

order (chapter 6), John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (chapter 7), and Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (chapter 8) all approach the notions of family-state analogy, genealogy, marriage and reproduction, patriarchal paternity, and lineal succession in a variety of ways that echo ideas already discussed in the first chapter and the chapters on Milton in the first half of the book. Clearly, the predominant structural factor in Murphy's organization of the book is the historical chronology of texts, and she does insist on reducing the often inspired readings of her chosen texts to historical references by structuring and concluding her arguments this way. As a result, anyone reading the book with a preference for literary interpretation or for particular variations of the family-state analogy may find the second half repetitive, and perhaps this could be frustrating. Certainly, the historical chronology of events could have been honored just as well in more coherent and cohesively arranged discussions of the rhetorical strategies that resembled each other.

And yet, anyone interested in domestic metaphors, the use of Genesis narratives, typology as a rhetorical device, marriage and/or reproduction metaphors, or the family-state analogy as used by seventeenth-century writers in a number of contexts and permutations would find Murphy's book good reading. Her prose is clear and her insights complex without being overworked and her readings are illuminating indeed, excavating new ways to look at these texts that develop our understanding of the intersections between them. Murphy's contribution here to our historical understanding of how the family-state analogy operates fluidly will certainly engender further study.

Michelle M. Dowd, and Julie A. Eckerle, eds. *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England*. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007. xii + 211 pp. \$99.95. Review by JEFFREY P. BECK, EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY.

Anyone who has ever read a blog post (meaning most human beings capable of reading who have internet access) will be aware that countless individuals are documenting their lives online, and any literary historian or critic will be aware that such blog posts hardly fit with

traditional notions of autobiography. So the terms “life writing” and “self-writing” have increasingly been used by scholars to describe not just blogs but myriad forms of self-presentation that do not conform with the genre of autobiography. And while blog posts did not exist in early modern England, as far as I know, Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle make an incisive case for a broader understanding of women’s self-writing than would be possible within the narrow confines of autobiography. Building on the work of Shari Benstock, Mary Beth Rose, and Marlene Kadar, they note that the self-presented in traditional biographies tends to be unified and controlling, whereas women’s writings often present selves that are often decentered and provisional. Instead of focusing just on autobiography, which would exclude most significant works of early modern women, Dowd and Eckerle have chosen to use the term “life writing,” defined by Kadar as “a less exclusive genre of personal kind of writing” (3). And on this basis, they have fashioned an essay collection that exemplifies this more inclusive, if sometimes messy, generic category.

Genre and Women’s Life Writing focuses primarily on women writers of seventeenth-century England, but beyond that basic limit, Dowd and Eckerle’s collection reaches out widely to comprehend many forms of life writing. The eleven essays in the collection range over many kinds of women’s writing, including memoirs, diaries, spiritual confessions, poetry, letters, recipe books, prefaces, and defense narratives, just to name a handful. Dowd and Eckerle note well that the essays demonstrate that “experimentation with form was a fundamental characteristic of women’s life writing in early modern England” (4). That was so not only because autobiography was not a formally defined and recognized genre during the period, but also because prolific generic experiments opened up new possibilities for early modern women, both for the social constitution of their selves and for their evolving identities as writers. In describing the generic and stylistic complexity of these writings, the editors hope generally that these essays will “resuscitate early modern women’s life writing in the history of early modern writing generally” (10).

Some of the early modern women whose life writings are featured most prominently in this volume include Margaret Cavendish, Elizabeth Richardson, Lady Anne Clifford, Lady Anne Halkett, Dorothy

Osborne, Martha Moulsworth, Arabella Stuart, Mary Wroth, Aemilia Lanyer, Elizabeth Moore, Agnes Beaumont, Elizabeth Frecke, Dorothy Lewkenore, Lady Grace Mildmay, Lady Brilliana Harvey, and Anna Weamys. As a whole, they are a richly diverse group in both class and generic experimentation. While most seventeenth-century scholars will know the works of Lanyer, Wroth, Osborne, and Cavendish, they will find it rewarding to learn many other names—for example, of Moulsworth (who wrote a remarkable autobiographical poem in 1632 which was not published until 1993), of Richardson (who wrote a mother's advice manual in 1645 giving advice to her daughters), of Beaumont (who wrote an account in 1674 of her trial on petty treason), of Frecke (who mingled diary entries with recipes, medical notes, and genealogical entries in her manuscript works), of Mildmay (who began a manuscript recipe collection that was continued and annotated by her daughter Lady Mary Fane), of Clifford (whose iterative life writings provide serial justifications of herself, in part for legal reasons), and of Halkett (whose memoirs mingled Christian piety, Royalist politics, and fictive elements of pastoral romance). As impressive as the range of women whose writing is discussed in this volume are the scholars who have contributed. The essay authors that study these life writings comprise a notable catalog of early modern historicist and feminist scholars: Helen Wilcox, Margaret J. M. Ezell, Catherine Field, Megan Matchinske, Mary Ellen Lamb, Eckerle, Dowd, Elspeth Graham, Lara Dodds, and Josephine Donovan. And as should be obvious from the lists above, the archival expertise of scholars like Ezell, Wilcox, and Field in uncovering and studying manuscripts of early modern women is one of the remarkable strengths of this volume.

Another strength of this volume, demonstrated by Elspeth Graham's essay on Margaret Cavendish, is the critical acumen of the essay writers in treating questions of genre with respect to women writers. Graham asks provocatively how Cavendish could have written so extensively in autobiographical modes when there existed "no established autobiographical tradition for her to work within" (131). And Graham writes with characteristic grace and humor: "I approach the issue of her autobiographical compulsion by investigating her habit of thinking connectively, of cooking diverse ingredients into hot-pots" (132). Cavendish, who famously announced that her "Ambition is such, as

I would either be a World, or nothing,” was, as Elspeth describes, a paradoxical writer who “could not but have written in autobiographical form” (135). The reason for this paradox is that while Margaret Cavendish was profoundly dedicated to her husband William, but as a writer and self-taught philosopher and scientist, she persistently needed to assert her autonomy. So at times, Margaret emphasizes her connection to William as wife, almost entirely eliding herself, as “nothing,” whereas elsewhere she appears entirely separate, “a World” unto herself. Graham thus suggests that Cavendish “wants simultaneously to be her sole author and yet to be written,” seeming to assert a controlling self and to deny it at the same time (142). Even, and perhaps especially in her scientific texts, Graham finds that the writer inserted herself, making autobiography central to all her learning.

In the end, it should be obvious that early modern women’s life writing is not a clearly defined genre practiced by a handful of well-known writers. Rather, *Genre and Women’s Life Writing* encompasses a vast category of self-presentations—famous and obscure, formal and informal, poetic and prosaic, aristocratic and middle-class, and published in print and preserved in manuscript. Seventeenth-century scholars seeking to expand the scope of their research will find the volume useful in suggesting new published texts, new manuscripts, and new authors for study, as well as new methods of understanding early modern genres. While some scholars may find the messiness of this vast category, the generic experimentation it entails, and the sheer number of unfamiliar authors exasperating, it is a vital form of exasperation. And whatever the exasperation, *Genre and Women’s Life Writing in Early Modern England* is much better reading than most blogs.

Nicholas Kiessling, ed. *The Life of Anthony Wood In His Own Words*. Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2009. xii +256 pages. Monochrome illustrations. \$50. Review by EDWARD PALEIT, UNIVERSITY OF EXETER.

The later seventeenth century witnessed a marked rise in occurrences of life-writing, in which people tried to give shape and order to their personal experiences. Often the results remained in manuscript