies, I was moved to speak my Message as from the Lord of Life to them after I had offered up my body, and to lay down my life for these poor innocents, my dear friends; and so with my voice I saluted them in the Lord's Truth, as they stood at the prison-Grates with these words in the behalf of the general Assembly of the Saints in Light, to wit, The whole Body of God's Elect, right dearly, ownes your Testimony. (K1v)

Baker's account of Evans and Chevers's suffering interpenetrates the women's own words and lends a particular shape to the writing that they produce while in prison. His description rapidly shifts from *Papers* to *hands* to his own voice, all of which serve as palpable embodiments of the women's testimony and their service to God. The conclusion that he reaches—that "The whole Body of God's Elect, right dearly, ownes" the women's testimony—further highlights the slippages between such categories as body and meaning, and public and private, in relation to the women's religious testimony.

Baker makes several additional references in the text to the relationship between the public body and published testimony, always in ways that connect both to God, as in his note that he is "constrained to publish the acceptable Words, that sound and savour of pure innocency and clear truth, for the Elect's sake" (K2r). Bound up in Baker's editorial notes is a clear sense that Evans and Chevers's letters serve as corporeal extensions of their sufferings. The merged forms of

¹³ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993). See especially the introduction and chapter one.

suffering—the suffering body, the suffering mind, and the suffering page—serve as physical embodiments of spiritual pain by which the women’s suffering, their innocence, and their testimony can be published and made public in order to elicit a particular response from the reading public.



The emphasis that I have hitherto placed on Baker’s role in the production of a final printed narrative neglects one crucial feature of seventeenth-century women’s writing, which is that print publication was not necessarily as clearly fixed of a notion as it seems to modern readers. In her recent study *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, Literacy*, Heidi Brayman Hackel has argued that early modern women’s writing practices reflected a complex “network of overlapping oral, aural, visual, and manual experiences.”¹⁴ She suggests that the terms *scribble*, *print*, and *publish* possessed multiple meanings during the period, and that the term “culture of print” might only be applied to the period if we “retain the full and varied contemporary sense of that word.”¹⁵ The “full and varied” sense of the word print is not, then, what we find in Baker’s introductory materials or on the title page of *This Is a Short Relation* but in the women’s persistent emphasis on the writing process throughout the text as a way of printing or publishing spiritual experience, pain, and testimony as well as on their interest in publishing their own ideas about conversion and faith by disseminating religious literature.

In fact, the reason that the women become targets of the Inquisition is that they have distributed paper among people in Malta: “we gave him a paper”; “we gave them Books”; “we gave some Books in the Street”; “he said we must give in the great Paper” (B1v). Evans and Chevers are publishing their testimony even before they begin writing from the prison by disseminating texts that explain and expand their messages. The Inquisitors promptly question Chevers about why the women had distributed religious books, and her reply further conveys

¹⁴ Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25.

¹⁵ Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 25–26.

the fact that the texts involve the intersecting layers of oral, aural, visual, and manual culture that Brayman Hackel has understood as working together in early modern print culture. The women's explanation of why they were taken prisoner hinges on the fact that they attempted to publish their ideas in multiple ways, as the following passage suggests: "they took some Books from her, and would have had her swear by them, but she would not: And they asked, Wherefore she brought these Books? And she said, Because we could not speak their Language, and they might know wherefore we came" (B2v). Throughout the narrative, reading is described as a key component of the publication process. Sharing language, swearing by language, and reading books whether aloud or silently are crimes by which the private is made public and the personal is made political, as many of the exchanges between the women and the Pope suggest.

The paper that the women disseminate—as well as the paper they will not acknowledge (the words of the Pope; Catholic interpretations of the Bible)—in fact plays a multilayered role in the articulation of their suffering because the paper itself is damaged, discounted, rendered expendable, and repeatedly written and overwritten. The paper itself suffers, and the women's own published account of their suffering becomes a metonym for these pained pages. Perhaps the clearest instance of this is when the women note: "our skin was like sheeps Leather, and the hair did fall off our heads, and we did fail often" (C3r). With their reference to sheep leather, the women make an obvious connection to parchment. By choosing this specific terminology, the women suggest that their bodies are writeable surfaces onto which the Inquisitors' torture methods and the women's own beliefs are inscribed.

The fact that Evans and Chevers imagine their bodies as material onto which language can be written does not stop them from actually taking on author functions of their own and impressing their meanings onto actual pieces of paper, some intended for publication in London and others for a different kind of publication in Malta. In the same paragraph that they describe their bodies as parchment, the women decide to write to the Inquisitor:

We did write to the Inquisitor, and laid before him our innocency, and our faithfulness, in giving our testimony for the Lord amongst; and I told him, if it were our blood they did thirst after, they might take it any other way, as well as to

smother us up in that hot room. So he sent the Fryar, and he took away our Inkhorns, (they had our Bibles before) We asked why they took away our goods? They said, it was all theirs, and our lives too, if they would. We asked, how we had forfeited our lives unto them; they said, For bringing Books and Papers. We said, if there were any thing in them that were not true, they might write against it. (C3r)

Within the space of only a few sentences, the women move rapidly from an image of their own bodies as writeable, page-like surfaces imprinted with signs of torture to an image of them as writers who use their blood and their inkhorns with equal potency. Finally it is through the loss of blood, ink, and Bibles that the Inquisitors feel they can adequately punish the Quakers for the crime of "bringing Books and Paper."

The same circumstances are reiterated throughout the narrative: "We askt him for our Bibles? He said, We should never see them again, they were false. We said, if they were conjuring Books, they had no warrant from the Lord to take them from us" (D2r) and "the Lieutenant took my ink and threw it away" (D3r). Books are taken, ink is taken, but the women repeatedly emphasize that their messages cannot be taken from them, impressed as they are on them in moments of individual vision. Thus it is not the writing materials that threaten the Inquisitors but rather the use that Evans and Chevers might make of them, but the debate between the Inquisitors and the Quakers does not extend so far into discourses of religion or ideology so much as it remains rooted in practical material realities.

But the women recognize a greater function of their works: to communicate the truth. Toward the end of their narrative, they twice register the relationship between writing and the production of meaning. First they suggest that their language should be read as is, with no "adding or diminishing": "Whosoever shall interpret this Paper before the Lord Inquisitor, (so called) I charge thee in the Name of the living God, as thou wilt answer before his dreadful presence, to interpret it word by word, as it is written, without adding or diminishing" (G1r). Because their language has come (according to Quaker theology) directly from God, no one can or should alter the meaning of "this Paper" that they have produced. Testimony is, for the women, a form in which authentic meaning appears, and they perceive that the

Inquisitors are afraid that they might publish or make public such authentic meaning by writing: "I told him I would write too, if he would bring me a Pen, Ink and Paper; and I would write the truth. He said, he would not that we should write" (G1r). Here it becomes clear that publication means, for these women, the social production of authorial intentions. Whether handwritten in a prison in Malta or published by a printing press in London, words that are fixed, complete, and true are necessary to the process of leaving behind the imprint of testimony.



The major narrative section of *This Is a Short Relation* ends with an authorial signature of sorts: "Written in the Inquisition-Prison in the Isle of Malta. Katharine Evans. Sarah Chevers." But this line does not actually conclude the text as a whole, nor does it clearly differentiate the text from a wider constellation of texts, including *A Brief Discovery* and *A True Account*. The remainder of *This Is a Short Relation* contains a compilation of hymns, songs, and letters written by Evans and Chevers while they were in prison in Malta. The mixing that characterizes the final section of the text reflects a sort of generic interactivity most typically associated (by Ezell and others) with women's manuscript writing but also evident in print miscellanies and other compilations. Further, the documents that Evans and Chevers published after their release from prison and their return to England continue, revise, and even rewrite many key points of their narrative.

The interrelations among *This a Short Relation*, *A Brief Discovery*, and *A True Account* provide a wealth of information about the workings of the print marketplace, particularly insofar as it often replicated and adapted strategies of manuscript circulation and as it made testimony into a form of writing that could be relived. In fact, the rewritability and relivability of testimony is perhaps the most significant feature of Evans and Chevers's writing. For religious tracts to perform work, they must employ tactics that make them accessible to others not only as readable material but also as narratives to be lived, reproduced, and rewritten to accommodate multiple experiences. Thus in some ways, the references to writing that abound in *This Is a Short Relation* must serve a didactic function. They teach others how to best use paper, pen, and ink to

write, read, and rewrite spiritual struggle, whether in a prison in Malta or under persecution in Restoration England or colonial America.

Like other Quaker women who produced works while in prison including Margaret Fell (1614–1702) and later the poet Mary Mollineux (c. 1651–1695), Evans and Chevers did not know for certain whether their words would receive a wide readership. But their experiments with a permutation of what Ezell has elsewhere termed “social authorship”¹⁶ reveal something of the power of the impulse to publish pain that occupied these women while they experienced the Inquisition in Malta as readers and writers largely denied books, pens, and paper. *This Is a Short Relation* is, in a sense, a story about how two women, their editor, and a London publisher managed to publish pain and suffering, which means that the text is a testimony of trauma. At the same time, the text reflects many of the material traits of the late seventeenth-century print marketplace, both in its production and in its meanings.

For Evans and Chevers, having their testimony published through the intermediary work of Baker and then with the help of the publisher Wilson was not an abrupt shift from the processes by which they received religious inspiration, were marked by the Inquisitors’ modes of torture, or wrote down words on whatever pages were available to them. Rather, publication was simply another permutation of making public their religious testimony. The printing process, particularly as they experienced it from prison through a series of external mediations, perhaps violated some of the sense of fixity that the women describe in context of the Inquisitor’s reading of their manuscript words (with their command “to interpret it word by word, as it is written, without adding or diminishing”).

This Is a Short Relation does not simply provide details about the lives and works of two Quaker missionaries. Instead, the text demands that we break down many of our assumptions about what it means to make language, beliefs, and sufferings public so that we can better understand the complex interactions between pen and page that appear throughout the text. These two women and the network of readers and writers who helped produce *This Is a Short Relation* developed a text in

¹⁶ Ezell has used the term to suggest that, in manuscript culture, textual control and authority were often shared by authors with later transcribers, editors, and publishers. See *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), especially chapter two.

which reading and writing, private and public, penning and printing could coexist as necessary components of published testimony. The pain that Evans and Chevers publish—whether brandished on the sheepskin-like surface of their bodies by the Inquisitors' blows, spoken in prophetic voices guided by God, written onto loose sheets of paper, or gathered together by Baker and combined for publication in England—is a public one, in which textual materiality and all of its concomitant features are necessary components of expression, authority, and testimony.