

Travel and Utopia in the Early Modern Period (2010) or Johanyak and Lim's *The English Renaissance, Orientalism, and the Idea of Asia* (2010) that attempt to demonstrate how Early Modern Europe was irreducibly transnational, whether in the form of its consumption of products, such as tea and china, or in the exchange of ideas. The essays in Lee's collection focus mainly on Spanish and Portuguese texts and thereby expand our knowledge of the Early Modern's encounters with the racial-cultural Other, in this case the Far East. Essays like Koss's in the volume are particularly fascinating for their focus on cultural productions and their politics of editing and adaptation. As a person familiar only with English textual materials on Asia, I was much benefited through Lee's volume, as I discovered the wealth of work on China. As a series itself, "Transculturalisms" is a major intervention in literary-cultural studies of the Early Modern period, and Lee's is a fine contribution to the area.

Elizabeth Mazzola. *Learning and Literacy in Female Hands, 1520-1698*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. 137 pp. + 8 illus. \$99.95. Review by JESSICA L. MALAY, UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD.

In this book, Elizabeth Mazzola takes as her subject the complex attitudes regarding female literacy in the early modern period. She opens with examples of individual women and their anxieties about the condition and practice of their literacy sharing, as Mazzola explains, "doubts about their own linguistic abilities" and the reception of these by a variety of audiences. The book makes use of a rich assortment of textual sources ranging from legal texts, autobiographies, poetry, dramatic, and prose texts by both men and women. Chapter One considers the relationship between tutors and students including the ways female students could manipulate this relationship. Here, she discusses the ambiguity concerning female literacy in the period, often seen as inferior to male literacy, and the agency that may have come from this ambiguity. She writes that under the "cover of illiteracy, inferiority, or confinement to the household women might engage in politically charged activities" (43) through the invisibility afforded them by cultural attitudes towards female literacy. She also explores

the networks that existed between women, where “courtly women move in and out of each other households, share books and ideas, read together and educate children” (32). In chapter Two, she considers how women participated in code making, masking, or transforming their script in order to conceal or reveal in a variety of circumstances. She discusses the cryptography of Mary Queen of Scots, alongside the maiden Jane Seager’s use of Timothy Bright’s shorthand system or “secrete writing” and considers how women writers both encoded their desires and invited or challenged men to decode these. Chapter Three examines the relationship between women and their writing masters, scribes, and secretaries, considering the ways in which messages were transmitted, the metaphorical resonances found in the use of an amanuensis, the circulation of information, and the ambiguities inherent in the context of scribal and secretarial intervention. In this chapter, she discusses the fraught relationship between William Cecil and Elizabeth I and the role of documents in both mediation and resistance in this relationship. Here, she also mentions the role of male scribes in the transcribing or recording of female voices, as in the case of Anne Southwell. And she discusses the proliferation of legal instruments that recorded and transmitted information with political as well as personal ramifications. In the fourth chapter, Mazzola returns to the ambiguities of female literacy as experienced by women themselves. She claims that, “Women writers in early modern England frequently (surprisingly) bemoan this new literacy and male writers just as frequently rue it too” (86). Here, the slippage and complications of roles in the course of textual production is examined; what Mazzola describes as “the murky space between literary control and literate compliance—between creating something and following a script, between being a teacher and a student, or a writer and a reader” (86). Here, Mazzola uses the example of the humble Elizabeth, who employed charges of illiteracy to shame her husband. She also discussed how Martha Moulsworth’s literacy becomes a memorial to her learned father as well as a site of cultural resistance to female literacy. Chapter Five serves as a conclusion to the book and returns again to issues related to the relationship between reading and writing, but also challenges concepts of empowerment derived from literacy, which are presented here as ambiguous and socially situated. The deposition of a

young Yorkshire woman, Anne Peace, accused of infanticide, exposes the dangers and opportunities present when navigating forms of literacy in particular social contexts—in this case, the legal system. This chapter also discusses the way in which women attempted to control a written vernacular, again both revealing and concealing meaning through an adept use of language.

Mazzola structures her chapters through the use of well-known literary texts—*The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, *King Lear*, and the *Astrophel and Stella* sonnet sequence. This has the effect of situating the reader within a familiar text from which examples can be drawn to illustrate the points being made about literacy and learning in the period. However, this strategy is at times problematic, eliding the representation of female learning and literacy in male-authored dramatic texts with information from documentary evidence, or from female-authored texts. It is fairly clear that Mazzola does not intend to suggest that Bianca, Regan, Viola, or Stella are real women, but rather that they are tropes or representations of male attitudes towards female learning. It is also fairly obvious that her examples of letters, messages and messengers, and secretaries and scribes drawn from literary texts are representations of cultural acts, not evidence of the acts themselves in the real world. However, at times this distinction is not as obvious as it could be. There is also occasionally a lack of recognition that literary representations are formed to serve dramatic or literary purposes and do not constitute evidence of a real world practice. From time to time, Mazzola also makes assumptions that are not fully supported by the evidence she presents.

In this book, Mazzola explores the many forms of female literacy in early modern culture. She engages with what she describes as “rough hands and corrupt texts” and convincingly argues that these, often produced by women, possessed a value not always recognized at the time, nor in more modern scholarship. This is her great contribution to the discussions of female literacy of the early modern period. She brings together a large cast of female writers, from Elizabeth I to the desperate Anne Peace, to convincingly argue that female literacy, while taking a number of forms and eliciting ambiguous responses, was widespread and widely practiced, leaving a rich legacy of female voices.