Fighting for Her Profession: Dorothe Engelbretsdatter's Discourse of Self-Defence

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As Aphra Behn argued for her vocation as the first professional woman writer in England, a six-year older Norwegian colleague did the same from her corner of Europe. Dorothe Engelbretsdatter (1634–1716) is considered the first professional poet in Denmark-Norway. Her fight for her art and her livelihood was sometimes fierce. The need to earn money from her writing made her try to defend her copyrights. There were pirate editions attempting to cash in on her success, and she turned on the publishers with entertaining if harsh polemics. Others accused her of plagiarising male predecessors, and she responded in counter-attacks in the form of occasional verse. Her fights paid off, and she was awarded royal support in the form of tax release for life. Her publication history and struggles throw light on the possibilities and limitations of women's entrance into the market of commercial publication around 1700. Her explicit polemics as well as the argument implied in much of her poetry, that women could and should write, reminds us of similar features in the texts of Behn or Anne Bradstreet. Her seemingly humble submission to male superiority while aiming kicks at the trouser folk, demonstrates the urgently felt need to be admitted to the book market.

When a canon of 25 works from across the ages was set up for the Norwegian Literary Festival in 2007, only four women were represented among 21 men.¹

¹ The four chosen women were (in chronological order) Camilla Collett, Sigrid Undset, Cora Sandel and Gunvor Hofmo. The publication of a collection of essays on the selected works, *Norsk litterær kanon*, confirmed the attempted canonization (*Norsk litterær kanon*, eds Stig

The two selected (male) writers from around 1700, Petter Dass and Ludvig Holberg, had one thing in common not mentioned in that document: they both admired Dorothe Engelbretsdatter.² She, however, does not appear at all in the selection, in spite of being considered Norway's first professional poet of any gender, and certainly one of the most popular in her own time.³ Modern reception has been much cooler, and a multi-volume cultural history from 1930 reflects both tendencies:

The most famous Norwegian hymn-writer of the Seventeenth Century was Dorothe Engelbretsdatter, a clergyman's daughter and clergyman's wife from Bergen. In her own time, she was highly admired even by real [*sic*] poets like Kingo, but the admiration was probably more for the clergyman's wife than for her work. In our time, one needs to be a literary historian to be able to admire her: her language, thinking and expressions are all too distant from us.

It is quite a different feast to read Petter Dass, the only Norwegian poet of the Seventeenth Century.⁴

This dismissive distinction between hymn-writers and "real" poets, the preference for her male colleagues, and the suspicion that her admirers saw the woman, not the work, are all typical for much of her reception until the present day. Dorothe Engelbretsdatter has had to fight for her place in the literary world from the start. This fight has been twofold: for publication and money,

Sæterbakken and Janike Kampevoll Larsen, Oslo 2008). In an almost homonymous book the year after (*Den norske litterære kanon 1700–1900*, eds Erik Bjerck Hagen, Jon Haarberg, Jørgen Magnus Sejersted, Tone Selboe and Petter Aaslestad, Oslo 2009), Dorothe Engelbretsdatter fares only a little better. When five professors of literature select thirteen main authors from the period 1700–1900, the only women are Camilla Collett and Amalie Skram. Engelbretsdatter is, however, mentioned *en passant* a few times, and given a page in the chapter on hymns, although declared to have written nothing of canonical value, in spite of her importance in literary history (*Den norske litterære kanon*, 240–41).

2 Her name appears in at least three different versions in her own books, including Dorethe and Dorothea, and she is often called Dorte for short, but Dorothe is the form chosen by her main editor Kristen Valkner.

3 See Laila Akslen's article about her in *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon*, 2009.

4 "Den mest kjente norske salmedikter fra det 17. årh. var Dorothe Engelbretsdatter, prestedatter og prestekone i Bergen. Hun blev i sin samtid høit beundret selv av virkelige diktere som Kingo, men beundringen gjaldt nok mer prestekonen enn hennes verk. I vår tid må en være litteraturhistoriker for å kunne beundre henne; sprog, tankegang og uttrykksform, alt står så fjernt fra oss. Ganske annen fest er det over Petter Dass, den eneste norske dikter i det 17. årh". (Sverre Steen, *Det norske folks liv og historie gjennom tidene: Tidsrummet 1640 til omkring 1720*, vol. v, Oslo 1930, 365). [All Norwegian texts are translated into English by me, MNS.]

but equally for status and recognition. As we shall see, these battles are inseparable in the story of her authorship.

Dorothe's Books

Unlike her male colleagues who had positions and an income as clergymen or professors, Dorothe Engelbretsdatter was a professional poet since she lived by her pen in addition to a meagre widow's pension. She ridiculed the size of the pension as "a few dozen coins" ("een snees Daler eller toe") in arguing for her need of money.⁵ However, her deepest urge was, evidently, to write. She had written poems since she had become a happy wife and mother, and published her first book while her husband was still alive. Her writing did not at first spring from the need for an income, but from the need to be read. Dorothe wrote religious poetry, hymns, prayers, occasional verse⁶ and verse letters.⁷ She published two main works. *Siaelens Sang-Offer* (The Song-offering of the Soul) started as a collection of 36 hymns and some other poems in 1678, but was enlarged with every new edition so that by 1699 it comprised 70 texts.⁸ Its immense popularity and widespread use as a song-book, with printed music included, led to seven editions in her lifetime alone and altogether at least 26 Norwegian and Danish editions over the next two centuries.⁹ She beat, for instance, Thomas Kingo in sales-figures at the time, and his *Aandelig siunge-Koor* (Spiritual Song-choir) of 1674 and 1681 was a huge bestseller.

Her second work, *Taare-Offer* (Tear-Offering, 1685), stands in a direct inter-textual relationship to male predecessors, as parts of it are based on the Danish clergyman Peder Møller's *Taare- og Trøste-Kilde* (1677), which in itself is a reworking of his German colleague Heinrich Müller's *Thränen- und Trostquelle* (1675) (both titles mean Source of Tears and Solace). Dorothe Engelbretsdatter takes these devotional texts and turns them into poetry, but she also delivers

5 In a supplication to King Christian v (Kristian Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter Samlede Skrifter*, Oslo 1999, 409).

6 Around 40 are preserved of what was probably a much larger production, perhaps published as leaflets or single sheets.

7 Unpublished at the time, they were circulated in handwritten copies.

8 Dorothe Engelbretsdatter, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatters Aandelige Sang og Taare-Offer*, Copenhagen 1699.

9 For further discussion of her seventeenth- and eighteenth-century reception, and the discovery of a *circa* 1750 copy, see Marie Nedregotten Sørbø, "Travelling Books: When Dorothe Engelbretsdatter Went to America", *European Journal of Scandinavian Studies* 2 (2017), 291–307.

FIGURE 4.1 Portrait of Dorothe, 1681. Store Norske Leksikon, online at https://snl.no/Dorothe_Engelbretsdatter

the Biblical material from a different angle. Her emphasis is not on the sinfulness of the prostitute at the feet of Jesus, which tended to fascinate the male authors, but instead on her redemption.¹⁰

The two collections were later published as one volume in all subsequent editions, and also expanded with other matter, notably the 1698 *Et Christeligt Valet* (A Christian Valediction). A decade after Dorothe's death *Tear-Offering* was, as the title informs us, "translated into Swedish verse by a distinguished

10 Inger Vederhus shows that Dorothe Engelbretsdatter reinterprets the figure of Mary the whore as one who is saved and accepted through her tears (Inger Vederhus, "Bold of Pen, Bold in Ink", in *The History of Nordic Women's Literature*, Copenhagen and Gothenburg 2012, 1993–98). Laila Akslen enters even further into an explication of Dorothe's use of the tears of the female sinner (Laila Akslen, *Barokke figurar*, Oslo 2008, 14 ff).

lady” and published with four copper plate illustrations.¹¹ The distinguished lady has been identified as the learned noblewoman Maria Gustava Gyllenstierna, who was a poet in her own right, with around 500 sonnets in addition to other poems.

“Death Is Half My Life”

Dorothe's two main titles are very suggestive of her entire writing: songs, soul, tears and offerings. “Death (or dead) is half my life” she exclaims in her moving elegy for her husband Ambrosius Hardenbeck, who died before she was fifty.¹² Part of her battle as an author was her battle against death. She lost seven of her nine children at a young age, all four daughters and three of her five sons. Of the two remaining sons, one died as a soldier and the other disappeared in Leiden (The Netherlands). Her medicine was to turn to poetry. She wrote verse to comfort herself: “New sorrow caused new songs”, she explains in her preface.¹³

As it happens, she comforted not only herself, but others as well. Among these was a fellow woman author, Leonora Christina, 13 years her senior, who was incarcerated in a tower in Copenhagen for 22 years because of her husband's political intrigues.¹⁴ Royal born (daughter of Christian IV) and highly gifted, her marriage in her teens to Corfitz Ulfeldt at first gave her the opportunity to travel and have seven children; then she suffered imprisonment and deprivation. She wrote two books in her prison years, and more of them afterwards, but could not publish in her lifetime, because of her notoriety. Only 200 years later did her prison memoirs *Jammers Minde* (Memory of Woe) see print (1869). And her collection of female biographies *Hæltinners Pryd* (The Adornment of Heroines) could comfort only herself by their example, until they finally saw print in the 1970s.¹⁵ Leonora Christina found solace in reading

11 Five Swedish libraries still own copies of this translation (Dorothe Engelbretsdatter, *Tåre-Offet, på svenska rim af en förnäm fru öfversatt*, Stockholm 1727).

12 “Død er mitt halfve Lif” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 404).

13 “ny Sorg forarsagede nye Sange” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 22).

14 Torill Thorstad Hauger wrote a book connecting the fates of Dorothea, Leonora Christina and Cille Gad, a poet and highly gifted relative of Dorothea's who was condemned to death for killing her new-born child. Her appeal for a reprieve (written in Latin) was granted, allegedly due to her great learning (Torill Thorstad Hauger, *I Dorotheas hus*, Oslo 1986).

15 Some of these biographical sketches had been lost over time, so the collection is now incomplete.

Dorothe's poems and expressed her praise in an honorary verse printed in the 1681 edition of *The Song-Offering of the Soul*: "You Norwegian Torch-Flame and True Tutorress".¹⁶

Dorothe Engelbretsdatter's poems also proved a great comfort to the leprosy-stricken Ingeborg Andersdotter Grytten, 30 years younger and, like Dorothe, from the West Coast of Norway. She wrote poetry inspired by Dorothe, published a collection called *Kors-Frugt* (Fruit of the Cross, 1713), and was included in Fr. Chr. Schønau's 1753 *Samling av Danske lærde Fruentimmer* (Collection of Danish Learned Females), as was Dorothe herself.

In the European context, the year of Dorothe Engelbretsdatter's first book, 1678, is also the year of Madame de La Fayette's (1634–1693) *La Princesse de Clèves*, marking a new taste for historical and psychological novels. Moreover, Dorothe's fight for her authorship took place at the same time as Aphra Behn (1640–1689) argued for female writing in England. Her play *Sir Patient Fancy* of exactly the same year contains explicit feminist polemics, as we shall see.¹⁷ Another European woman by birth, the New England immigrant Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672) had died a few years before, but the second, authorised edition of her book was published this year, and she also contributed to this *querelle des femmes*, describing her own battles (see below).¹⁸

Dorothe's Battle

The author's preface for *Song-Offering* bears strong witness to her fight for status. Her self-perception is unashamedly clear.¹⁹ She calls herself "Bergen's Deborah", after the powerful female judge of the Old Testament, and also refers copiously to other prominent women of the Bible. It is, of course, a way of begging acceptance for her writing: placing herself alongside Biblical models. Moreover, in her poems she argues explicitly for women's right to use the gift that was, after all, given to them by God.

16 "Du Norske Fakkelt-Blus og sand Lærmesterinde" (Elisabeth Aasen, *Kvinnens spor i skrift*, Oslo 1986, 30; Dorothe Engelbretsdatter: *Tekster i utvalg: salmer, rimbreve og leilighetsdikt*, eds Elisabeth Aasen and Egil Pettersen, Bergen 1996, 44–45).

17 It was her seventh play since 1670.

18 The first edition of *The Tenth Muse* was published by her brother-in-law in London in 1650.

19 In a recent scholarly appreciation of her authorship, Jørgen Sejersted sees this self-fashioning as the key to her success. The dialectics between religious self-denial and authorial self-consciousness is a striking feature of her texts and paratexts (Jørgen Magnus Sejersted, "Selvfremstilling i Norges første og største forfatterskap: nyanser i forfatter nærvær hos Dorothe Engelbretsdatter og Henrik Wergeland" in *Norsk Litterær Årbok* (2011), 158–90).

Both arguments stand out immediately on opening her first book; in the very first lines she declares herself the female servant (“servantess”) of Jesus, and on the second page she asks God to accept her songs like he accepted Mary, Deborah and Hannah. Her extreme humility is no doubt sincere, declaring herself an unworthy sinner, but it is also (she must have been aware) a weighty argument. How can the powerful men of Church and society reject the songs of a pious woman only wishing to praise God? Throughout her authorship she insists on this argument. What she fights for is clearly the right for women to express themselves in print, to be published and read, and to join the discourse of professional authors in its common channels.

After the preface there is an introductory poem – “To the Reader” – where Dorothe Engelbretsdatter enters into theological argument to support her claim to be a published poet. She argues logically that God is the giver of all talents and that she herself has a small talent for writing; should she then bury it? Quite the opposite; talents must be used, she finds. Furthermore, since birds sing and stars shine by God’s force, He must even be able to use “a poor female brain”. She takes courage from remembering other women God has graced, and there is a second list of Biblical examples. Like so many others, she makes apologies for her lack of formal training, asking the reader to overlook the stylistic faults of “a mere woman”, and judge her like a brother would. She begs the reader not be surprised that poor women also want to join in where The Lord’s praise is sung; in other words, a direct request for recognition of female creativity and professionalism. She procures the role of professional poet for herself, and paves the way for other women.²⁰

Dorothe Engelbretsdatter was never an anonymous lady, nor did she hide behind male pseudonyms. Although her name did not appear on the title page of the first editions, only her initials, it is given in the letter of recommendation from the Bishop of Bergen, and also in her own preface.²¹ The author’s gender is not only identified, but always very visible. It is remarkable how the word “woman” keeps reappearing, as if she wants to throw it in the reader’s face. It may partly be meant as defence (be patient with a poor woman), but it

20 “En skørbelig Quinde Hierne”; “Jeg er ickun en Quinde”; “Lad dig og ey forundre det/At Quindfolk som er ringe,/Vil også gjerne være med/Hvor Herrens Loff skal klinge” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 23–25).

21 The title pages are lost from the early editions digitized by the Norwegian National Library, but according to Valkner, her full name first appeared on the title page of the 1699 edition (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 533). Her name otherwise appears all over the opening pages (in honorary verses) in all extant editions. Also, her portrait has been included since the beginning, with her own inscription around it (figure 4.1.).

certainly also served as efficient feminist argument (I have done this, and I am a woman).

Dorothe had lived in Copenhagen, then the common capital of the united Denmark-Norway, for three years in her youth (circa 1647–50). The cultural impulses from the capital may very well have contributed to her poetic ambitions. Certainly, as a clergyman's daughter and from the age of eighteen a clergyman's wife, she was closer to books than most women at the time. Her hometown Bergen was then Norway's biggest and most international city, and approximately half of the population were immigrants from all over Western Europe.²² Dorothe's own husband was half German, and German words appear in her poems.²³

Her twentieth-century editor, Kristen Valkner, claims that she was the first Norwegian author of lasting importance to publish in Norway (rather than Denmark).²⁴ The now lost first edition of her first book was published in Christiania (Oslo), and possibly also the next, a now lost pirate edition. Most of the later editions, authorised as well as pirate, were published in Copenhagen.²⁵

Dorothe Engelbretsdatter clearly saw herself as a poet with a vocation, but how did others see her at the time? Her battle was also a battle for recognition from readers and colleagues – and she succeeded. She travelled to Copenhagen again in 1684–85, after her husband's death, and was celebrated at the time as “the first poetess” of Denmark-Norway.²⁶ The title was coined, or repeated, by the anonymous writer of an honorary verse printed in her book (in some editions signing himself ГМК). He flatters her by pretending that her gifts must belong to a goddess, and concludes that “If you are really only a woman/We will tie you a laurel wreath/And crown you (as reward for your work)/The first poetess”.²⁷ She obviously liked the honour and also used the title herself. After she lost her house in the great fire of Bergen in 1702, she wrote

22 Elisabeth Aasen gives an illustrated presentation of her life and work in a contemporary context (Elisabeth Aasen, “Dorothe Engelbretsdatter - barokkens Poetinde” in Aasen and Pettersen (eds), *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 11–61).

23 Ambrosius' poem in German to his ‘Geliebte Dorothe’ ends her *Song-Offering* (Engelbretsdatter, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatters Aandelige Sang og Taare-Offet*, 276–80).

24 Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 12.

25 For textual history, see Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 505ff.

26 Kristen Valkner also comments on the fame she achieved there (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 305–6). If the first poetess, she was soon followed by others: Elizabeth Pedersdatter Heeboe published *Enkens Suck- og Sang-Offet* (The Widow's Sighs- and Song-Offering) in 1687 (Aasen and Pettersen (eds), *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 38).

27 “Men est Du blot et Kvinde-Kiøn/En Laur-bær Krans vi binde/Og krone dig (dit Verk til Løn)/Den første Poet-Inde” (Dorothe Engelbretsdatter, *Sielens Sang-Offet*, Copenhagen 1684, 8).

a poetic supplication to King Frederic IV, asking for “a small widow’s cottage” for “the first she-poet in The King’s countries”.²⁸ In a dedication for the 1685 edition, she reminds King Christian V “That he in his countries found/the first Bardess”.²⁹

Battling the Trouser Folk

Being the first professional poetess meant fighting male prejudice as well as male institutions. Still, Dorothe Engelbretsdatter also found ardent supporters among the literary establishment. Among her most eager admirers were two fellow poets, a Dane and a Norwegian, both of whom she met and corresponded with.³⁰ Thomas Kingo, a Danish bishop and the most celebrated hymn-writer of the century, was one of the many who wrote honorary verses for her. Born the same year and publishing in the same genre at the same time, they seem kindred spirits. They met at a dinner in Copenhagen, exchanged rhyming compliments, where he named her master of the art.³¹ His praise was profuse and quoted on the frontispiece of several editions: “Who will be surprised that ... the female bardic pen deserves laurel-branches?”³²

Dorothea means ‘God’s gift’ and the first part of her surname Engelbretsdatter means ‘angel’, and Kingo puns on both, gallantly if somewhat feebly. Even taking into account the stylistic as well as emotional extravagancy of the time, the fact remains that Kingo admired her, and welcomed a poetess among the poets. In his long honorary poem for the book he promises that “She shall among bards get a name and seat of honour”.³³ He pinpoints male prejudice towards female writing:

We men may hitherto have thought
That none but we could crack the little nut

28 “En liden Encke-Høtte”; “Den første Hun-Poet J Arve-Kongens Lande” (quoted in Elisabeth Aasen, *Kvinnens spor i skrift*, Oslo 1986, 33).

29 “Att Hand i sine Lande fant/Den første Skialderinde” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 416).

30 Kingo and Dass, however, never met each other (Akslen, *Barokke figurar*, 131).

31 “Mæsterinden” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 432, 553–54).

32 “Hvo vil forundre sig ... At Quindens Skialdre-Pen fortiener Laurbær-greene?” Valkner observes that this verse first appeared in Cassube’s pirate reprint of her first book circa 1680, and then authorized in her second book in 1685 (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 575).

33 “Hun skal blant Skialdrer faa sit navn og ære-sæde” (quoted in Henrik Jæger, *Illustreret norsk litteraturhistorie*, vol. 1, 1896, 237).

Where hidden lay poetic force and core
But pooh, look now, what woman hits upon.³⁴

He went further and playfully suggested that young men who had no taste for learning could swap places with her:

Go take her spinning-wheel you louts,
Who do not want to study,
Start spinning thread and crochet hemp,
While she earns praise with pen and brain.³⁵

Although the attitude is probably more carnivalesque than revolutionary, the effect was still a defence of the gifted female poet. It was an enthusiasm shared by his colleague Petter Dass, now the most famous Norwegian baroque poet, but then an unknown clergyman who remained mostly unpublished in his lifetime. Keen to get hold of a copy of Dorothe Engelbretsdatter's book, he wrote a rhymed petition to her while visiting Bergen. She replied – also in verse – that her house was empty of copies, but she was able to reclaim one she had given to a friend, who was instead promised a copy of the forthcoming reprint. The story demonstrates the immediate success of her book. Dass wrote three more entertaining verse letters to her, one of them a complaint that she had not answered his previous ones, provokingly asking if she has lost her rhyming powers.

The two friends may have been of different poetic temperament. As Laila Akslen argues, her attitude seems introvert where his is extrovert. Her poetry was contemplative, subjective, while he was preacher for the people, always instructing.³⁶ Nevertheless, they were more alike than different, in their shared fondness for expressing themselves and their faith in rough rhymes and elaborate metaphors. "We will be comrades" she declares in her first answer to his petition, on 2 August 1680, although she knows that she has only "a simple Woman's tongue", and is incapable of "high discourse". This simple woman's discourse is, however, deliberately double: while claiming humility she

34 "Vi Mandfolk hid indtil, maaskee, har haft i Tanke/At ingen uden vi den Nysling kunde banke/Hvori den Skialdre-Kraft oc Kierne proppet laa/Men pyt! See nu kun hvad en Qvinde hitter paa!" (Jæger, *Illustreret norsk litteraturhistorie*, 237).

35 "Gaar, tager Hendis Rok I Karle-Drøsse-Pinde/Som ey studere vil, begynder I at spinde/Gaar, setter eder ned at hegle Hamp og Hør!/Mens hund sig priselig med Pen og Hierne gjør" (Jæger, *Illustreret norsk litteraturhistorie*, 237).

36 Laila Akslen, *Norsk Barokk: Dorothe Engelbretsdatter og Petter Dass i retorisk tradisjon*, Oslo 1997, 220.

demonstrates mastery. Her well-composed verse is strewn with foreign words from Latin, German and French,³⁷ and she cannot help combining a humble bow to her male superiors with a self-confident boast of her own accomplishments: “Even if – between the two of us – I know a little more than The Lord’s Prayer, I have to stand aside for the learned ones, the trouser folk take precedence”.³⁸

And they did, also in this case. Comparing the careers and reception of Dorothe Engelbretsdatter and Petter Dass, we are reminded of a pattern in literary canon formation: even once famous women are afforded little space in posterity, and in later reassessments have to give way to men who were once their admirers. (Elizabeth and Robert Browning is another case in point.) In their own lifetime, Dorothe was celebrated and Petter was mainly unpublished. Today, he is selected for two (above mentioned) recent attempts at a Norwegian canon, while she is not.

Another of the canonised men belongs to the next generation: Ludvig Holberg, the most famous Norwegian dramatist before Ibsen. He grew up in Dorothe’s neighbourhood in Bergen, was later professor at Copenhagen University, and wrote a book about his hometown in 1737, two decades after her death. Here he admits that Bergen has not fostered many philosophers or literary people, but among the exceptions to this rule there is Dorothe: “Bergen can boast of what no Danish or Norwegian town can show, namely having produced the greatest Poetess that the Nordic countries have had, namely the well-known Dorothea Engelbrechts Dotter”.³⁹ He remembers seeing Dorothe as an aging woman, dressed in the old costume of Bergen and with a remarkable coiffure, and expresses the utmost respect for her poetic work, which – although not strictly adhering to all “the rules” – is so full of “poetic fertility” that “few Danish poetic works can compare”.

37 Dorothe is right in acknowledging her lack of formal education, but the times were improving. The new freedom from Latin meant a chance to write and publish for women without classical training. There is a fascination with the possibilities of the native language in both Engelbretsdatter and Dass, playing with words and ideas that had previously been expressed only in the Biblical languages. It was an age for Bible translations as well as educational texts and poetry in the vernacular.

38 “Vi vil være Camerater [...] J en simpel Qvinde Tunge/Jngen høy Discurs bestaar./Om ieg zwischen uns at sige,/Kand lidt meer end Fader Vor,/Maa ieg for de Lærde viige,/Buxefolket gaar dog for” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 398).

39 From *Bergens Beskrivelse*: “har dog Bergen haft det at berømme sig af, som ingen Dansk og Norsk Stad kand viise, nemlig at den har produceret den største Poetinde, som de Nordiske Riger have haft, nemlig den bekjendte Dorothea Engelbrechts Dotter” (Ludvig Holberg, *Den Berømmelige Norske Handel-Stad Bergens Beskrivelse*, Copenhagen 1737, 96).

Dorothe Engelbretsdatter's fame was rooted in both popular and intellectual circles. Her religious motifs as well as her echoes of Norwegian regional accents and daily life secured her immense popularity among the common people.⁴⁰ They are also the reason why she was reprinted at least 15 times in the century proceeding, the Eighteenth, and altogether 26 editions up to the present day. Meanwhile, the admiration and explicit defence that came from important pillars of society and culture must have been instrumental in establishing her reputation as a woman of learning.

"You are an example for our Nordic women" another woman wrote in admiration. She was the first Danish novelist, Anna Margrethe Lassen, signing herself "Aminda" in her honorary poem for *Tear-Offering* in 1685.⁴¹ The admiration was mutual and Dorothe addressed "Madame Lassen" as belonging among "the foremost of poets" in a verse letter. Although maintaining that she had not earned such praise, Dorothe accepted the tribute: "if I thus became an example for women".⁴² Dorothe's contemporary status as an important literary figure is solid. It was won through insistent arguments and fierce fights.

Controversies: Accusations of Plagiarism

We now come to the other side of the coin; Dorothe Engelbretsdatter may have had fame, but she also faced resistance. Controversies came from two quarters: arrogant academics and pirate publishers. Some students in Copenhagen (whose university also catered for Norway until the Nineteenth Century) accused the author of plagiarism and theft of texts. The first accusation came almost immediately upon publication of the second edition, as witnessed by Joachim Kaae, himself a student at the time: "one heard then many [...] give censure and ascribe it not to Dorotheæ herself, but to her husband who was alive at the time". He then recounts (in verse) how he could disprove the charge, because he himself had made the fair copy of the book for printing. He

40 She repeatedly insisted on her Norwegian origin and identity in her texts, and also employed a large number of Norwegian words and forms in her use of the official Danish language (see Egil Pettersen, "Språket hos Dorothe Engelbretsdatter" in Aasen and Pettersen (eds), *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*). Modern readers can easily recognise the Bergen dialect in her writing.

41 "Du et Exempel er for voris Nordens Qvinder". Lassen was the author of the 1723 *Den Beklædte Sandhed* (The Clothed Truth, quoted in Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 420). Her classical taste in pseudonyms is a mannerism of the time, and reminds us of Katherine Philips' "Orinda".

42 "Blef ieg paa den maneer for Qvinder et eksempel" (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 420)

attributes the accusations to “envy”, and finishes with some angry lines about “nasty insinuations”.⁴³

Another defence is implicit in her son’s tribute, included among the many honorary verses in the beginning of the book: “my virtuous mother/she who has written this book”.⁴⁴ Not to mention her husband’s two-page homage to his wife’s art, which ends the collection.⁴⁵

It was not the only charge, another attack came from a student who could reveal that Dorothe Engelbretsdatter’s work was not original, but had been published in devotional books a century before. Dorothe responded in kind. She was not one to sit still and suffer such false accusations against her writer’s honour. Several of her verse letters reflect the conflict, and some are addressed to the student(s) in question: “To the old student Jacob Hassebart” she writes mockingly of his little courage, his empty purse and his friendliness with the bottle. In “Recipe for a Ranter” she repeats the accusation against her “that I reheated hymns” from old hymnbooks, which would remain a lie “even if he could shit gold and pee white cinnamon-water”. She recommends extreme measures: “Claus Clown should be castrated”.⁴⁶

This coarse counter-attack is perhaps not quite what we expect from a female hymn-writer with two volumes of pious verse. Dorothe Engelbretsdatter was not, however, a nineteenth-century hymn-writer, but a seventeenth-century one, of the same making as John Donne (who found rape an appropriate metaphor for divine action). They have the same taste for mixing the high and the low, the heavenly and the earthly.

The slandering students seem to have had some effect: “Some people swallow such wisdom”, she notices herself.⁴⁷ And Kaae, as we saw, heard “many” people repeat it. Dorothe is clearly anxious of “the doom felled by the world” even if she knows that “My work is clear to God”.⁴⁸

43 “da hørte mand vel mange, [...] At give hver Censur, eendeel det at tilskrive/Ej Dorotheæ selv; Men Manden som i Live/Paa den tid var”; “Afvind”; “saadan Skumleri” (from an honorary poem included in the 1699 edition, quoted in Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 528).

44 “Min Dydefulde Moder/Hun som har Skrefvet denne Bog” (Engelbretsdatter, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatters Aandelige Sang og Taare-Offer*).

45 See footnote 23 above.

46 “Til en gammel Student Jacob Hassebart”; “Recept for en Ord-Gyder”; “opvarmed Salmer”; “Om schiønt hand kunde skide Guld/Og hvidt Canel-Vand pisse”; “Claus Nar bør Castere-ris” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 446–48).

47 “Slig Klogskab some sluger ind” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 448).

48 “Hvad Domme Verden felder; Mit Verck for Gud er Aabenbart” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 448).

The attacks were firmly founded on male prejudice against female writing. One attacker, the poet Tøger Reenberg, made polemic verses about how “men are always better fit to write verses and ride horses and show courage at war, which is no honour for women”.⁴⁹ Like so many other women writers, Dorothe Engelbretsdatter and her contemporaries had to fight such notions about the female intellect, or brain, as she refers to it.⁵⁰ Anne Bradstreet complained of the same. In “The Prologue” to her book she declares “I am obnoxious to each carping tongue/Who says my hand a needle better fits/A poet’s pen all scorn I should thus wrong/for such despite they cast on female wits”. We notice she has also met the accusation of theft (“They’ll say it’s stolen”).⁵¹

Aphra Behn expressed similar frustrations, for instance, in the Epilogue of *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678). After the action is over, her narrator steps onto the stage and confronts the audience with their prejudices: “I here and there o’erheard a Coxcomb cry/Ah, Rot it – ‘tis a Woman’s Comedy [...]”. She embarks on a long speech of defence for the female intellect: “What has poor Woman done that she must be/Debar’d from Sense and sacred Poetry?” She sharply ridicules male weaknesses, and male classicist drama, and provokingly claims that women “could write/Equal to Men; cou’d govern, nay cou’d fight”, a claim she also repeats in the last line of the play: “pray tell me then/Why Women should not write as well as Men”.⁵² Like Dorothe Engelbretsdatter, she confidently uses her own work as proof of her point. Clearly, Anna Margrethe Lasson was right when she observed (in her verse to Dorothe) that many people “doubt that this sex can possess this gift”.⁵³

49 “At skrive Vers, at ride Hest/I Krigen modig være/det stedse sømmer Manden best/er Quinden ingen Ære” (Laila Akslen and Inger Vederhus, “Etterord til 1999-utgåva” in Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 583–95, 592).

50 Kristen Valkner thinks that the newness of a woman producing a major poetic work was at least part of the cause (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 11). Laila Akslen Kvalbein observes that “What caused contemporary and later controversies around Dorothe and her poetry was to a large extent that she dared grip the pen and compete with the most renowned male poets. And moreover, she also managed to put a sharp and deliberate feminine imprint on what she wrote, an imprint that bothered and annoyed a lot of people at the time”. (“Det som gjorde at det vart strid om Dorothe og diktinga hennar alt i samtida og den nære ettertida, var mykje det at ho som kvinne torde gripe til pennen og ta opp konkurransen med dei gjevaste mannlege diktarane. Og ikkje nok med det, ho makta også å setje eit skarpt og medvite kvinneleg stempel på det ho skreiv, eit stempel som genererte og irriterte svært mange den gongen.”) (Laila Akslen Kvalbein, *Feminin barokk: Dorothe Engelbretsdotters liv og diktning*, Oslo 1970, 17).

51 *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 6th ed., Vol. A, ed. Nina Baym, New York and London 2003, 239.

52 *The Works of Aphra Behn* 4, 1915, 115–16.

53 “tvifler, dette Kiøn kand eye denne Gave” (quoted in Aasen, *Kvinnens spor i skrift*, 32).

Later literary historians came up with similar accusations; in the early Twentieth Century the argument against Dorothe Engelbretsdatter was that she had copied Thomas Kingo, based on certain similarities between their texts. The editor of her collected works, Kristen Valkner, meticulously researched the alleged loans, and concluded that the similarities were slight, and always a result of shared ideas and images of the time, which would be found in any writer.⁵⁴ The allegations had also much earlier been refuted in *Norsk Salmehistorie* (Norwegian hymn history), where editor J.N. Skaar pointed to textual and biographical evidence that most of Engelbretsdatter's poems in *Song-Offering* were in fact older than Kingo's hymns.⁵⁵ He finds her to be mainly influenced by the predominant German hymn-tradition, which she knew from a life in the church, and which must be where she got her sense of poetic form.

The controversy also had a clear gender bias, with gender battles being fought. Dorothe Engelbretsdatter's somewhat irreverent name for the male part of the population was "the trouser folk" or even "trouser trolls" ("Buxefolket", "Buxe-Trold"). It is, of course, an example of the typical baroque taste for periphrasis, where elaborate evasions substitute the simple word. The parallel for women is for instance "ewe-lambs" ("Gimmer-Lam") or "the linen" ("Lintøyet").⁵⁶ More than this, the concept indicates a certain nonchalance, and an awareness that she is a female poet and different from the trouser folk. There is a striking mixture of submission and self-confidence in her attitude to them. She combines explicit humility with implicit pride and craving for the right to write, like Bradstreet and Behn. She claimed her place and beckoned women to follow her: "The ewe-lamb is not ashamed, even if – between us – it is a little forgotten. When the trouser-folk brag and boast, should we therefore yield?"⁵⁷ The answer is a clear no, and she argues that God has his own school for "the weak female gender, whose brain is made like a son's".⁵⁸

What Engelbretsdatter achieved by not yielding was a feminine form of baroque. This is also the main conclusion of Laila Akslen Kvalbein's study of her texts. The author did not dare disturb the main genres and forms of poetry, since to be a professional woman poet was disruption enough. She was not inventive or avant-garde, and instead worked within inherited forms and the

54 Referred to in Inger Vederhus, *Engelbretsdatterstudiar*, Bergen 1982, 82 ff.

55 J.N. Skaar, *Norsk Salmehistorie* 2, Bergen 1879–80, 583.

56 Akslen Kvalbein, *Feminin barokk*, 114.

57 "Gimmer-lam er icke skemt,/Blef end lit paa dennem glemt,/Mellom os at Sige,/Huor af buxe-folcked vill,/Giøre sig for meget till,/Bør Vj derfor Vige?" (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 439).

58 "Gud har og sin scholle/For det suage quinde Kiøn/Skabt I Hiernen som en Søn/Derpaa bør vi stole" (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 439).

poetic taste of the day. However, her use of those forms was clever, her poems striking and her figure in contemporary society important. Her feminine contribution to poetry took at least three major directions. She introduced female interests and imagery into a male world, such as the pleasure in jewellery.⁵⁹ She wrote about (and for) mothers and widows and Christian women. And she insists throughout her work on her own femininity, down to the details of grammar: always calling herself “poetess” not poet, always adding the feminine suffix “-inde” (-ess) to all possible or impossible nouns, like servant, worker, bard, singer, sinner, and disciple.⁶⁰ I also noted above how she keeps foregrounding the word “Quinde” (woman). Dorothe Engelbretsdatte never puts her candle under a bucket, but always lets it shine proudly: arguing theologically with men, seeing herself as proof that women should be allowed to write.

Controversies: Piracy and Copyright

The second main controversy surrounding Dorothe Engelbretsdatte, in addition to the suspicions raised by her gender, is the battle with publishers. Two of the early editions of *The Song-Offering of the Soul* – the second and the third – were pirate versions, and Dorothe Engelbretsdatte was deeply frustrated by the inaccuracies and lack of respect for her authorial rights. In a preface to the reader in her own second edition of 1681, which was really the fourth to be published, she complains that “a greedy, vicious, impertinent person, who dares not proclaim his name,⁶¹ could find it in his heart, for the sake of perfidious profit, to reprint the book, in swindler’s manner”.⁶² She goes on to describe the omissions and mistakes.

Clearly, it annoyed her that while she herself had paid for the first edition and had printed only few copies, which she had given out for free among rich and poor, other people should try to cash in on her immediate success.⁶³ What

59 Akslen Kvalbein, *Feminin barokk*, 63ff, 85. In one poem she uses the larder as an image for the Last Supper (“Saa det Spise-Kammer/Slugte all din Jammer”), in a metaphysical conceit worthy of a female John Donne. It is as if a modern poet said of Holy Communion that “this fridge satisfies all your yearnings” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatte*, 131).

60 Akslen Kvalbein, *Feminin barokk*, 67.

61 She seems to be thinking of the second edition, since the third carried Cassube’s name.

62 “at it glubsk, vanartig, u-forskammed Menniske, der icke tør være Nafned bekiendt, understood sig, for slem Vindings skyld, at trycke Bogen effter, paa Fuskerviis” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatte*, 212).

63 “paa egen Bekaastning”; faa Exemplarier som blant Venner Rig og Fattig, uden Nøttesøgelse, er ud-deelt’ (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatte*, 212)

really enrages her to the extent of abusing her pirates is the fact that these editions, particularly the second, were faulty, and gave the wrong impression of her poetic abilities. In addition, the printed music was missing. It worried her that the buyers would get poor value for their money, and she strongly recommends her readers to stick to the first or the new fourth edition. The others are “bastard foetuses”.⁶⁴ “I do not recognise other books” is a strong declaration of the rights of authorship, especially coming from a woman, and at the beginning of her career. Dorothe Engelbretsdatter fought for her books from the start.⁶⁵

She also composed a counter-attack in the form of a verse lampoon, although this was not published. Here she suggests that somebody lend the thieving printer a pair of glasses so that he can render her poetry better the next time the greed for money grips him.⁶⁶ She said worse things, and in these cases the lines are virtually dripping with contempt in words such as “shameless”, “long-fingered”, “gallows-food”. In a verse letter she defends her harshness: “A mother must have the right to complain when her foetus is attacked”.⁶⁷

Dorothe Engelbretsdatter was granted a kind of early copyright as a reward for her struggles: a royal licence to control the publishing of her books for ten years, later renewed for ten more (figure 4.2). In 1682, the publisher of the unauthorised editions, Christian Cassube, was heavily fined, although this seems not to have hurt him much. Cassube's thriving book business and increasing monopoly in both countries made him rich enough to lend the state money.⁶⁸ The controversy demonstrates Dorothe Engelbretsdatter's saleability and market value as well as her professional and self-confident attitude and behaviour.

Several of her counter-attacks are found in her verse letters, a genre much exploited in her circles. She also addressed The King with rhymed letters of petition, where we see that she had financial battles to fight as well. She explains that she has “little money, not much in the larder, and no fields or harvests”, and names her small yearly income as a clergyman's widow. She is as “terrified of the executor [tax collector] as of the bogey-man himself” (written in 1684).⁶⁹

64 “u-æcte Fostre”. Valkner comments that the word “foster” (foetus) was then also used for children after birth (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 213, 543).

65 “Jeg kiendis icke ved andre Bøger” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 213).

66 “At vende Versen op og need/Og riime efter galne griller/Kand ingen laane dig to briller/ At see herefter bedre til/Og læse over om du vil/Saa du i Konster ej fallerer/Naar Penge-Soeten opererer” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 401).

67 “En Moder faar jo klage sig/Hvis Foster mand angriper” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 403).

68 Vederhus, *Engelbretsdatterstudiar*, 88.

69 “Ikke har jeg mange Penge/Ikke gaar Forraadet højt/Jngen Agre heller Enge/Jngen Jindkomst for en Døyt ... Aarlig Nøed Pastorens Enkke/Een Snees Daler eller toe/... Jeg naar

FIGURE 4.2 The Royal Letter allowing Dorothe to have a copyright on her work, 1682, revised 1692. The Norwegian National Library's digitized editions of Dorothe Engelbretsdatter's books, 1706 edition.

Interestingly, she uses the same argument Virginia Woolf based *A Room of One's Own* on around 250 years later: financial security is the key to the creative process. The King holds “my key to poetry/to open or lock”. When he was graceful, “the rhyme-bag sprung open where before it was dormant”. Like Woolf, Engelbretsdatter needs a certain sum of money and a room of her own: “The Ink-brush demands quiet”.⁷⁰ She explicitly does not expect affluence, just

Angsten dominerer/J mit Hovet som een Elf/Er saa red for exequerer/Som for Busse-
Manden self” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 409).

⁷⁰ “Ham var med skyldig Fryct min Dicte-Nøgel Ragt/At Aabne og sla til Stood i Monarkens
Mact./Strax hand kun Naade-Fuld saa Trøstig ord gad tale,/Sprang Rime-posen op der
Half-Død laa i dvale,/Blek-Penslen fodrer Roo, Prakt giver jeg forlov,/Har dog i midler Tid
Lifs underhold behov” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 411).

subsistence, so that she has the necessary peace to write.⁷¹ In her next letter, to Queen Charlotta Amalia, she thanks her profusely for having intervened with The King and “released me from my burdens”.⁷² When King Christian v died, she wrote to his son, the new King Frederic IV in 1700, in the hope that he would continue supporting her writing “after the simple womanly talent”. We also notice that she refers to her work as a “duty to write”.⁷³ To oil the machinery, she sent poems in praise of both the deceased and the new king.

Dorothe Engelbretsdatter was awarded tax relief for life. She clearly fought for the right to support herself as a widow, as an alternative to the common solution of remarrying another clergyman after her husband died. Instead of re-entering the marriage-market, she argued for her livelihood as a writer. “She recognised early on that the status of ‘Poetess’ gave her a unique commercial lever in her contemporary society”.⁷⁴ The tax relief was in reality a form of author’s stipend, and it made Dorothe Engelbretsdatter effectively the first Norwegian writer to receive such support.

Last Battles

One of the last battles old Dorothe had to fight was for a room of her own, or more precisely a “small widow’s cottage”, after the great 1702 fire of Bergen had destroyed her house along with most of the city. It was actually the fifth big fire in Bergen in her lifetime, and the second time her own home was lost. As usual, she resorts to her pen and her “rhyme-bag” and sends a humorous, but heartfelt appeal to three important men of the city. She points out that she is now in “Number Nil”, seemingly housed in an alms-house among the poor. She is like a bird without a nest, ashamed of begging, but soon to die, self-ironically “full of sighs and old coalfish”. She presents herself as the forgotten poet whose talent is being reduced to crumbs, in spite of the popularity of her books. “Bergen’s Deborah perceives that the Trouser-folk have forgotten the poor one”.⁷⁵

Appeals over the years to King and city at last paid off and she got a new house, and hopefully some peace in her final years. Unfortunately, since it took

71 All quotations are from her second letter to King Christian v in 1684, the year she went to Copenhagen.

72 “mig fra byrder løst” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 413).

73 “i lige Maade Anno 1700 naadig anseer min dybt underdanigste SkrivePligt, stieled efter det kleinlige Qvinde-Pund” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 478).

74 Vederhus, “Bold of Pen, Bold in Ink”.

75 “Nu mig Nummer Nix voldgiester”; “Met af Suck og gammel Sey”; “Bergens Debora fornemmer/Buxefolck den stachel glemmer” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 498–99).

ten years to provide her with a permanent home, she only had six years to enjoy it. In one of the many ironies of history, the house has later been proudly shown off as “Dorothe Engelbretsdatter’s house”, part of The Museum of Old Bergen.

In true baroque manner, like John Donne sitting for his death mask, she wrote her own funeral hymn, just leaving the year open.⁷⁶ Here she expresses her loneliness and hard life, and the sense that death is a release from all troubles. Through all pious hopes and humble submission, the most striking line is the very last one; she is going “Where husband and children embrace me”.⁷⁷ She must have been a lonely, old woman, having lost nine children and a much-loved husband, and having to beg the city authorities to look after her. She remembers the pleasures and merriment of the past, of the happy days when she “feasted on joy”, and “opened” her “rhyme-bag” for fun. “But since, worries have scourged my joy/And death has penetrated the windows”.⁷⁸

When later nineteenth-century critics found her poetry maudlin they seem not to have grasped the conditions of her life and times – a time of pestilence and poverty – from the comfort of their plush, pompons and pipe-smoking, their time of high production and optimistic progress. Nor did they comprehend the baroque taste for personal emotion and extravagant expression, or her striking self-irony. She did not fit in with nineteenth-century order and moderation. The influential literary historian Nordahl Rolfsen is a case in point. Although awarding her a place in his canon of Norwegian poets, incorporating her portrait and six poems, he still mainly expresses annoyance at her tearfulness: “the reader” is “drowning” and “gasping for air” in all this water. Moreover, he objects to her tactless style in writing of “whore-houses” and “maggot-sacks”.⁷⁹

Around 340 years have passed since Dorothe Engelbretsdatter published her first book, with a contemporary best-seller status that subsequently

76 She marks the expected year of death as “170nb”, while she actually lived until 1716.

77 “Hvor mand og børn mig fauvner” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 502).

78 “I Glæden Grasseret”; “Men siden bekymring min Glæde Hudflenget/Og døden sig igien Vindverne trenget” (Valkner, *Dorothe Engelbretsdatter*, 467–68). After studying the author’s revisions in the various editions of *Sielens Sang-Offet*, Akslen Kvalbein comments that she changed after the death of her husband. She expands the genre of “Sighs” for morning and evening use for all days of the week, and her titles are full of widowhood, grief and farewells to the world (Akslen Kvalbein, *Feminin barokk*, 120).

79 Nordahl Rolfsen, *Norske digtere: fra Petter Dass til vore Dage*, Bergen 1886, 22–30. Twenty years earlier, in a history of Norwegian poetry, the tone is more balanced, but her poetry is seen as “rhymeries” (L. Dietrichson, *Omrids af den norske Poesis Historie* 1, Bergen 1866, 69–76).

endured in the following two centuries.⁸⁰ She was, however, increasingly seen as old-fashioned, and moreover, as too crude and coarse in her expressions, too tearful and emotional in her attitude, and, I suspect, too direct in her female demand for recognition and her conscious poetic voice.⁸¹ Her fight for professional status as a major poet has not always been successful.⁸²

Nevertheless, she has also in modern times been represented by a few poems in official hymnbooks for Norwegian church use. The most influential one of the late Nineteenth Century and much of the Twentieth was M.B. Landstad's hymnbook, and he specifically argued that since she had been so widely loved by the public, she deserved a place in the canon. He deliberately transplanted her from the cottages to the churches, and thought she would not shame them.⁸³ One and a half centuries later, one of her songs remains in the new hymnbook for The Norwegian Church.⁸⁴

She is at present commonly taught in schools, and included in Norwegian textbooks. YouTube turns up examples of school projects where young voices read or dramatise her. A prize-winning children's author wrote a personal account of her life and times based on her house.⁸⁵ A novel of academic satire describes a professor of literature tracing unknown love-letters between her and Dass, in his eagerness to supervise a young woman who wants to write her thesis on Dorothe.⁸⁶ Engelbretsdatter has also occasionally been introduced

80 In a register of books mentioned in settlements of estate in four Norwegian regions between 1690 and 1839, Dorothe Engelbretsdatter is found in all regions. Although she is by far outnumbered by her friends Dass and Kingo, who authored standard catechisms and hymnbooks to be found in most homes, she is among the more common of the other authors (Jostein Fet, *Lesande bønder*, Oslo 1995, 345). The author Kristofer Janson noticed a small revival for her and other such "dusty old books of devotion" since they had been recommended by the popular spiritual leader Hans Nielsen Hauge in the first part of the Nineteenth Century (quoted in Fet, *Lesande bønder*, 194).

81 In a major 1896 literary history her second book is described as "tasteless and banal" ("smagløst og banalt") and a "tearjerker" ("Taare-perse"), although the author also acknowledges her longstanding fame as "the great poetic light" who "struck chords which are still resounding" (Jæger, *Illustreret norsk litteraturhistorie*, 232–40).

82 By the early Twentieth Century, her books had disappeared from the shelves of, for instance, the women's reading society in the Norwegian capital, and only a small booklet on her authorship is found in the collection (see Marie Nedregotten Sørbo, "Elusive Women Authors in Norwegian Nineteenth-Century Reading Societies", in *NORA* 24/4 (2017), 279–95).

83 Quoted in Skaar, *Norsk Salmehistorie*, 587 and in Jæger, *Illustreret norsk litteraturhistorie*, 236.

84 It is her most popular evening song: "Dagen viker og går bort" ("The day is yielding and departs", or in Grove's translation: "Day is dwindling, then is gone"), in a somewhat modernized version (*Norsk Salmebok: for kirke og hjem*, Stavanger 2013, 929–30, No 810).

85 Hauger, *I Dorotheas hus*, 1986.

86 Henrik Langeland, *Francis Meyers lidenskap*, Oslo 2007.

abroad. In an American canonisation of Norwegian authors, she is presented twice, in the chapter on the baroque period, and in Faith Ingwersen's chapter on women writers.⁸⁷ While Sarah J. Poulson's introduction to Dorothe Engelbretsdatter's work for foreign students of Scandinavian literature interestingly also includes three translations into English by Leslie Ann Grove.⁸⁸ More translations are found in Gracia Grindal's thorough chapter on her authorship.⁸⁹ And although Dorothe Engelbretsdatter may not have seen much translation a hundred years ago, she was still awarded a decent entry in one of the world's main reference works, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, in 1911.⁹⁰

Her name has always lingered in the corners of literary histories, even if canon-makers as recently as 2007 and 2009 overlooked her. Like her fellow poets Anne Bradstreet and Aphra Behn, Dorothe Engelbretsdatter wrote appeals for the acceptance of the woman writer. Moreover, Behn and Engelbretsdatter both lived by their pen, setting early examples of professional female authorships. Through fighting for her livelihood as well as her reputation, Dorothe Engelbretsdatter remains a strong voice in Scandinavian literature. The need to earn money and the need to be recognised are equally urgent. Modern readers do not, however, often get a chance to hear that voice. Although there have been two twentieth-century editions of her poetry, one of collected and one of selected poems, there are no books by her in Norwegian bookshops at present. The battle therefore still goes on.

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87 In Harald Naess, *A History of Norwegian Literature*, 1, Nebraska 1993, 50–51, 353.

88 In *Female Voices of the North*, 1, eds Inger M. Olsen and Sven Hakon Rossel, Wien, 2002, 117–132.

89 Gracia Grindal, *Preaching from Home*, Grand Rapids, 2011.

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