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**Renaissance and Reformation**  
**Renaissance et Réforme**



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(eds.). *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender  
in Early Modern Europe*

Vanessa McCarthy

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**Poska, Allyson M., Jane Couchman, and Katherine A. McIver (eds.).**

***The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe.***

Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013. Pp. xvii, 554 + 24 ill. ISBN 978-1-4094-1817-7 (hardcover) \$145.95.

*The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* is a comprehensive collection of 25 thematic essays, all written by scholars expert in their fields. Each briefly introduces the theme under examination, traces its historiography, surveys current debates, and identifies avenues for future research. They all conclude with extensive bibliographies for further reading. By gathering together and presenting all of these essays in a single volume, the *Companion* makes a welcome contribution to early modern studies and will be of use to scholars, teachers, and students alike.

The editors' introduction and the individual essays not only highlight the debt that the history of early modern European women and gender owes to the twentieth-century feminist movement and to early feminist scholars, but also engage with theories emergent in recent feminist scholarship. Important theoretical positions—such as attending to the differences and similarities among women, the negotiability and fluidity of patriarchal authority and constraints, and the performability and mutability of gender roles—are stressed throughout. The contributions demonstrate how ubiquitous gender was, both as a concept and as a lived experience, in every realm of the early modern European world: in the law, in social relations, in musical and artistic culture, in nation-state building, in economics, in spirituality, in literature, and in everything between.

In an effort to bring order to the many topics covered in the volume, the editors have divided it into three thematic sections. Each contains eight or nine essays varying in length from fifteen to twenty pages. The first section, "Religion," includes contributions by Elizabeth A. Leheldt on convents and the "permeable cloister," Alison Weber on literature by Catholic religious women, Jane Couchman on Protestant women's voices, Susan E. Dinan on female religious communities beyond the convent, and Merry Wiesner-Hanks on Protestant movements. The second section, "Embodied Lives," includes essays by Lyndan Warner on gender and the law, Allyson M. Poska on marriage and the family, Elizabeth S. Cohen on "marginal" women, and Katherine Crawford on early modern sex and sexuality. The third and final section, "Cultural

Production,” includes contributions by Julie D. Campbell on the *querelle des femmes*, Alisha Rankin on women in science and medicine, Diana Robin on intellectual women, Sheila ffolliott on women artists, and Katherine A. McIver on material culture. Each essay is cross-comparative, bringing together scholarship from various disciplinary, linguistic, and “national” boundaries, and while the historiography of the English-speaking world dominates, references to other linguistic scholarship have been included.

For this review, I have chosen to highlight three contributions, one from each section, in order to give readers a sense of the contents and utility of the essays in general. In “Protestant Movements,” Merry Wiesner-Hanks artfully sums up the historiography of early modern religious reform, current debates in the field, and directions for further research. Of special note is her survey of the literature on men, masculinity, and early modern religious movements. So too is her coverage of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religious movements, such as Methodism, Quakerism, and Puritanism, which are sometimes elided in early modern surveys in favour of mid-sixteenth-century reform movements. Wiesner-Hanks provides an extensive bibliography which will be of great use to teachers intent on expanding their traditional “Reformations” lectures, and also to undergraduate students in their research. Wiesner-Hanks’s ultimate point about the minimal integration of gender into the majority of recent text books and surveys is a compelling reminder of how much work feminist scholars still have to do.

In her essay, “The *Querelle des femmes*,” Julie D. Campbell reminds social historians like me of the sheer ubiquity of the *querelle*, not only in the early modern literary tradition, but also in debates about marriage, sexuality, and women’s political authority. In fifteen pages she presents the medieval context of the *querelle* and a survey of the scholarship on the early modern debate. She notes that from their early interest in uncovering proto-feminists, scholars now investigate the *querelle* to uncover early modern writing practices and social and cultural tensions in gender, politics, and religious reform. Campbell furnishes an impressive survey of secondary studies, grouping them into cross-cultural and regionally-specific studies. Rounding out her contribution is a consideration of the numerous modern translations of primary sources dealing with the *querelle*, including printed defenses, letters, and pamphlets.

Lyndan Warner admirably tackles the daunting task of presenting the historiography of women, gender, and law in “Before the Law.” Tracing the

research of twentieth- and twenty-first-century historians of Europe, she also includes in her discussion scholarship that focuses on the Ottoman Empire, the Americas, the Balkans, and Scandinavia. Her contribution focuses on issues of the status of women before the law, “law versus practice,” women’s strategies of self-presentation, and “female crimes.” Warner’s contribution also contains a clear and concise discussion of the methodological and interpretive issues related to using the law to understand early modern women, gender, and society. The bibliography presents both well-known and recent studies on the topic and makes a special effort to be geographically and culturally inclusive.

Given the wide range of topics examined, the up-to-date and clear historiographical surveys presented, and the extensive bibliographies provided, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* will be of use to students, teachers, and scholars alike.

VANESSA MCCARTHY, *University of Toronto*