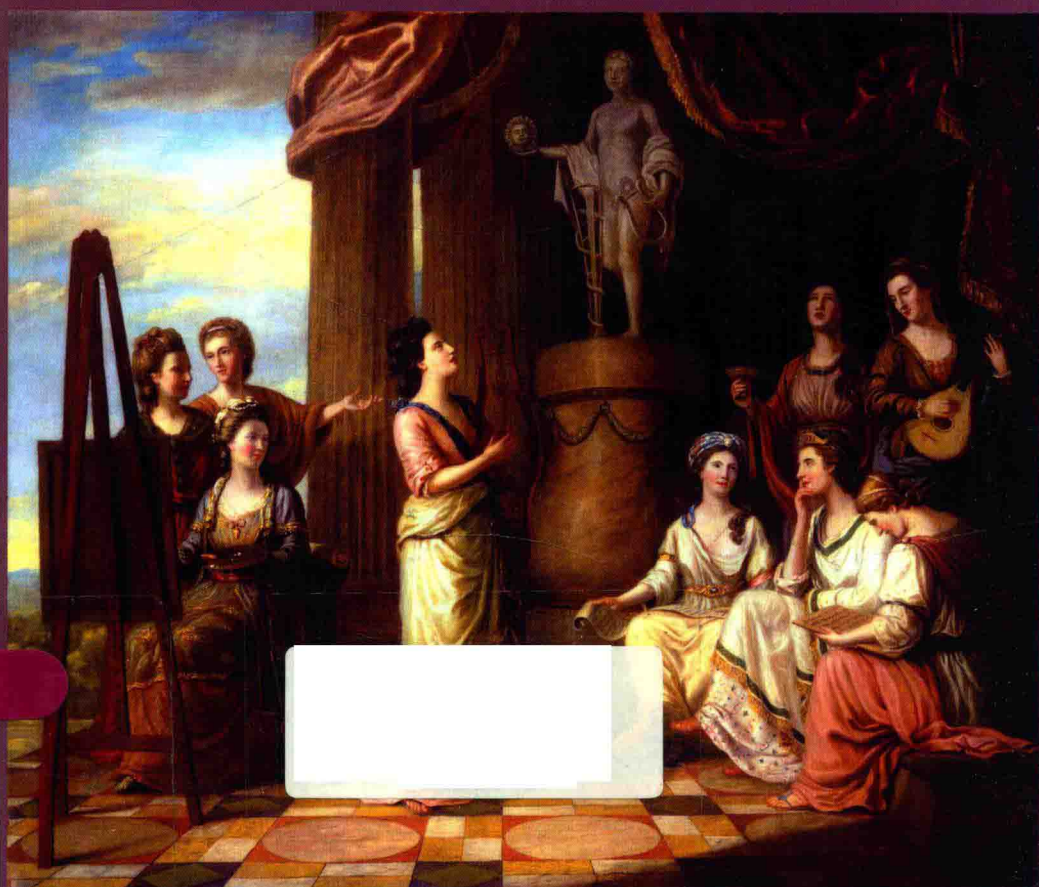


EDITED BY
SIGRUN HAUDE
AND MELINDA S. ZOOK



CHALLENGING ORTHODOXIES: THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL WORLDS OF EARLY MODERN WOMEN

Essays Presented to Hilda L. Smith



Challenging Orthodoxies: The Social and Cultural Worlds of Early Modern Women

Essays Presented to Hilda L. Smith

Edited by

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ASHGATE

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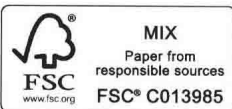
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CHALLENGING ORTHODOXIES:
THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL WORLDS
OF EARLY MODERN WOMEN

*This volume is dedicated to the memory of
Charles Montgomery Gray, 1928–2011*

Notes on Contributors

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Shakespeare, 1660–1900 (edited with Sasha Roberts, Manchester, 1996), and *In Arden: Editing Shakespeare* (with Gordon McMullan, 2003).

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Hilda L. Smith

For Hilda (May 2011)

You know perfectly well
you'll never "retire" retire
But time will not hang
heavy on your hands
for having more of it
just for yourself

I sometimes wonder
in time-travel mode
what the Duchess
would have made of you
made of the South
made of Chicago
made of Cincinnati

made of being read
all these years on

I'll never forget
you driving us in Chicago
to the Frank Lloyd Wright houses
through the black neighborhood
not that much healed
since 1968

You witnessed
But more importantly you acted

All those strong women
through the years
you've historically known

Women in the guilds
Women who ran things

It takes strength
to recognize strength

Margaret Cavendish
saved by you from the stupidities
of Alexander Pope

(Pope's memorial tablet
in an Anglican church despite his Catholicism
is writ in Italian
for reasons hard to grasp)

Ain't life strange

And all the people gathered
in celebration of you
are bright enough
to grasp that

John O. Thompson

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	ix

Introduction	1
<i>Melinda S. Zook</i>	

PART I CHALLENGING CULTURAL AND SOCIAL TRADITIONS

1	The Boundaries of Womanhood in the Early Modern Imaginary	13
	<i>Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks</i>	
2	Women and Guns in Early Modern London	33
	<i>Lois G. Schwoerer</i>	
3	Fiscal Citizens: Female Investors in Public Finance before the South Sea Bubble	53
	<i>Barbara J. Todd</i>	

PART II CHALLENGING SCIENTIFIC AND INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS

4	The Microscopist as Voyeur: Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Philosophy	77
	<i>Lisa T. Sarasohn</i>	
5	Women, Anglican Orthodoxy, and the Church in Ages of Danger	101
	<i>Melinda S. Zook</i>	
6	Émilie Du Châtelet and the Enlightenment's <i>Querelles des femmes</i>	123
	<i>Judith P. Zinsser</i>	
7	Charlotte Lennox and her Challenge to the Orthodoxies of Shakespeare Criticism	147
	<i>Ann Thompson</i>	

PART III CHALLENGING POLITICAL AND LEGAL TRADITIONS

8	Daughters of Coke: Women's Legal Discourse in England, 1642–1689 <i>Mihoko Suzuki</i>	165
9	“Willing to go if they had their clothes”: Early Modern Women and Indentured Servitude <i>Anna Suranyi</i>	193
10	Epilogue—Women Theorize the Power of the “Powerless”: The Case of Virginia Woolf <i>Berenice A. Carroll</i>	211
	<i>Selected Publications of Hilda L. Smith</i>	229
	<i>Bibliography</i>	231
	<i>Index</i>	257

List of Figures

1.1	Woodcut of a Gonzales sister, from Ulisse Aldrovandi, <i>Monstrorum historia</i> (1642). Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Author's photograph.	14
1.2	Lavinia Fontana, <i>Portrait of Antonietta Gonzales</i> (1590s). Chateau Blois, France. © RMN — Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.	15
1.3	Tempera painting of a girl from Aldrovandi's collection. Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna. Author's photograph.	19
1.4	Joris Hoefnagel, miniatures of the Gonzales children from <i>Elementa depicta</i> (1580s). Gift of Mrs. Lessing J. Rosenwald. Image courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.	20
4.1	Image of a flea in Robert Hooke's <i>Micrographia</i> (1665). From http://www.google.com/imgres?q=robert+hooke+micrographia (accessed August 16, 2012).	78
4.2	Image of a louse in Robert Hooke's <i>Micrographia</i> (1665). From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Louse_diagram,_Micrographia,_Robert_Hooke,_1667.jpg (accessed August 8, 2012).	79
6.1	Frontispiece to the first edition of Émilie Du Châtelet's <i>Institutions de physique</i> (1740).	133
6.2	Émilie Du Châtelet portrayed in the frontispiece to the second edition of her <i>Institutions de physique</i> (1742).	144
8.1	Edward Coke, <i>The Second Part of the Institutes of the Lawes of England</i> (1642). Reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.	179
8.2	<i>The Humble Petition of Elizabeth Lilburne</i> (1646). © The British Library Board. General Reference Collection E.359 (17, 18).	180
8.3	Elizabeth Cellier, <i>Malice Defeated</i> (1680). Reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.	187

Introduction

Melinda S. Zook

In 1982, when Hilda L. Smith published *Reason's Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists*, scholarship on women's history was still in its "salad days," fresh, green, still finding its way. Certainly, important work in feminist history and theory appeared in the 1970s, including that of Gerda Lerner, Joan Kelly, Linda Gordon, Nancy Cott, and Natalie Zemon Davis among many others.¹ But if the 1970s represented the launching of a new subdivision within the discipline of history, capable of transforming its periodization as well as theories of social change and social analysis in the optimistic assessment of Kelly, the 1980s represented a full-frontal assault on the historical profession.² That decade began with the publication of Judith Walkowitz's *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* and Linda Kerber's *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* in 1980, and included such landmark theoretical studies as Joan Scott's 1986 article in the *American Historical Review*, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," and Carole Pateman's *The Sexual Contract*, published in 1988.³ The 1980s also witnessed the proliferation

¹ Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York, 1976); Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1979); Joan Kelly, *Women, History & Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago, 1984); Nancy F. Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven, CT, 1977); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford, 1975). That decade also witnessed the publication of Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism, 1860–1930* (Princeton, NJ, 1978) and Ellen DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848–1869* (Ithaca, NY, 1978).

² Joan Kelly-Gadol, "The Social Relations of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History," *Signs*, 1/4 (Summer 1976): 809–11.

³ Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1980); Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge, 1980); Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review*, 91/5 (December 1986): 1053–75 (which was republished in Scott's important, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988)); Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, 1988). Other landmark studies include Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago, 1987) and Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA, 1989).

of women's studies departments and courses on women's history, as well as scholarly journals and conferences dedicated to the study of women in former times. In the 1990s the flood of new scholarship in feminist and women's history, as well as in literature, art history, philosophy, and political thought continued apace. And by 2002, when Smith published her second monograph, *All Men and Both Sexes: Gender, Politics and the False Universal in England, 1640–1832*, the transformative properties of feminist theory and history had come to fruition.

Three major approaches—feminist, women's history and gender history—have dominated the investigations into women's lives in the past. These often overlap, and, while complementary, they are not identical or, despite the common misconception, interchangeable. Conceptualized in heady times, feminist history has an undisguised political agenda, seeking, as it does, to legitimate women's roles in the past and provide inspiration to women today. Women's history, on the other hand, may not always offer inspiration; in fact, it is less likely to tell a heroic tale. Rather, it strives to uncover the lives of women in the past, their roles and experiences, regardless of class or race. Finally, gender history centers on the interdependence and relational nature of female and male identities, as well as the social and cultural constructions of gender and gendered hierarchies. Gender has proved a rich construct, spawning the history of masculinities and providing a particularly useful lens of analysis in literary scholarship since it so often centers on discourse, language, and images.

What feminist, women's, and gender history have accomplished for the discipline of history in the last 40 years has been nothing less than a revolution. While they may not have remapped the way historians periodize the past, they have certainly called into question models of modernization. Furthermore, taken together, these three approaches to the history of women have decentered the subject (men) and democratized who counts in history, and they have also broadened our view of all that counts as evidence and historical discourse. In short, feminist, women's, and gender history has been the site of the most path-breaking intellectual innovation within the historical profession in the last quarter century. The essays in this collection engage all three of these approaches.

This volume of essays offers a broad and eclectic approach to the experiences and activities of women, as well as the many meanings of gender in early modern Europe. The authors are equally diverse insofar as they represent feminist scholars at different stages of their careers and intellectual development. Moreover, the collection spans several disciplines, including literature, political science, and, predominantly, history. Importantly, however, all contributions share a significant departure from the increasingly stale paradigms commonly found in feminist, women's, and gender history. They do not insist on an overarching concept of patriarchy, that once so prevalent theoretical shorthand

for the various historical dynamics that resulted in female oppression.⁴ Rather, they understand that women could cooperate, collude, rebuff, contribute to, and manipulate the structures of power and authority. As Berenice Carroll asserts in her essay, the so-called “powerless” could demonstrate power, including the ability to simply ignore the powerful. Or, as Linda Gordon put it some years ago, “to be less powerful is not to be power-less.”⁵

Nor do these essays rely on or reinforce the worn-out trope of the last 30 years in European and American women’s history—the gendered division between public and private spheres: the public world of men and masculine activity, and the private world of women and femininity. Hilda Smith questioned the validity of this paradigm for early modern Englishwomen in 1998, when she remarked that “seventeenth-century women considered women’s exclusion from all public and political roles less certain than we’ve come to believe today.” Smith suggested then that scholars adopt a “broader and more inclusive understanding of politics,” and subsequent work, particularly on women and politics, has followed suit.⁶ Recent monographs by Ellen Chalus and Ann Hughes, as well as the essay collection by Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson all seek to define politics and political action in broad, flexible, and inclusive terms, allowing women opportunities to participate and influence the public world of law and power.⁷ This collective volume reveals this to be true through the ages and in many different realms. Besides political discourse, women engaged with other, equally male-dominated areas, such as law, religion, science, and economics. Even if gendered language was so constructed as to deny the reality of female participation in these worlds, as Smith so powerfully demonstrated in *All Men and Both Sexes*, time and again the evidence proves that women had a widespread and visible presence in these various domains.

Thus, in this collection, Lois Schwoerer’s examination of the Guildhall Library records of the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers shows that numerous women were employed in various aspects of the gunmaking industry in early

⁴ Sue Morgan (ed.), *The Feminist History Reader* (New York, 2006), pp. 6–7.

⁵ Linda Gordon, “What’s New in Women’s History,” in Teresa de Laurentis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies* (Bloomington, IN, 1986), p. 24.

⁶ Hilda L. Smith, “Introduction: Women, Intellect, and Politics: Their Intersection in Seventeenth-Century England,” in Smith (ed.), *Women Writers and Early Modern British Political Tradition* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 4. Lois G. Schwoerer makes the same point in her contribution to Smith’s collection, “Women’s Public Political Voice in England, 1640–1740,” pp. 56–74.

⁷ Ellen Chalus, *Women in English Political Life, c. 1754–1790* (Oxford, 2005); Ann Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (New York, 2012); Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (eds.), *Women in British Politics, 1760–1860: The Power of the Petticoat* (Basingstoke, 2000). See also Melinda S. Zook, *Protestantism, Politics and Women in Britain, 1660–1714* (Basingstoke, 2013).

modern London. Barbara Todd's investigation of Bankers Annuitants and other lenders, based on ledgers of loans and interest payments compiled by clerks of the Exchequer, substantiates that both married and single women were active participants in government finance at the outset of the eighteenth century. And Anna Suranyi shows that even common women in dire circumstances sought to navigate the English criminal code to their benefit. The essays in this collection confirm once again that we need to stop envisioning women in former times as helpless, deterred by cultural conventions and stereotypes, or set apart in some domestic box.

While the essays presented here are unencumbered by older paradigms, their authors have benefited from the innovative scholarship in cultural history and discourse theory, much of which is the offspring of the "linguistic turn" of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Understanding gender as Joan Scott taught us—that it is socially and culturally constructed and crucial to the way in which both we and our ancestors imagined the world—is also important here.⁸ These essays recognize the inescapability of language, the very centrality of the text, whether it is a treatise on law, theology, science, or a work of art. Several of the essays center on close textual reading, such as Mikoko Suzuki's analysis of seventeenth-century Englishwomen's use of legal discourse. Others focus on the ever-changing nature of gender and gendered language. Thus, Merry Wiesner-Hanks looks at several pictorial images and contemporary descriptions of the hairy Gonzales sisters in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Europe to ascertain how the presence of these women challenged early modern conceptions of womanhood. Similarly, Lisa Sarasohn investigates the gendered meanings of the new science as it was practiced by the Royal Society in seventeenth-century England.

Finally, all these essays reflect the presence of Hilda L. Smith in the lives and intellectual milieu of our authors. Hilda Smith's extraordinary life journey from Missouri foundling to doctoral student at the University of Chicago to feminist activist and pre-eminent scholar of women's history, her larger-than-life personality, her talent for giving the most targeted, however indelicate, advice, and, above all, her scholarship, which has led the way in the rediscovery of the intellectual, social, and cultural lives of women and the meanings of their gendered experiences, have—as one dynamic package—influenced the contributors of this collection and, it would seem, feminist scholars worldwide.⁹ Like Mary Astell, who in many ways is the hero of *Reason's Disciples*, Hilda Smith has been a true "lover of her sex" in her desire to promote the fair and equal treatment of women; and she, like Astell, has sought to inspire women and to demand

⁸ Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, pp. 28–52, 15–27.

⁹ Hilda recounts some of her life story in Hilda L. Smith, "Regionalism, Feminism, and Class: The Development of a Feminist Historian," in Eileen Boris and Nupur Chaudhuri (eds), *Voices of Women Historians* (Bloomington, 1999), pp. 30–42.