

real contribution to students of the early seventeenth-century English court scene.

Barbara Smith and Ursula Appelt, eds. *Write or Be Written: Early Modern Women Poets and Cultural Constraints*. Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001. ix + 281 pp. \$74.95. Review by ELIZABETH SKERPAN-WHEELER, SOUTHWEST TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY.

Feminist Studies has predictably gone the way of scholarly vogues: opportunism. Who is *not* jumping on the feminist bandwagon these days? Senior men scholars, who heretofore never deigned to include a woman author on their syllabi, are now editing entire anthologies of women's writings. Keen to expand their publications' list with trendy, politically correct titles, enterprising scholars of both sexes are now sharing by-lines with "name" feminist scholars.

This odd collection of essays assembled by Barbara Smith and Ursula Appelt (academics with apparently no prior record in feminist scholarship) is a case in point. Despite the presence of several prominent scholars, *Write or Be Written* is ultimately a feebly conceived project based on ill informed historical assumptions. Over some 250 pages of analysis, Smith and Appelt's book offers as many as twelve essays on the subject of cultural constraints against women and against women writers as reflected in the work of Englishwomen poets during the early-modern period. What constitutes "early modern" in their view is anyone's guess, as the book's title surprisingly fails to supply the dates of the collection's timeframe; nor is temporal coverage specified by Appelt in her introduction. The essays, so uniformly brief as to suggest editorial truncation, address four large units: *I. Strategies and Contexts* (Pamela Hammons on Katherine Austen; Anne Russell on Aphra Behn; Margaret Ezell on Damaris Masham); *II. Poetic Conventions and Traditions* (Clare Kinney on Mary Wroth; Jacqueline Pearson on "the female body and the country house"; and Margaret Hannay on women writers' uses of psalm literature); *III. Negotiating Power*

*and Politics* (Joan Linton on Anne Askew; Shannon Miller on Mary Sidney; Andrew Shifflett on Katherine Philips); and *IV. Writing the Female Poet* (Helen Wilcox on authorial self-construction; Bronwen Price on Katherine Philips; Jeslyn Medoff on Behn). Only a few of these contributors are established specialists on women writers.

The collection's coverage, though clearly interesting, is unbalanced at best; in fact, specialists will be agog to see *two* essays on Katherine Philips, two essays on Aphra Behn (neither of which addresses Behn's brave political verse), *yet not one dedicated essay* on such important women poets as Margaret Cavendish, Lucy Hutchinson, Jane Lead, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Anne Killigrew, Anne Wharton, Anne Finch, Sarah Egerton Field, and certainly the "Ephelia" poet (Mary Villiers, Duchess of Richmond), whose bold political broadsides on the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis merited a strong essay by, perhaps, Carol Barash, Elaine Hobby, Marilyn Williamson, Germaine Greer, Warren Chernaik, or Ephelia's principal advocate, Maureen Mulvihill. How is it that many of these nine overlooked women poets, all apropos the collection's theme, are not even listed in the book's index? The most conspicuous snub in the collection, though, is the absence of Anna Weamys, whose *Arcadia* (1651) recently saw a first modern edition from Oxford University Press in 1994, by Patrick Cullen, himself an Ashgate series co-editor.

As to the book's organization, it is unacceptable that such a collection would not rivet the readers' attention on the very sources of women's perceived "cultural constraints" in, for example, the institutions of law, marriage, education, authorship, the Church, etc. Women poets directly engaged with all of these large issues in varying ways; yet, the editors display but a tentative and casual grasp of the early modern period by not guiding their contributors (and each other) along these more finely targeted lines. Curious that the publisher or readers on this manuscript did not recommend a sensible bipartite organization—women poets before and after 1660—which would have resulted in an appealing range of contrastive treatments.

Bondage and patriarchal oppression is the controlling thesis of this small collection. Now this sort of doctrinaire feminism was essential, even exciting, a few decades ago when Feminist Studies was cutting its teeth; but by 2001, the "victim" view of the woman writer has become an outdated cliché. Smith and Appelt needed a crash-course (at least) on the seventeenth century before launching this project. They needed to hear, for example, that England's literary culture did not systematically oppress or fetter women writers throughout the early-modern period. The central thesis of their book is contradicted by the very record of women's published work by a fair number of prominent London stationers; and women writers, moreover, were aggressively promoted by many of their male literary contemporaries. While Tudor and early-Stuart women poets produced mostly religious texts, in manuscript, circulated amongst a select coterie, Stuart women poets after 1660 enjoyed a far more hospitable, public reception of their published work. And it is just this essential distinction between eras that Smith and Appelt fail to appreciate. After the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, women poets took an enormous leap forward in cultural status and frequency of publication. They began to distinguish themselves in the literary market as authors of successful verse-collections, as poetic collaborators with one another and with men poets, as translators of Classical poetry, and as contributors to poetry miscellanies edited by men poets. London publishers were intrigued by this rising breed of new poet; and on several occasions, women's small octavos were taken into second editions, which featured commendatory verses mostly by their male publishers and men poets.

Aphra Behn, at the height of her success, was promoted by several prominent men: publishers Jacob Tonson and Joseph Hindmarsh, the poet-laureate John Dryden, and principals at the court of Charles II. Katherine Philips became a national icon and modern-day Sappho; this is the obvious iconography of William Faithorne's engraving of the Vander Gucht portrait-bust of Philips which her publisher, Henry Herringman, selected as frontispiece to Philips' posthumous *Works*. Similarly, Anne Killigrew, though falsely

charged with plagiarism by her male contemporaries, was praised as an accomplished poet by Dryden.

Patricia Crawford, David Cressy, and Lawrence Stone have each introduced persuasive statistical analyses of women's rising literacy rates after 1660, as well as a dramatic increase in publications by women writers (including poets) throughout the second half of the seventeenth century. Crawford, for example, in "Women's Published Writings, 1660-1700" offers a statistical table which supports the view of women's increased literary output after 1660 (*Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior [London: Methuen, 1985]).

Appelt, exposing astonishing ignorance of seventeenth-century history and literature, writes as if this body of seminal research, now a full twenty years old, never existed. This is precisely the sort of havoc which doctrinaire feminism can wreak upon a book. Suffice it to say that Englishwomen writers published progressively more poetry throughout the second half of the seventeenth century than ever before; and that they evidently were not held back from self-expression and publication. While it is true that women as a class of writer were harshly ridiculed by some of their male contemporaries throughout the seventeenth century, it is also true that Englishwomen writers got published, were courted by publishers, and were raised to national prominence by their culture after 1660. So whence "cultural constraints"?

For an anthology to make a true contribution to scholarship, it needs to do more than attract a few strong essays, which could have easily found other venues. It needs a strong editorial vision. Because the book does valuably bring attention to little-known material and some attractive new literary figures, a reader may well wonder why the editors and publisher did not enliven this unattractive volume with portraits, as well as facsimiles of title-pages and autograph manuscripts. This visual adjunct, conspicuously absent, would have lent interest and a measure of authenticity to the entire presentation. Moreover, a reader may question why the two editors themselves have not contributed an essay on a woman poet. Did they judge themselves unfit for the task? Even

more irregular in this book is the curious absence of Ursula Appelt's co-editor, Barbara Smith, who did not even co-author the introduction. Especially in light of the expense of the book, prospective readers should look for other works by the contributors. Their editors did not serve them well.

Lady Mary Wroth. *The Second Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. Ed. Josephine A. Roberts; Completed by Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller. Tempe: Renaissance English Text Society in conjunction with Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999. xlv + 575 pp. + 13 illus. \$60.00. Review by KATE GARTNER FROST, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN.

This edition, a memorial tribute to Josephine Roberts, under whose editorship Part One appeared in 1995, has achieved a double distinction as a model both for editorial practice and for scholars in the field of women's studies. Beginning as consultants on the Part I project, Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller found that their discussions of editorial procedure were to bear fruit when, on Roberts's untimely death in 1996, they took over the incomplete editing of Part Two of Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*, heretofore found only in a Newberry Library holograph manuscript. The enterprise was daunting: after constructing a system for references to the text that would smoothly incorporate the scattered preliminaries of Roberts's work, they had to provide critical and textual introductions, textual notes and annotations, and indices of characters and places, with Roberts's computer disks and file folders as their only guides. Not the least among these tasks was dealing coherently with her transcription and the Newberry folios themselves.

Their answer was to maintain Roberts's practice of modernized punctuation and paragraphing for rhetorical passages and to base final editorial decisions on her transcription of the manuscript. This done, the edition was coordinated with Part One (which had been published by Louisiana State University Press in 1995) and Robert's commentary-in-progress, supplying missing annota-