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Aphra Behn (1640?-1689) was the first English woman known to have earned her living as a writer. *Astraea* was the code name she adopted in 1666 when Charles II appointed her as a spy to the Netherlands. Because her husband left her penniless when he died, and the English government never paid her for her services as a spy, Behn was forced as a last resort to turn to her pen as a means of supporting herself. She wrote numerous plays, poems, and a novel under the pen name, again, of *Astraea*.

Women no longer require such dire financial circumstances to motivate them to write; nor do they meet with quite the same derision that Behn and women writers of the two succeeding centuries encountered throughout their careers. In soliciting manuscripts for this publication, we discovered that Ann Arbor presently abounds with aware and undaunted women writers.

We regret, of course, that we could not publish more of what we received (over 200 contributions), but space was limited. Our primary consideration in choosing manuscripts for publication was whether the writer communicates the particular experience she writes about with a real immediacy. We also wanted to include works that describe a broad spectrum of women's experiences, as well as works that do not focus on women's issues at all.

We have chosen this inexpensive mimeographed format in the hopes that other women will not hesitate, because of cost, to publish a sequel to this collection of women's writing.

Betsy Amster
Helen Prescott

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