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Challenging Women's Agency and Activism in Early Modernity. Edited by Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. 312 pp. \$144.00. ISBN 9789463729321.

This volume arises out of the 2018 Attending to Early Women (ATW) conference. The editor, Merry Wiesner-Hanks, was also the host of the last three ATW conferences. The tenth ATW conference focused on women's action and agency, revisiting and reframing one of the key concepts in women's history. Wiesner-Hanks draws a direct connection between the early modern period and our own, noting that both are periods of "resurgent patriarchy" (9). The book examines agency in four sections, "Choosing and Creating," "Confronting Power," "Challenging Representations," and "Forming Communities." The authors are an interdisciplinary group (one of the hallmarks of ATW conferences).

The first part, "Choosing and Creating," provides some of the most innovative and creative essays in the collection. Redolent of the "material turn" by historians and literary scholars, these essays explore how women created or consumed material objects and in doing so imbued these objects with their identities and intentions. Angela McShane's essay examines early modern women's "tobacco habit": primarily pipe smoking and snuff taking. She argues that contrary to modern assumptions, women regularly took tobacco and that this was true for women of all social statuses (including staid Quakers). Using examples from colonial America and England, she posits that tobacco was just as "embedded" in women's lives as tea drinking. McShane alludes to some intriguing editorial silencing of women's tobacco taking that tells us more about what later historians' thought was (im)polite than what early modern people believed. McShane highlights snuff recipes, snuff boxes, and portraits of women holding them, to provide evidence of women's tobacco habits. Just like those editors, though, curators have tended to assume women's snuff boxes were patch boxes and thus erased their existence. McShane ultimately argues that we should view women's tobacco habits as forms of autonomy and claims to leisure.

Joyce de Vries continues the connection between material culture and women's agency by examining women's dowries in seventeenth-century Bologna. She argues that the goods that made up a woman's trousseau are "excellent sources of information on how women planned their future lifestyles and livelihoods via material culture" (71). De Vries's approach provides a fruitful way to get at artisanal women for whom we don't have many ego documents. In a chapter titled

"Crafting Habits of Resistance," Susan Dinan, Karen Nelson, and Michele Osherow provide three brief but suggestive examples of women's resistance through the genres and materials available to them. Dinan shows how the habit created by the seventeenth-century French Daughters of Charity marked these women as something new: neither nuns nor secular women but respectable religious women who worked in the world. Osherow considers another type of cloth, in this case needlework, to show how it was not only a passive female occupation but also a site of women's resistance. She shows how needlework representations of Queen Esther celebrated Esther's power and autonomy in ways that subtly differed from the biblical story. Nelson presents cases of women's presence in literary and dramatic representations of war (mostly English but with one Persian example) to point out that women appeared as agents in early modern stories of war.

Part II, "Confronting Power," includes Grethe Jacobsen's essay on Danish female office and property holders. In an engaging story of two competing noblewomen, she introduces the position of crown fief holder, an office that noblewomen as well as men could hold in early modern Denmark. Jacobsen sheds light on an understudied topic: the office and property holding of European elite women that flourished under feudal regimes but gave way to strictly male bureaucracies beginning in the 1600s. Caroline Boswell's well-researched and important essay moves from women's political roles to women's political speech. Focusing on England's revolutionary decades of the 1640s and 1650s, Boswell finds that "women accounted for roughly half of those accused of provoking language or gestures in the Middlesex sessions" (122). This is somewhat surprising and shows the agency of women's words at a time of heightened political tensions. Boswell's findings for the secular courts have much to add to Laura Gowing's and others' research on defamation and sexual slander in the church courts. Caroline Castiglione's essay takes women's political agency to the realm of political theory. She presents a fresh look at the Venetian protofeminist Moderata Fonte's *The Worth of Women* (1600). Castiglione posits that Fonte viewed early modern marriage in political terms, arguing that women as well as men possessed liberty, that men's abuse of power in marriage was a "usurpation" of women's rights, and that women had the right to leave an abusive marriage. Castiglione's reading of Fonte is persuasive, and she may have pushed Lockean notions of contract theory as applied to marriage a full century earlier. The ATW conference always includes sessions on pedagogy. Part II includes such a contribution by Jennifer Selwyn on what it means to address women's agency in our classrooms and how to cultivate both

critical thinking as well as historical empathy, which she defines as “incorporating an understanding of what motivates historical actors” (167).

Part III, “Challenging Representations,” begins with Mihoko Suzuki’s fascinating essay on Margaret Cavendish, whom she argues challenged contemporary beliefs on the boundaries and relationships between humans and nonhumans. She reads Cavendish’s “Dialogue betwixt Birds” and “A Dialogue between an Oak, and a Man Cutting It Down” as examples of how Cavendish both wrote from non-human perspectives and questioned humans’ sovereignty over plants and animals. In her 1653 poems, Cavendish assigned agency both to nonhuman creatures and atoms, foreshadowing the modern environmental movement by three centuries. In their essay, Saskia Beranek and Sheila ffolliott also assign agency to inanimate objects, in this case portraits. They suggest that we need to take seriously that portraits representing women and owned by women “function independently of their sitters or makers” and that as objects paintings did “cultural work” (207) separate from their makers and sitters. They also make useful points about the transactional impact of art objects, according agency to the viewer, as well as how context affects the agency of the objects, according agency to the space and display of portraits.

Andrea Pearson’s intriguing detective piece on “ocular agency” in a medieval “housebook” contributes to research on both manuscripts and marginalia as well as ideas about the female gaze. Focusing on a manuscript from late medieval Germany that is replete with images of men working, hunting, jousting, and engaging in military exploits, Pearson analyzes how these images depict masculinity. Noting that a later hand drew a female figure gazing out of a window and onto a military encampment, the author posits this female gaze was critical to men’s performance. Showing female figures had “spectatorial agency” is satisfying although Pearson doesn’t shirk from noting the more typical courtly love tropes in the book’s other depictions of women.

Part IV, “Forming Communities,” includes Julie D. Campbell’s essay on the duchesse de Retz, whose sixteenth-century French salons show continuity with Italian modes of entertainment but who also foreshadowed the salons of the seventeenth-century *précieuses*. Campbell’s piece reappraises salon history, illustrating both the transnational elements of salon culture and positing Retz as a proto-salooniere. Pushing the boundaries of female communities beyond Europe, Sarah E. Owens contributes a piece on Spanish nuns who traveled as missionaries in the seventeenth century and established the first Franciscan convents in Manila and Macao. Owens explores the collaborations and alliances among these women

that enabled them to navigate treacherous geographical and political waters. As is true in Owens's other accounts of these nuns, "the verve required to take on such a journey" even by today's standards, much less the early modern, is astounding (269). The volume concludes with Theresa Kemp, Catherine Powell, and Beth Link's piece on women's social networks and collectives in the arts. The authors present two case studies. The first is of Agnes Henslowe and Joan Alleyn, two female members of the family so significant to Tudor-Stuart London's theatrical world. The second is of Maria Sibylla Merian and her daughters, conceptualizing them as a family business and network of female artists who had to create their own community since they were excluded from the more formal (read male) scientific and artistic societies of the era. Incidentally, this piece is the only discussion of business and women's economic agency in the entire volume, but the collection is still an excellent overview of early modern women's agency in multiple forms.

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Amorous Hope, a Pastoral Play: A Bilingual Edition. Valeria Miani. Edited and translated by Alexandra Collier. *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 83.* Toronto: Iter / Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, Victoria University in the University of Toronto, 2020. 368 pp. \$59.95. ISBN 9781649590268.

Valeria Miani's *Amorous Hope* (*Amorosa Speranza*; 1604) is a seventeenth-century pastoral play that engages with serious, protofeminist matters and themes such as female agency, victimization of women by men, infidelity, and inconstancy in matters of the heart. The play places on stage the strong female protagonist Venelia, a self-reliant, resilient, and eloquent nymph who works to contrast the period's helpless nymph character type. *Amorous Hope* dares to expose seventeenth-century Italy's double standard of women and men by depicting male characters with the flaws that were stereotypically attached to the female sex at the time, such as inconsistency, infidelity, and lustfulness. The pastoral overtly (and unexpectedly) seeks to demonstrate women's superiority with respect to men.

Valeria Miani (ca. 1560–after 1620?) was an extraordinary figure of her time as one of the few female poets and playwrights from the Veneto region who, at the turn of the seventeenth century, was able to show a strong presence in the traditionally male-centered canon. Miani's presence along with a small, select number of