

[W]hen I cast mine eyes and see
That brave Vibration each way free;
O how that glittering taketh me!
— Robert Herrick, 'Upon Julia's Clothes'¹

Pounce or pin-dust stuck to the 'B' of 'Bright-shining', from the Balliol College Library's copy of:
Margaret Cavendish, *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (London, 1663). Shelfmark: 535 d 4.
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The prose in Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle's *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1663) literally glitters. Or at least, it does in most of the copies of the book to be found in Oxford college libraries. Bits of blotting sand or ground magnesium mica, sticking to inked corrections in the book, sparkle and create flashes of light when seen from different angles. This essay is about those sparkly bits—variously called stanchgrain, pounce, pin-dust, sand, blotting sand, callis sand, or Calais sand—and what their appearance in copies across Oxford libraries tells us about Cavendish's revisions to the third edition of her natural philosophical treatise.

As people who study early modern manuscripts have discussed, 'pounce' actually means, potentially, two to three very different things in medieval and early modern manuscript studies.² First, pounce and stanchgrain were both names for a powder rubbed onto a parchment or paper page before writing to keep ink from spreading on the page. Pounce in this sense was made of powdered pumice, cuttlefish bones, rosin, or gum sandarach.³ While this was less of a necessity for paper than for parchment, it was still recommended especially for paper that had little size (a gelatinous coating used to make paper less absorbent).⁴ Early modern writing manuals such as those

¹ Robert Herrick, *Hesperides, or, The works both humane & divine of Robert Herrick, esq.* (London, 1648), p. 308.

² For overviews on the changing history of pounce, on which this paragraph draws, see Michael Finlay, *Western Writing Implements in the Age of the Quill Pen* (Wetheral, Carlisle, Cumbria: Plains Books, 1990), ch. 6, 'The Pounce-pot or Sander', pp. 32–34; James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture of Letter-Writing, 1512–1635* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 36–37, 41; and Joyce Irene Whalley, *Writing Implements and Accessories: From the Roman Stylus to the Typewriter* (Exeter: David and Charles, 1975), pp. 90

by John de Beauchesne include instructions for making pounce or stanchgrain, though as A.S. Osley has demonstrated, 'Later writing-masters (especially Cresci and Scalzini) were violently divided about its use'.⁵ Giovambattista Palatino—in his sixteenth-century writing manual—advises, 'Pounce is employed when you want to write well and distinctly, but it must be used sparingly, as too much of it will stop the ink from flowing'.⁶ A pounced page would allow a scribe to make sharp lines, but also prevented speedy writing.

Tools of writing, including callis sand in a sand box (11), from:
Johann Amos Comenius, *Orbis Sensualis* (London, 1685), pp. 186–87. Cal# #: C5525.
Photograph by Liza Blake, from the collections of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

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However, pounce was used not just for the preparation of paper, but also for the blotting of ink after it had been written on the page. Pounce in this sense, also called blotting sand or callis sand, would typically be held in 'pounce pots', a standard tool for most writing desks, as in Johann Comenius's list of usefu.

I do not plan to argue that Cavendish deliberately made her natural philosophical texts sparkle, though I do wish to explore the payoff of paying attention to pounce in early texts. In addition to providing a beautiful sparkle, pounce can sometimes also be useful to the bibliographer attempting to learn more about the history of a text. For instance, the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC owns a 1598 printing of Sidney's *Arcadia* whose title page is covered with pounced ink.²³ Figure 5 shows one of the large swatches of ink (of seven on the title page) that completely obliterates the text underneath. The large amount of ink used for this obliteration was dusted with an especially fine and sparkly pin-dust or pounce, thereby creating a beautiful effect, as if inverting Henry More's analogy that 'Small subtil starres appear until our sights / As thick as pin-dust scattered in the skie'.²⁴ The recto of the flyleaf immediately preceding has a signature from one 'J. Eyre' of University College Oxford, which also has some small pieces of pounce stuck to it (Figure 6); the appearance of pounce on both the signature and the obliterations on the title page suggest that J. Eyre was the one to scratch out bits of writing on the title page, presumably the signatures or owners' marks of previous owners.

The pounce or pin-dust that is found in copies of Margaret Cavendish's 1663 *Philosophical and Physical Opinions (PPO)* across Oxford is far more coarse than that found in the Folger's *Arcadia*. Figures 7 and 8, of manuscript corrections to *PPO* found in copies of New College and The Queen's College, respectively, show the thick, reflective grains that have been stuck to the ink. While New College and Queen's College have particularly encrusted manuscript corrections, pounce can be found sticking to corrections in at least nine of the copies held in various Oxford libraries, and nearly every copy of the 1663 *PPO* to be found in college libraries has uniform corrections.²⁵ We know that these copies exist across Oxford college libraries because they were donated by Cavendish; as William Poole notes, there is ample evidence that she had copies of her works (including her poems, plays, and natural philosophical treatises) deposited in the college libraries of Oxford, as well as in the Bodleian.²⁶ I have also found that she did the same in Cambridge, and that she had her books batch-bound before sending them to Oxford and Cambridge University college libraries, with matching bindings across colleges in each of the two universities (but, interestingly, varying bindings between the two universities: the uniform Oxford binding patterns are different from the uniform Cambridge binding patterns).²⁷ Cavendish, a prolific writer, understood that her writings—ambitious and sometimes controversial treatises, letters, plays, and orations, all written by a woman—were not always finding their ideal audiences in the middle of the seventeenth century; by depositing her works in college libraries, she ensured their survival until a more hospitable present.

²³ Philip Sidney, *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia* (London, 1598). The pounced copy is call number STC 22541 copy 2.

²⁴ More, *Democritus Platonissans*, p. 16.

²⁵ There are pounced corrections in the following Oxford college libraries: All Souls, Balliol, Corpus Christi, Herford, Jesus, Lincoln, Merton, New College, and Queen's. The following libraries have matching corrections, though no pounce: Brasenose, Christ Church, Magdalene, Pembroke, and St. John's. There are corrections in the Wadham college library copy of *PPO*, though they do not exactly match those in other colleges: they are made in a different hand, and the corrections vary from the patterns established in other Oxford copies.

²⁶ William Poole, '[Margaret Cavendish's Books in New College, and around Oxford](#)', *New College Notes* 6 (2015), no. 5, pp. 1–8. The Bodleian Bene

Corrections to Margaret Cavendish, *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (London, 1663), p. 144.
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The patterns of correction in pounced copies of *PPO* in New College and other colleges around Oxford mainly incorporate changes from the Errata, but they also vary from the Errata. These variations are so consistent that they should allow a bibliographer or librarian with a corrected copy of *PPO* to tell if that copy's changes originated from Cavendish, or from a conscientious reader. Some of the variations are minor: for instance, no copy in Oxford has the correction listed for page 331, to change the chapter title 'Madness is not always about the Head' to 'Madness is not always in the Head'. Likewise minor, but consistent, is the variation on page 144. The Errata instructs the corrector, 'for *ruggedness* read *smoothness*' and 'read *softer or harder*'; the corrector, in every copy, instead inserts 'harder or' before 'softer', making the phrase read 'harder or softer' instead of 'softer or harder'. The image of the correction as found in New College's copy (Figure 9) usefully indicates some typical features of the pouncing corrector's hand, including their habit of deletion (two thick horizontal lines connected by diagonal lines between), their use of '+' to mark an insertion, and the swooping ascenders on their uncial 'd's—as well as the pounce stuck to the ink.

There are two other consistent changes where the corrector has addressed an error from the Errata, but not in the way the Errata demands. On page 306, Cavendish writes, in the original printing, 'Animals cannot Live without Air, although some think Fish do not, but I believe they do, for if Fish had no Air, they would Die'; the Errata instructs readers to delete 'not'. In Oxford copies, the corrector deletes 'not', but also adds a 'not' after the second 'do', so that the corrected phrase reads 'some think Fish do, but I believe they do not'.³⁶ On page 200, the word 'the' should be deleted twice (and is deleted twice in copies corrected by later readers), but is only deleted once in Oxford copies. This likely comes from a typo in the Errata: 'page 200. line 31 leave out *the*, *ibid.* line 28 leave out *the*'. The page only has 28 lines, and the first Errata entry should therefore read not 'line 31' but 'line 21'. While readers correcting their own copies work this out and make both deletions, the pouncing corrector does not delete the first 'the', which is before the word 'Degrees'.³⁷

Some of the corrector's changes are of more consequence. On sig. c4v, in a prefatory note to the reader, the original printing had the following sentence: 'Other Learned and Wise men have an Opinion, that Fire is only Motion without Substance, to which Opinion, when My Lord heard it, he answered, that if so, then an House when it is Burnt, cannot be said to be Burnt and Consumed by the Fire, but by a Substanceless motion'. The Errata asks the reader to delete the phrase 'without

³⁶ This addition is also found in the Folger Library's copy as well, as mentioned above, because otherwise the sentence would be nonsensical—this is, therefore, an instance of two separate correctors coier

Substance' after 'Motion', and to replace the word 'Substanceless' with 'violent'. In Oxford copies, the corrector makes these changes, and additionally inserts 'a violent' before 'Motion'. This change perhaps shows Cavendish, through her corrector, dialing back the polemics of the preface. Elsewhere in her natural philosophical works she attacks those who erroneously believe in immaterial substance, arguing that substance by definition must be material or physical, and repudiating dualism, the idea that the soul or mind might be immaterial. Here, however, she sidesteps this controversial argument, changing the discussion from the substance of matter, to the relationship between motion and matter.

Addition to Margaret Cavendish, *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (London, 1663), p. 22.
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