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**From the Selected Works of Julie Campbell**

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A review of "Reading Early Modern Women's Writing" by Paul Salzman

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Available at: [https://works.bepress.com/julie\\_campbell/3/](https://works.bepress.com/julie_campbell/3/)

There is much in these writings to interest social historians too. Anne records details of domestic affairs, including references to beauty, clothes, pregnancy and childbirth, and the management of her servants, but also of her engagements within her local community through, for example, acts of charity, such as going to visit the minister, Mr Cooper, when he fell sick on 11 July 1694, the same day on which she wrote of her intention to establish a public fund for the support of the elderly, and to enable 'honest parents' to educate their children. Motherhood, both as a biological and social role, formed a key part of Anne's identity. She acknowledged the debts she owed her mother, especially in terms of her religious education, and in her later years displayed a great deal of concern about her son, Robin, when he was imprisoned for his political activities in 1690.

Trill notes in her acknowledgments that two of her postgraduate students, Fith Lanum and Sara Murphy, have completed dissertations on Lady Anne Halkett's life and writings. Thanks to her own scholarship, Trill has enabled a great many other scholars to gain access to Anne's observations and meditations. Anyone interested in the political, religious or social history of Britain in the second half of the seventeenth century will find something of interest in this collection.

Paul Salzman. *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 247pp. \$110.00. Review by JULIE D CAMPBELL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY.

Salzman's study of the history of reading early modern English women's writing has two key features: it provides a general overview of the women writers who have been most studied by scholars for the past two decades, and it traces the trajectories of their readerships from their own times to the present. In the process, Salzman deftly weaves commentary from recent scholarship on these writers with his own opinions and research. The result is a book that fulfills his stated goal: it will be of interest to readers from "a wide variety of fields and disciplines who want to know more about what women wrote in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and how that writing was

read, processed, interpreted, rewritten, and often rediscovered, from the time of its writing through to the present day” (10).

Covering the span of years from 1558 to 1700, Salzman begins with the writing of Queen Elizabeth and ends with that of Aphra Behn. In his first chapter, he discusses the scope and nature of early modern English women’s writing, noting that it is “possible to view women’s writing” from this period “as a series of phases, although it is vital to avoid any forced homogenization of what was a very diverse set of practices” (12). He also notes that when “we move away from literary genres, the quantity of material written by women is far more substantial, and grows dramatically throughout the seventeenth century” (17). Genres he covers include poetry, drama, translation, spiritual writings, diaries, letters, recipes, mothers’ advice books, medical writing, and defenses of female education. In this overview, he discusses writers as diverse as the Cooke sisters, the Countess of Pembroke, Anna Trapnel, Margaret Fell, Anne Southwell, Margaret Cavendish, Isabella Whitney, and Bathsua Makin.

In a particularly valuable section of this first chapter, Salzman looks at the preservation of early modern English women’s writing from 1700-1900, examining anthologies and dictionaries of literary biography. He begins with Thomas Heywood’s *Gynaikeion; or Nine Bookes of Various History Concerning Women* (1624; reissued in 1657 as *The Generall Historie of Women*), and includes commentary on others such as Nathaniel Crouch’s *The Female Excellency* (1688), Edward Phillips’s *Theatrum Poetarum, or A Compleat Collection of the Poets* (1675), George Ballard’s *Memoirs of Severall Ladies of Great Britain* (1752), George Colman and Bonnell Thornton’s *Poems by Eminent Ladies* (1755, exp. ed., 1773 and 1780), Alexander Dyce’s *Specimens of British Poetesses* (1825), George Bethune’s *The British Female Poets* (1848), Matilda Bertham’s *A Biographical Dictionary of the Celebrated Women of Every Age and Country* (1804), and Eric Robertson’s *English Poetesses* (1886). He concludes with Virginia Woolf’s impressions of early modern women’s writing from *The Common Reader* (1925) [27-34]. Salzman’s consideration of these works’ illustration of the historical reception of women’s writing creates a useful resource for readers curious about the “loss” of English women’s writing.

Following his overview are six thematic studies. In the second chapter, Salzman presents “Poets High and Low,” the cases of Queen Elizabeth and Isabella Whitney as opposite ends of the class spectrum of writers. He also discusses the poetry of Aemilia Lanyer, Mary Sidney, and the Anglo-American Anne Bradstreet. Chapter Three is devoted to Lady Mary Wroth as a case illustrating the rise of a woman poet from “Obscurity to Canonization.” He notes that the “story of Mary Wroth’s dramatic increase in visibility over last two decades exemplifies the changes that have taken place in the status of early modern women’s writing” (60). In Chapter Four, Salzman focuses on life-writing in Anne Clifford’s diary, describing her legal predicament regarding her inheritance, her public image, and the history that we have received from Vita Sackville-West’s *Knole and the Sackvilles* (1922). He also brings in Nicky Hallett’s case “for a connection between Orlando and Anne Clifford” based on Woolf’s early drafts of *Orlando* (107). Chapter Five is dedicated to the prophets and visionaries, Lady Eleanor Davies/Douglas, Anna Trapnel, Margaret Fell, and Jane Lead. Chapter Six is focused on “Authorship and Ownership” as viewed in the cases of Margaret Cavendish and Lucy Hutchinson, and Chapter Seven addresses notions of reputation in the cases of Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn. His aims in these case studies are to illustrate “how early modern women’s writing was produced, circulated, and responded to at the time it was written” and to show “how it was reproduced, recirculated, and commented on by succeeding generations of readers, editors, and scholars” (219). He fulfils these goals admirably, especially for an audience new to this subject matter. Scholars who work in this field will see many familiar references.

In addition to noting the scholarship of many of those who work on these individual authors, especially those who have been instrumental in the “recovery” of their works, Salzman engages with the theoretical stances of a few scholars who have offered considerations of the development of women’s writing in general. In particular, he considers the work of Margaret Ezell in *Writing Women’s Literary History*, Denise Riley in *Am I That Name?*, and Jonathan Goldberg in *Desiring Women Writing*. He concurs mainly with the work of Ezell and elaborates on her observations about women’s writing during

this period throughout his study.

This book is essentially a compendium of much of the work on early modern English women writers that has been done in the past two decades. It would be an excellent companion to Salzman's *Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology, 1560-1700* (Oxford 2000). Although the titles of both books are bit misleading, both are specifically about English women's writing, and would make good texts for courses that address early modern English literature. This book in particular would provide an excellent introduction to the field of early modern English women's writing for undergraduate and graduate students, and Salzman's contextualization of historical and current commentary on the vicissitudes of these women's writing will appeal to specialists in the field.

Martine Julia van Ittersum. *Profit and Principle. Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies (1595-1615)*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006. lxx + 538 pp. Includes b&w illustrations and 8 maps. \$199.00. Review by JAKUB BASISTA, JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY, KRAKÓW.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 1603, Jacob van Heemskerck's small Dutch fleet attacked a Portuguese carrack in the waters of the Singapore Straits. After a day's fighting, the Portuguese captain surrendered his damaged *Santa Catarina*. The ship was carrying cargo intended for Europe, which was worth at least £ 300,000 according to the contemporary exchange rate. The Dutch, who had left their home country two years earlier, could return with the loot to satisfy the shareholders of the VOC (*Vereenighde Oostindische Compagnie* or *United Dutch East India Company*). (No dividends were paid to the shareholders until 1610, as all profit was reinvested in the company.)

A typical act of piracy, one would observe nowadays. One of the many similar undertaken by the English, Dutch and other privateers against the Spanish and Portuguese ships in the world's oceans in the early modern period.

Yet the clash between the Portuguese merchant and the Dutch fleet is but an excuse for the author of the discussed work to study the