

Esther Sahle. *Quakers in the British Atlantic World, c.1660-1800*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2021. viii + 206 pp. with 22 illustrations. \$25.95 (paper). Review by JAMES WALTERS.

Quakers in the British Atlantic World, c.1660-1800 by Esther Sahle represents a valuable contribution to the literature on Quakers. This is a book that is very clearly framed with respect to the existing historiography and largely delivers on its aim of addressing the gaps in this historiography that Sahle identifies.

In previous historiography and popular consciousness, the idea of Quaker success in business and trade as being rooted in a unique set of business ethics and marriage practices has been largely accepted. However, Sahle argues that this idea has its origins in early twentieth-century studies that were methodologically flawed and mostly accepted without scrutiny by later historians of the Quakers and early modern commerce. The main flaws that Sahle identifies in previous studies are a lack of comparative work to establish whether supposedly unique Quaker ethics shared commonalities with those outside the Quaker community, and an assumption that Quaker beliefs, practices and discipline remained largely unchanged throughout the early modern period. In order to redress this, Sahle's book seeks to examine comparatively how Quaker discipline, marriage practices, and rhetoric around business ethics changed across the early modern period and differed in Pennsylvania and London. The book also compares Quaker rhetoric to that of other Protestant groups in an attempt to gauge the extent to which their approach to business ethics was truly unique.

This book is in effect divided into two halves, the first establishing the state of Quakerism and its place in early modern commerce by the first half of the eighteenth century, and the second examining how the attitudes and institutions of Quakerism changed in the later eighteenth century. Its first three chapters function as an introduction to the world of early modern trade and how the Quakers fit into this wider picture, with a focus on London and Philadelphia. Chapters 4 and 5 then examine the nature of Quaker business ethics and discipline, and compare this to how other prominent religious groups approached these issues. Chapter 6 introduces the concept of the mid-eighteenth century "Quaker Reformation," and functions in effect as

an introduction to the second half of the book. Chapter 7 addresses how Quaker discipline in London evolved with regards to debts and “honesty in business,” and chapter 8 addresses similar questions with a focus on Philadelphia. Chapter 9 contains a particularly interesting study of Quaker marriage practices, which ties unique Quaker trends to the wider historiography of marriage and the role of women in early modern society. In chapter 10, Sahle addresses possible causes of the shift in the way Quaker discipline was applied and relates this shift to a series of scandals that undermined Quakerism in Pennsylvania.

Through analysis of Quaker epistles and meeting records, Sahle charts how public perception of Quakers was shaped by crises and the conscious efforts by the Society of Friends to improve their public image in response to these crises. Firstly, Sahle notes how the persecution of Quakers after 1660 as part of a broader concern of the Restoration regime with potentially dangerous religious dissent led to an increased emphasis from Quakers on their peaceful nature and to the establishment of a complex network of Quaker meetings to support their persecuted members.

In the mid-eighteenth century, however, Sahle argues that Quaker pacifism became a weapon with which Quakers were attacked by their opponents, particularly in Pennsylvania. Disputes with the proprietor of the colony, and military threats to Pennsylvania in the 1750s led to pamphlet campaigns to discredit the Quaker elite in Philadelphia. The Quakers’ opponents used this to claim that the supposed pacifism of the Friends was a cover to leave other denominations undefended from the French and Native Americans, and to maintain their monopoly on the fur trade. This situation, argues Sahle, lent greatly increased urgency to a Quaker reform movement which had already begun to emerge prior to the outbreak of war in the 1750s.

Through analysis of the sanctions imposed by Quaker meetings, Sahle demonstrates that from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, the Society of Friends was increasingly concerned with policing the morals, business practices, and finances of its members. However, Sahle argues that in comparing the rhetoric surrounding financial matters in Quaker epistles and sermons to those from other denominations, Quakers and non-Quakers alike shared similar concerns around “covetousness”. Therefore, it was in the enforcement of Quaker discipline,

which Sahle argues was in part motivated by a keen awareness of the importance of reputation, rather than any set of ethics unique to the Friends, that the roots of “Quaker trustworthiness” lie. This concern for reputation also structured other important shifts in the focus of Quaker rhetoric and discipline, such as an increased emphasis on opposing slavery.

It might have been interesting for this book to take these conclusions further, to analyse how the post-1750s Quaker focus on maintaining reputation through discipline actually impacted their role in commerce. That the Quakers enjoyed a trustworthy reputation and that this assisted in their success in business is accepted throughout this work, but as I approached the end of the book I had expected a more comprehensive conclusion regarding how the Friends reached this position from the nadir of Quaker reputation in the mid-eighteenth century. Sahle simply notes “The existence of a Quaker reputation for honesty setting in a few decades after meetings began to publicly condemn malpractice in business,” without going into much detail on this point. However, I understand that this is beyond the scope of this particular work, and it is to Sahle’s credit that she does not overreach with her conclusions and allows the excellent analysis of sources that this book contains to speak for itself.

It is in this analysis that some of the most significant contributions of this book lie, and I have no doubt that it will prove a valuable resource regarding the granular detail of matters such as Quaker occupations, debts, marriages, and how Quaker discipline and disownment functioned. In particular the chapter concerning Quaker marriages, while somewhat detached from the broader narrative of the book, is a fascinating insight into the social aspects of Quakerism and the role of women.

The central contentions of the work, that “Quaker institutions changed dramatically between the mid-seventeenth and the end of the eighteenth century,” and that these changes were more tangible and influential than any unique set of business values inherent to Quakerism, are well evidenced and clearly argued. It also provides a valuable historiographical framework for future studies on Quakerism, as the influences that these changes had on perceptions of Quakerism beyond the scope of this work (i.e., into the nineteenth century) have

yet to be explored. Overall, this work would be of great use to anyone specifically studying Quakers, but also for those with a broader interest in early modern economic and social history.

Roberto Romagnino. *Théorie(s) de l'ecphrasis: entre Antiquité et première modernité*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019. x + 299 pp. €32.00 Review by KATHRINA A. LAPORTA, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY.

This book presents a history of theories on descriptive writing from Antiquity through the seventeenth century with a particular focus on France. Citing the preoccupation among early modern French authors to paint with words, Roberto Romagnino centers his study on one of the primary rhetorical tools that can give an audience the impression that they are *seeing* what they read or hear: *ecphrasis*. Indeed, one of the strengths of the book is its focus, which allows the author to differentiate with painstaking care the meaning of the term *ekphrasis*, as well as related words such as *enargeia*, *hypotyposis*, *diatyposis*, *description*, and *evidence*. It is exceedingly difficult to discern a stable meaning for any of these terms owing to the evolution in their meaning over time and to mistranslations that have yielded competing definitions in different languages. The clearest example is the term “*ekphrasis*” itself. Whereas for centuries the word referred to vivid descriptive speech that conjures an image before the mind’s eye of the listener, it has been used since the twentieth century to describe a genre in which a writer describes a specific artistic work, such as a painting, in great detail.

Romagnino’s book contributes to a body of scholarship on *ekphrasis*, *hypotyposis*, and other forms of word-images in classical rhetorical treatises and on the reception of these treatises in early modern Europe. Adopting what he calls a “historico-philological approach” (17), Romagnino expertly navigates the vast continent of terms and techniques associated with descriptive speech. He nods to the complexity of such an undertaking in setting forth the goals of his study:

Rouvrir le dossier sur l’*ecphrasis* signifie se confronter à une notion complexe et fuyante, dont la conception s’est reconfigurée à plusieurs reprises au fil des siècles. Voici donc le défi de cet ouvrage: parcourir l’histoire du discours descriptif en tant que