A COMPANION TO

# EARLY MODERN WOMEN'S WRITING

EDITED BY **ANITA PACHECO**

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A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing

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For my mother

# Contents

# Notes on Contributors

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**Elizabeth H. Hageman**, Professor of English at the University of New Hampshire, is currently Chair of the Executive Committee of the Brown University Women Writers Project and a member of the Executive Council of the Renaissance English Text Society. She is general editor of the series *English Women Writers, 1350–1850*, and co-editor for that series of the forthcoming volume of Katherine Philips's poetry, plays and letters.

**Margo Hendricks** is Associate Professor of Literature at the University of California at Santa Cruz. She is co-editor of *Women, Race, and Writing in the Early Modern Period*. She has published on Marlowe, Shakespeare, race and Renaissance culture, and Aphra Behn. She recently completed a study of race and Aphra Behn, and her current research explores race and Shakespeare. A future project will examine African women in Renaissance culture and feminist historiography.

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**Elaine Hobby** is Professor of Seventeenth-Century Studies at Loughborough University. She has been researching women's writing from the period 1640–1700 since 1978, and finds it more fascinating as each year passes. Her publications include *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing 1649–1688*, co-editorship of *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen* and *Jane Sharp, The Midwives Book*. She is currently working on a history of the early modern midwifery manual.

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**Sheila Ottway** gained her Ph.D. from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands in 1998, with a thesis entitled *Desiring Disencumbrance: The Representation of the Self in Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*. She has published articles on women's writings from the early modern period, and is co-editor of *Betraying Ourselves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts* and of *Writing the History of Women's Writing*. She now lives in Oxford.

**Anita Pacheco** is a Lecturer in the Department of Humanities at the University of Hertfordshire. She has published articles on Aphra Behn and is the editor of *Early Women Writers 1600–1720* and joint editor (with John Stachniewski) of *Grace Abounding and Other Spiritual Autobiographies*.

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**Gweno Williams** is Senior Lecturer in Literature Studies at the College of Ripon and York St John. Drama by early modern women is one of her major research interests, particularly the plays of Margaret Cavendish. She has produced original film versions of a number of Cavendish's plays and is co-author, with Alison Findlay and Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, of *Women and Dramatic Production 1550–1700*.

**Susanne Woods** is Provost and Professor of English at Wheaton College and Adjunct Professor of English at Brown University, where she taught for many years and was founding director of the Women Writers Project. She has written *Lanyer: A Renaissance Woman Poet* and edited *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer* and, with Margaret P. Hannay, *Teaching Tudor and Stuart Women Writers*. She has also written numerous articles on Renaissance poetry and poetics, and a book on the development of English verse, *Natural Emphasis: English Versification from Chaucer to Dryden*.

# Introduction

*Anita Pacheco*

The study of early modern women's writing is a relatively new academic field, and its emergence has been characterized by a sustained and rigorous examination of the premises of feminist literary history. In the 1970s, as poststructuralism became a force to be reckoned with in the academy, the early work on women's writing by critics like Ellen Moers, Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar came under increasingly heavy fire. The charges levelled against them are by now familiar: in treating women writers as the coherent, controlling origins of textual meaning, these critics were peddling humanist conceptions of authorship and selfhood that were both outmoded and politically retrograde. How, it was asked, could academic feminism hope to profit from the adoption of a model of the author spawned by bourgeois patriarchy and instrumental in the creation of a male-dominated literary canon?

Poststructuralism, in accordance with Roland Barthes's claim that 'it is language that speaks, not the author' (Barthes 1977: 209), pronounced the author dead, and in so far as his demise signalled the weakening of an exclusionary canon, it could only be greeted with a sigh of relief by feminist critics. But the poststructuralist dismissal of authorial signature obviously posed problems for the study of women authors, which it seemed necessarily to discredit as an academic enterprise. Indeed, under the influence of poststructuralism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, some French feminist theorists called into question the political usefulness of privileging women's writing as an object of study; for if all language was inevitably tainted by patriarchy, what mattered was not the biological sex of the author but whether or not a piece of writing contained traces of the 'feminine': the pre-oedipal realm of infancy, dominated by the mother and repressed upon the child's entry into the symbolic order.

For feminist critics committed to the recovery and study of women's writing, the indifference of some French feminist theorists to female authors seemed at the very

least politically complacent. As Janet Todd put it in 1988 in her book *Feminist Literary History*:

> The long tradition of actual female writing which it has been the business of American historical feminist criticism to recover is ignored. . . . French-influenced critics . . . make no effort to remake or shake the canon, and it appears that theory can substitute for reading female writers of the past; 'reading woman' takes over from reading women. (Todd 1988: 78)

Underneath Todd's exasperation with French feminism lay two related assumptions: that women and other social groups traditionally excluded from or marginalized by literary studies deserve a voice, and that to kill off the author is to ensure their continued silence. Todd had no truck with the naive humanism of some of the pioneers of feminist literary history, but neither did she want the history of women's writing to be consigned to oblivion at the very moment that it was beginning to make itself known. Many feminist critics of women's writing shared Todd's desire to preserve the author without reverting to liberal humanist notions of the free and self-determining individual on which it had hitherto been based. While accepting the poststructuralist dictum that there is no nature outside culture, these critics argued as well that the cultures that create us are 'neither seamless wholes nor swallowed whole' (Jones 1990: 2); that the tensions and instabilities built into them create the conditions for social struggle and change; that within the limits set by the dominant groups, there is room for manoeuvre and resistance by subordinate groups. The female author, by this account, would be read not as an autonomous 'great writer' but as a product of history who was also an agent, capable of negotiating her marginal position and of intervening creatively in a masculine discursive system.

Yet poststructuralist thought also raised searching questions about the nature of historical enquiry. Suddenly, the past seemed a very distant land, the lives and experiences of its inhabitants available to us only in the form of representations that we inevitably interpret through the filter of our own values and preconceptions. In the face of such limitations, it seemed wise at least to acknowledge the 'interestedness' of the stories we construct about the past, and the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a widespread interrogation of the critical agendas and historiographical assumptions that had shaped the study of women's writing. Much of the early work in the field had been either ahistorical, looking at women writers almost entirely in terms of their gender and so effectively detaching them from their social and cultural contexts, or had adapted a traditional linear model of history to its feminist ends, locating in the history of women's writing a steady progression of feminist sensibilities. As a guiding principle of women's literary history, this evolutionary feminism now seems ill-suited to pre-1700 women writers, who either looked unappealing alongside their more 'enlightened' successors or were airbrushed into early but reassuringly recognizable versions of ourselves. The point here is not that there are no critical perspectives on

women's subordination in early modern women's texts, rather that readings of them need to be properly historicized. As Susanne Woods points out in her essay on Aemilia Lanyer in this volume, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611) offers a 'woman-centred' rewriting of Christ's passion, but the text's 'proto-feminism' should be seen in relation to the Jacobean patronage system and Lanyer's plea for 'the attention and favours of higher-born patronesses'.

Feminist literary historians were increasingly criticized for offering insufficiently historicized readings of early women's texts, for trying to establish 'continuities and identities between past and present that bully the past and its literature out of their specificity and materiality' (Todd 1988: 97). This critique led to the questioning of many of the most well-established historical 'facts' of women's writing before 1700: that there were few women writing during this period; that those who did were 'rare and eccentric creatures' (Ezell 1993: 42), usually of aristocratic or at least upper-class birth; and that the scarcity of women writers in early modern Britain was due to the overwhelmingly oppressive power of patriarchal ideologies. Thanks to the research of scholars and literary historians like Margaret J. M. Ezell, Elaine Hobby, Hilary Hinds, Wendy Wall, Margaret Ferguson and many others, we have been able significantly to revise this reconstruction of the past, and to recognize the extent to which it derived from notions of literature as a commercial enterprise and of the author as a professional who wrote for profit in the medium of print – notions that are far more appropriate to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than to the sixteenth and seventeenth. This imposition of a modern conception of the author on to the early modern era obscured the characteristics of authorship in 'a pre-professional literary environment' where to publish was 'the exception for both men and women' (Ezell 1993: 34). Coupled with a narrow view of literature as the traditional canonical genres of poetry, drama and fiction, this preoccupation with publication and commercialism led feminist literary historians to overlook or ignore the significant numbers of women of different classes who were involved in coterie literature and manuscript circulation, and who wrote for an audience (though not for profit) in a wide variety of genres: letters, diaries, prophecies, advice books, religious treatises, as well as more traditional 'literary' genres.

In her essay in this volume on 'Women and Writing', Margaret J. M. Ezell delineates a vibrant pre-1700 literary culture that was based at least as much on social interaction as on solitary endeavour and that encompassed such disparate cultural practices as the reading and writing circles that formed an integral part of domestic life for elite women; the popular tradition of exchanging verses; the creation of commonplace books that often registered a plurality of hands and voices; and the political petitions and appeals compiled by Quaker women, as well as the professionalism that became more common in the latter half of the seventeenth century. This book aims to familiarize its readers with this lively, diverse and widespread female literary culture and to bring together the work of many of the literary critics and historians who have been instrumental in its recovery. It is designed to convey the remarkable

extent of women's textual production in early modern England, as well as the generic variety of their writings. It also seeks to situate those writings in their social and cultural contexts and in so doing to provide accounts from different historical perspectives of women's participation in and contributions to early modern culture and society. On this level, Part One of the book, 'Contexts', reveals a broad consensus among literary, social and cultural historians of early modern women. In her essay, Margaret Ezell observes that while early modern England was unquestionably a patriarchal and hierarchical society, 'the oft-cited injunction that women should be chaste, silent and obedient and confine their creative work to needles and threads . . . can no longer be taken as an accurate delineation of women's participation in early modern literary culture'. The gap Ezell notes between patriarchal decrees and actual practice appears in varying forms in each of the 'Context' chapters. Kenneth Charlton's chapter on 'Women and Education' contrasts the limited educational opportunities available even to elite women with the extensive role upper- and middle-class women played as educators within the family. Diane Willen, looking at Puritan women of elite and middling status in pre-revolutionary England, finds that their Protestant faith simultaneously reinforced oppressive constructions of femininity and legitimized their adoption of active spiritual roles within their communities. In his chapter on 'Women, Property and Law' Tim Stretton points out that a legal system that seriously disadvantaged women and restricted their access to property did not in fact prevent them either from going to law 'in their thousands' or from owning and controlling considerably more property than has hitherto been recognized. Sara H. Mendelson traces the long, demanding and highly resourceful working lives conducted by poor, middling and elite women in a society which denied all women a professional work identity.

The aim of these social and cultural historians is not to question the existence of patriarchal oppression but to capture something of the complexity of women's position in a society where practice did not always adhere to prescription, where there might be substantial variation in women's experiences of male domination, and where women were able both to resist social pressures and constraints and to make the most of the limited opportunities their society often unwittingly afforded them.

Part Two, 'Readings', presents critical introductions to ten major texts by early modern women in a variety of genres: poetry, prose romance, tragic drama, comedy, autobiography, prophecy, political polemic, and translation. Part Three, 'Genres', provides extended coverage of autobiography, defences of women, prophecy, poetry, prose fiction and drama. This section is designed to give readers a clear sense of the number and range of women who were writing in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The authors represented in Part Two are probably the best-known and most frequently studied figures in the field, and a significant number of them either belonged to the upper ranks of society or were royalists or both. While it is debatable whether any of them, with the exception of Aphra Behn, could be called 'canonical' writers, it is nonetheless important to supplement their texts with the work

of less familiar but equally significant writers and to avoid perpetuating a narrow and exclusionary 'canon' that silences other women authors of this period, many of whom came from lower social ranks or held radical political beliefs. Many also wrote in non-canonical genres, and it is hoped that the genre chapters will serve to underline the need for a broader understanding of what constitutes 'literature' in the early modern period. As Elaine Hobby points out in her chapter on 'Prophecy', there were over 300 women prophets in England during the seventeenth century, which arguably makes prophecy 'the single most important genre for women in the early modern period'. The broad generic categories covered in this section in fact encompass numerous sub-genres. Sheila Ottway's chapter on 'Autobiography', for example, looks in some detail at diaries and mothers' advice books, both popular forms of writing for women in this period. Mothers' advice books in particular have recently attracted considerable scholarly interest; they figure prominently not only in Sheila Ottway's essay but also in Diane Willen's chapter on religion, where they exemplify the capacity of Christianity to create a space for women to construct and affirm their identities, in this instance by taking on responsibility for the spiritual education of their families.

Translation is generally recognized as playing a vital role in the establishment of early modern female literary culture. While there is not a separate chapter devoted to translation in this volume, it is the central focus of Debra Rienstra's essay on Mary Sidney's *Psalmes* in Part Two, and its importance is registered by numerous other contributors, including Kenneth Charlton, Bronwen Price, Sophie Tomlinson and Paul Salzman. Women's extensive involvement in translation, especially of biblical and religious texts, is often explained on the grounds that a mode of writing that was at once devotional and second hand would have been a 'safe' literary venture for women. Both Debra Rienstra and Bronwen Price suggest that translation's appeal for early modern women may be more complicated than this view allows. Rienstra reminds us that in a period in which imitation was a central principle of poetic composition, translation was highly valued as a form of artistic endeavour. Both critics also stress that Sidney's *Psalmes* are notable not for their decorous self-effacement but for their startling technical virtuosity.

In Part Four, 'Issues and Debates', readers will find in-depth consideration of two of the major challenges facing the field of early modern women's writing: the canon and feminist historiography. As we have seen, the canon has always posed problems for the study of women writers, and in her essay 'The Work of Women in the Age of Electronic Reproduction', Melinda Alliker Rabb presents a thought-provoking review of the difficulties that trouble both integrationist and separatist approaches. More worryingly, she concludes that early modern women's writing remains a marginal academic field due to 'the powerfully restrictive intellectual systems that govern postmodern interpretive communities'. In Rabb's view, so entrenched are 'the fixed systems of valuation and comprehension' deriving from the conventions of print culture, that they continue to devalue the texts produced in the largely pre-professional literary world documented in this book. Rabb is nonetheless optimistic about the

future of the field. What we need are new ways of reading and responding to the written word, and these, she argues, may prove to be timely by-products of e-culture. Databases like *The Brown University Women Writers Project* and *The Perdita Project*, based at Nottingham Trent University, are already making early modern women's texts available in a form free of the interventions of anthology editors. Perhaps more importantly, the worldwide web may encourage modes of reading, writing and interpretation more akin to the practices of early modern manuscript culture.

Margo Hendricks also stresses the need for new ways of reading. Her chapter on 'Feminist Historiography' addresses a problem that has dogged feminist history, literary and otherwise, since its inception: the tendency to treat women of the past as if they belonged to a homogeneous subculture; as if they all shared precisely the same set of experiences regardless of other determinants of identity such as class, ethnicity and sexuality. This kind of historical writing works to privilege as 'normative' the experiences of the middle- and upper-class Englishwomen whose histories are most visible to us. While Hendricks acknowledges the progress feminist historians have made in recognizing and rejecting 'the universal woman model', she argues convincingly that there remain too many histories that portray early modern England as 'homogeneous and white' and that collapse women of different classes into the single category of 'Early Modern Woman'. She calls for more archival research in order to make visible the full range of women living in Britain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and urges that we read the archival records in ways that do not simply confirm our own preconceptions; that we ask not only what they reveal but also what they conceal and attempt to make sense of both.

It is hoped that this book will contribute to the development of a feminist historiography that is 'truly representative of "women's histories"' (Hendricks, this volume). Much more work needs to be done, of course, especially on the non-elite and non-European women who leave fewer traces in a historical record biased in favour of the gentry and aristocracy. But in the pages that follow readers will discover something of the diversity of women's lives and writings in early modern England. They will also encounter some of the opportunities for agency available to many women of the period. One of the major 'recurring themes' of the book is the enormous importance of religion in the lives of early modern women of different classes, for whom it offered not only spiritual consolation but also an entry into the public domain. Diane Willen's study of the Puritan community of Caroline England, Hilary Hinds's essay on *Anna Trapnel's Report and Plea* and Elaine Hobby's discussion of prophecy are just a few of the chapters that serve to remind us that in early modern England religion was a political issue. By serving God many Englishwomen adopted a political role as well; as Diane Willen succinctly puts it, 'godliness abetted politicization'. Numerous texts discussed in this volume register women's interventions in the political conflicts and debates of the period, often (though not always) from a religious perspective: from the Fifth Monarchist Anna Trapnel to the royalist Margaret Cavendish to the High Church Tory Mary Astell.

This book also helps to illuminate the close connection between women's writing and their reading. The popularity of the commonplace book during this period illustrates the extent to which reading and writing were inseparable activities for the small portion of the population who could write as well as read; women and men copied out and collected passages from their reading and in doing so created books of their own. Patricia Brace reads the non-aristocratic Isabella Whitney's *A Sweet Nosegay* as a poetic text rooted in this conception of reading as a kind of transformative gathering of textual fragments. Elaine Beilin reveals the intimate connection between the aristocratic Elizabeth Cary's reading and her writing by discussing *The Tragedy of Mariam* in relation to Lucy Cary's account, in *The Lady Falkland: Her Life* (1645), of her mother's extensive reading of history.

Much of women's reading and writing took place in social settings, and the contributors to this book offer us numerous glimpses of a range of early modern women in a variety of social literary environments: Mary Sidney reading and writing with her brother Philip before his death, and later circulating her translation of the *Psalmes* in manuscript among her Wilton coterie; Quaker women in the 1650s composing prophecies collectively, often from prison; upper-class women writing plays 'intended both for reading and performance within their families, or within circles defined by kinship and political alliances' (Tomlinson, this volume), to name but a few. These women, as Margaret Ezell emphasizes, did not seem to need 'a room of their own' in which to read and write and reflect, and this book reveals how fully they participated in their social and cultural world and the skill with which they located spaces in which their voices could be heard.

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# PART ONE
# Contexts

# 1
# Women and Education

*Kenneth Charlton*

## Introduction

When 'education' (of whomsoever) is discussed, first thoughts centre on what is to be taught, on the content of education, and then on the methods of teaching deemed appropriate to that content. The discussion may then move on to consider who should be the teachers, who the taught, when this education should take place and where. It is only when these at first sight eminently practical questions have been adumbrated and discussion is under way that we become aware that certain assumptions have been made as to whether this education should take place at all, and if so for what purposes – purposes which on occasion are taken to be so self-evidently agreed by all as not to require expression, least of all discussion. It becomes critical, therefore, to include in any description and discussion of the education of girls and women in early modern England (or any other group at any other time) – i.e. the what? the how? the by whom? the for whom? the where? the when? – an 'ought' variable, which recognizes at the same time that 'prescription' concerns itself not only with what should be the case in the future but also with what is seen to be the best of current and past practice, just as the flood of 'now-a-daies' complaint referred to the worst of such practice. Authors of prescriptive literature in the matter of education had to feel that their prescriptions were in some sense reasonable, not plucked out of some ideal world, incapable of being realized.

Anne Murray, who was born in 1623, recollected in her autobiographical memoirs that her widowed mother

> spared no expense in educating all her children . . . and paid masters for teaching my sister and me to write, speak French, play on the lute and virginalls, and dance, and kept a gentlewoman to teach us all kinds of needlework . . . but my mother's greatest care [was to ensure] that from even our infancy we were instructed never to neglect to begin and end the day in prayer and orderly every morning to read the Bible and ever to keep the church as often as there was occasion. (Loftis 1979: 10)

Reflecting on this, it becomes clear that it describes only part of a much wider picture, one which will require an inclusive rather than an exclusive use of the term 'education', and more particularly an avoidance of the equating of 'education' with 'schooling', if by that is meant what is transacted in the formal institution called 'school'. That other educative agency, the church, long pre-dated the school, and Osbert Sitwell's observation that he was 'educated during the vacations from Eton' reminds us that the family, pre-dating both church and school, continues to have a role in 'education'. Moreover, in the early modern period, John Milton expressed his own awareness that 'whatever thing we hear or see, sitting, walking, travelling or conversing, may fitly be called our book, and is of the same effect as writings are' (*Areopagitica*, 1644).

Plenty has been written about the 'learned ladies' of the past, but remarkably little about how far and in what ways they acquired their learning, and, equally important, whether and how they passed on their learning to their children. That some women in the early modern period were 'learned', 'educated' in the achievement sense, is not difficult to demonstrate, as the essays in Part Two of this volume will show. Precisely how they came to acquire that learning and the skill to express it is rather more difficult, and more so if we widen our enquiry to encompass the many as well as the few.

For our purpose here we shall distinguish between the few and the many by reference to their levels of literacy, at the same time noting the relatively greater importance of reading literacy, as contrasted with the ability to write (too often equated by historians with an ability to sign one's name at a particular time in a particular situation). By the turn of the sixteenth century most women in the upper and middle classes were able to read and write in a functional way. The vast majority of women, however, were quite illiterate in both senses. Their education, in our inclusive sense, was therefore based on their aural willingness to make use of an oral provision. Provided mainly in church and family, it was a provision which was directed, of course, to all classes of the population, and was primarily religious in content. It was in the parish church that literate and illiterate alike would, through the lessons of the Book of Common Prayer, become acquainted with the contents of the Bible, the readings being planned to cover the text of the Old Testament in the course of a year and that of the New Testament twice a year. In addition, the choosing of a biblical text and its explication was a function of the sermon preached by the parish priest or his curate. Despite the invention of movable type and the spread of the printed book, pamphlet and broadsheet, early modern England remained for a very large majority of women (and men) an essentially oral culture, and it was for this reason that Latimer reminded his congregation of Paul's words to the Romans: 'We cannot be saved without faith, and faith cometh from hearing the Word' (*Sermons*, ed. G. B. Corrie 1844: 200), and later, in his characteristic way, that John Donne reminded his that 'the ears are the acqueducts of the waters of life' (*Sermons*, ed. E. M. Simpson and G. R. Potter, 1953: V, 55).

In the early modern period it was well known that women constituted the larger part of the parish church's congregation, a fact attributed by contemporaries to their apparently 'natural piety'. There were, needless to say, plenty of men who found it desirable to attend more than one sermon in the week, but it was to women of like mind that the pejorative label 'gadders' was applied, as John Wing, for example, reported in his *The Crown Conjugall or The Spouse Royall* (1620):

> Nay (says many an impious and profane wretch) if she be a churchgoer, a gadder after sermons, let her go, I will have none of her. I cannot endure these precise dames who are all for religion and never well busied but are poring over their Bibles.

Oliver Heywood recalled with pride that his mother Alice

> hath in her time taken intolerable pains to hear sermons; scarce any public exercise, stated or occasional within many miles, but that she went to it; she was, as it were, the centre of news for knowing the time and place of weekday sermons. (J. H. Turner, ed., *Autobiography*, *Diaries . . .* 1883: I, 48)

Lucy Apsley, who was born in 1620, and who later married Colonel John Hutchinson, remembered that by the time she was four she was carried to sermons, and 'whilst I was very young could remember and repeat sermons exactly, and being caressed, the love of praise made me attend more heedfully' (Sutherland 1973: 288).

Reinforcement has ever been an essential part of education, and was never more enjoined and practised than with respect to the sermon. John Donne was repeating a common homely metaphor when he likened repetition – repeating the sermon to oneself or to one's family – to chewing the cud: 'The holy rumination, the daily consideration of his Christianity, is a good character of a Christian . . . all good resolutions . . . must pass a rumination, a chewing of the cud, a second examination' (*Sermons* IV, 36; VI, 52; VII, 327–9). In the 1590s Margaret Hoby noted in her diary, almost as a matter of course, that she 'talked with some of the house of the sermon'; 'after dinner I conferred of the sermon with the gentlewomen that were with me'; 'kept company with my friends talking somewhat of the sermon' (Moody 1998: *passim*). The preacher of Lady Anne Waller's funeral sermon reported in 1662 that

> Her custom was after the sermon both in the morning and the afternoon to retire to her chamber and call before her her maidservants and such boys as served in the house to give an account of what they had heard, helping their memories and wherein they failed clearing up the sense of what was delivered . . . exhorting and pressing them to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. (E. Calamy, *The Happiness of Those Who Sleep in Jesus*, 1662: 28)

In some cases attendance and repetition were further reinforced by the practice of taking notes either at the sermon itself or later at home. Margaret Hoby constantly

wrote up her notes when she returned home. Before she married Robert Harley in 1623, Brilliana Conway kept a commonplace book in which she kept notes of sermons she had heard (Eales 1990: 48–9). John Barlow, who preached Lady Mary Strode's funeral sermon in 1619, reported that

> She was a notary and took down sermons which she heard by her own hand . . . She did this when as many much meaner than she come with their fans and feathers, whereas (me seems) goose quill would far better befit their fingers . . . Moreover, having taken her notes she did in her chamber repeat to her maidservants the sermons she had heard and penned. (*The True Guide to Glory*, 1619: 48)

In this way, then, the religious education of girls and women of all classes, begun in the church, was continued in the household, to be supplemented by prayers and psalm-singing. Moreover, in his *Book of Martyrs* John Foxe recorded that Bible-reading was undertaken in the households of the less affluent families. Foxe's book itself, especially in Timothy Bright's abridged version, was popular family reading throughout the early modern period, being recommended for that purpose in Thomas Salter's *Mirrhor Mete for all Mothers, Matrones and Maidens* (1579), by Philip Stubbes in his *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), as well as in Thomas White's *Little Book for Little Children* (1674) and Benjamin Keach's *Instructions for Children* (1693). Margaret Hoby read it to members of her household, and Elizabeth Walker included it in her 'prudent choice of books of instruction and devotion' which she drew up for the benefit of her two daughters, Margaret and Elizabeth (Charlton 1999: 216–19).

It has to be remembered that religious education such as this was taking place in the context of a Protestant state church concerned to ensure the continuance of itself and its crowned head. The maintenance of orthodoxy, uniformity and conformity became the overriding concern of those in authority. Religious education, therefore, was suffused with a political education which entailed an induction not only into religious observance and doctrine, but also into the power structure of society, with obedience, deference and subordination receiving particular attention. It was not for nothing that there was an 'authorized' Bible (whether the Great Bible of 1539, or the Bishops's Bible of 1569 or eventually the Authorized Version, 'King James's Bible', of 1611), a Book of Common Prayer in which figured prayers for the sovereign and his or her ministers, and an authorized catechism which glossed the fifth commandment to include not only 'thy father and thy mother' but also 'my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters, [and] to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters . . . to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me'. Glosses on the fifth commandment in the form of sermon or commentary poured from the presses in increasing numbers. Yet whatever form of control was used – statute, royal proclamation, episcopal injunction, authorized Bible, Book of Common Prayer, catechism – the early modern state was relatively powerless to enforce attendance at church, to control what was said in the pulpit, and above all to

monitor what religious and political education was engaged in inside the family. The result, therefore, was an extremely heterodox outcome, even within a godly family. Even in the matter of choice of marriage partner young women (and men) were enjoined in marriage sermons, 'Advices' and conduct books to marry only with the advice and consent of parents, with biblical proof-texts to substantiate the argument. A similar procedure was followed in the prescriptive literature about the suckling of infants (Charlton 1999: 29ff., 198–9). For some young women it was simply a Christian duty to follow such advice, though of course there were others, parents and children, who did not. Henry Parker alluded to the matter in his discussion of the relative rights of subjects and princes:

> In matrimony there is something divine . . . but is this any ground to infer that there is no humane consent or concurrence in it? Does the divine institution of marriage take away freedome of choice before, or conclude either party under an absolute degree of subjection after the solemnization? (*Jus Populi*, 1644: 4–5)

As always, social and moral codes were susceptible to interpretation by individuals, and therefore productive of a variety of prescription, attitude and behaviour.

This was nowhere more noticeable than in the constant reminders to girls and women alike that the virtuous woman should be 'chaste, silent and obedient', both before and after marriage. The prayer designed for wives which was included in the Edwardian Primer of 1552 was repetitively typical:

> Give me grace, I most entirely beseech thee, to walk worthy of my vocation, to knowledge my husband to be my head, to learn thy blessed word of him, to reverence him, to obey him, to please him, to be ruled by him, peaceably and quietly to live with him. (*Two Liturgies AD 1549 and AD* 1552, ed. J. Ketley, 1844: 465)

But even in the prescriptive literature this was not the whole story. Ambiguous familial metaphors and analogies, and innumerable glosses frequently hedged injunction round with conditional clauses in an attempt to reconcile patriarchy with affectionate mutuality in marriage (Goldberg 1986). Some wives were willing to accept a subordinate position in the matter of decision-making. In 1632 Lady Mary Peyton, for example, advised her daughter, newly married to Henry Oxinden of Barham, 'withal to be careful that whatsoever you do to love, honour and obey your husband in all things that it is fitting for a reasonable creature', and in so doing to 'show yourself a virtuous wife whose price is not to be valued' (*The Oxinden Letters 1609–42*, ed. D. Gardiner, 1933: 97). Elizabeth Walker's advice to her daughters Margaret and Elizabeth could not have been more customary, citing Proverbs 12.4 and 31.7 as well as 1 Peter 3.1–6. Lucy Hutchinson was her own witness:

> Never man had a greater passion for a woman, nor a more honourable esteeme of a wife; yet he was not uxurious, nor remitted not that just rule which it was her honor to obey,

> but manag'd the reines of government with such prudence and affection that she who would not delight in such an honorable and advantageable subjection must have wanted a reasonable soul. (Sutherland 1973: 10)

Yet for a variety of reasons other women did not subscribe to such 'advantageable subjection'. Anne Askew, for example, left her husband of an arranged marriage when (as John Bale reported): 'In the process of time by oft reading the sacred Bible, she clearly fell from the old superstitions of papistry to a perfect belief in Jesus Christ . . . whereupon she thought herself free from that uncomely kind of cloaked marriage by this doctrine of St Paul, I Cor.6' (*Select Works of John Bale*, ed. H. Christmas, 1849: 199). Foxe celebrated the lives of other women contemporary with Askew, who held fast to their reformed religion in the face of 'unbelieving' husbands. Other women expressed their wish for a degree of independence by ignoring the customary injunction to marry only with the advice of friends and parents. Anne More, daughter of Sir George More of Loseley near Guildford, resorted to secrecy in her marriage with John Donne (R. C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life*, 1970: 128–90). Elizabeth Freke followed a similar path in 1671 when she married her cousin Percy Freke (M. Carbery, *Mrs Elizabeth Freke, Her Diary, 1671–1714*, 1931: 148). There were many others of like mind.

## In the Household of Another

Most of the education we have touched on so far took place either in the home of the upper and middle levels of society, or, with the rest of society (at least those who attended), in the church – of whichever denomination, for in the religious education of girls and women there was remarkably little difference between the various religious groupings. However, following the medieval tradition of sending boys and girls to spend their childhood in another, preferably socially superior, household, many parents of high social standing sent their daughters to join another family where they would be expected to receive the kind of education considered appropriate to their class. It is important to recognize that this was but one method of socialization amongst several for such girls. The plurality of method was itself expressed in the public–private debate in education then current, a debate which recognized the reductiveness of the view that sending children away to this kind of education stemmed simply from a lack of affection on the part of parents. As always in such cases, motivation varied from one family to the next and, as the records of individual families show, was in some cases mixed.

Nicholas Orme has used the domestic correspondence of the mid- and late-fifteenth century to show this practice at work (*From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of English Kings and Aristocracy 1066–1530*, 1984). The letters which passed between Arthur Plantagenet and his second wife Honor Basset, in the early sixteenth century, tell a similar story of the placing of their daughters, Bridget and Elizabeth Plantagenet and Catherine, Anne and Mary Basset. In Sir Thomas More's house we find

Anne Cresacre, Francis Staverton and Margaret Giggs. Catherine Hastings, wife of the 'puritan Earl' Henry, third Earl of Huntingdon, had in her household Margaret Dakins, later Lady Margaret Hoby, whose first husband was Walter Devereux, who, with his sisters Penelope and Dorothy, was also a resident member. In a postscript to a letter to Sir Julius Caesar in 1618, Lady Catherine quite justifiably claimed 'I think there will be none make question but I know how to breed and govern young gentlewomen', and as part of the 'breeding' process this deeply religious woman doubtless made it plain to her charges that she 'governed' in accordance with the fifth commandment (C. Cross, *The Puritan Earl*, 1966: 24–7, 57). On occasion, of course, a pious upbringing was not the only or indeed the prime reason for sending a daughter to another's household. Sir Edward Molineux, for example, sent his two daughters to the house of his cousin, to be brought up, as he said, 'in virtue, good manners and learning, to play the gentlewoman and good housewife, to dress meat and oversee their households'. Henry Thorndike was more tersely direct in sending his niece to live with the Isham family in Northamptonshire 'that she might find match by having the honour of being in your house' (Pollock 1989: 236).

The greatest household to which a girl could be sent was the royal court, an old chivalric tradition by which both girls and boys were sent to learn the appropriate mode of service to their elders, as well as to acquire courtly manners and to participate in the religious pattern of the royal household (Charlton 1999: 131–2). The practice continued virtually unchanged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and nowhere more so than in the pious ambience of the court of Henry VIII's queen Catherine of Aragon. It was to this place that in 1517 Catherine Parr's newly widowed mother Maud went as a 21-year-old lady-in-waiting to the queen, accompanied by her three young children, Catherine aged three, Anne aged two and the infant son William, there to be joined eventually by the young Princess Mary, with whom they were brought up alongside Katherine Willoughby and Joan Guildford, daughters of Catherine's other ladies-in-waiting. The court of Queen Elizabeth was also used as a 'school' for numerous other 'maids of honour'. In 1575, when she was 13, Mary Sidney, daughter of Sir Henry and Lady Mary Sidney and sister of Philip, was sent to Elizabeth's court where she became a lady-in-waiting, as had her mother before her. The household of Queen Henrietta Maria was of quite different religious orientation, but it was there that Margaret Lucas, later Duchess of Newcastle, was sent, following her mistress on the outbreak of war first to Oxford and then to France. Elizabeth Livingstone (later Delaval) was also at court aged 18, serving in the Privy Chamber of Queen Catherine, wife of Charles II.

## Academies for the Daughters of Gentlemen

It was during the seventeenth century, however, that a new kind of provision became popular, the 'academies for the daughters of gentlemen' (Charlton 1999: 131–41), thus widening the debate as to whether boys should be educated at home by a private

tutor or sent away to the increasing number of grammar schools which took in boarders. When John Batchiler printed his *The Virgins Pattern* in 1661, in which he memorialized 'the life and death of Mistress Susanna Perwich', he dedicated it 'To all the young ladies and gentlewomen of the several schools in and about the City of London and elsewhere'. His reason for doing so arises from the fact that Susanna was the daughter of Robert Perwich who had a school in Hackney, in which she finished her education and had then become a teacher. Hackney was at the time a salubrious suburban village to the north of the City of London, in which many prosperous middle- and upper-class people had taken residence, and in which were to be found several schools of a similar kind and clientele. One of the earliest to be mentioned was that run by a Mrs Winch, which became known in 1637 as a result of a notorious and well-reported abduction (Fraser 1984: 23–5). It was in the following year that the 8-year-old Katherine Fowler arrived in Hackney to attend the school of a Mrs Salmon; Fowler would later marry and, as Katherine Philips, make her name as a poet, 'the Matchless Orinda'. The two eldest daughters of Sir John Bramston were also sent to Mrs Salmon's academy on the death of their mother in 1648, and in his notebook Samuel Sainthill of Bradninch, north of Exeter in Devon, recorded his outgoings for the teaching and boarding there of his sister during the three years 1651–3. Mary Aubrey, a cousin of the antiquary, also attended the school, and in 1675 Ralph Josselin's two daughters Mary and Elizabeth arrived with their mother from Earls Colne in Essex.

The Hackney schools were plainly well supported over the years by the prosperous parents of young ladies, but no records of the schools themselves have survived. Similar schools were started in the villages which circled London in the seventeenth century. Evidence of such schools in the provinces is scattered and equally lacking in detail other than that of their existence. All that is known of the schooling of Margaret and Mary Kytson, daughters of Sir Thomas and Lady Elizabeth Kytson of Hengrave Hall in Suffolk, is derived from an account book entry which recorded expenditure 'For a drinking at Thetford and the children going to school at Norwich' in January 1573, Norwich lying about 30 miles to the east of their home.

## Elementary Schools

It was in the seventeenth century, too, that a new kind of provision, an endowed elementary school, was made available for the children of the poor (Charlton 1999: 142–53). The early Protestant reformers had emphasized the need for all believers to learn to read (at least the Bible), 'so that they may better learn to believe, how to pray and how to live to God's pleasure', as the 1536 Royal Injunction put it. Thomas Becon called for the setting up of a nationwide system of schooling in his *New Catechisme* (1559), and such a comprehensive system continued to be called for, especially during

the Commonwealth period. William Dell, for example, stipulated that 'in the villages no women be permitted to teach little children but such as are most sober and grave' (which suggests that women were already active in such a role), and that 'in these schools they first teach them to read in their native tongue, which they speak without teaching, and then presently as they understand, bring them to read the Holy Scriptures' (Dell, *The Right Reformation of Learning*, 1646, in *Several Sermons and Discourses of William Dell*, 1709: 643).

It was left to the task of philanthropy to attempt to provide funds for this level of education, the bulk of the evidence being found in wills, wherein the rents from donated lands or the interest from a capital sum were indicated to be put to the provision of education for the children of those 'sorts' of parents usually labelled 'poor', 'humble', 'labouring'. Unfortunately, most such testaments provide only the barest of detail – a sum of money or parcel of land, with the number and 'sort' of children to be provided for, as in the will (1562) of William Pepyn of Wenhaston in Suffolk, who left £20 to educate poor children of the village in 'learning, godliness and virtue'. Some benefactors provided a little more detail. In 1586, for example, George Whateley of Stratford-upon-Avon granted lands in Henley and other parts of Warwickshire, half the rents of which were to provide for a master to teach 30 children reading, writing and arithmetic in Henley-in-Arden. Anthony Walker, Rector of Fyfield in Essex, left by his will of 1687 (he died in 1692) houses and land to teach the poor children of Fyfield to read, write and cast accounts, and to say their catechism. The sum of £1 was allocated for the purchase of books and paper for the poorest children, plus £1 for Bibles.

Other benefactors were more generous. In 1611, for example, Marmaduke Longdale of Dowthorpe Hall, Skirlaugh in Yorkshire left £200 for a school. In 1634 William Smyth left £250 to purchase lands whose rents were to be used for a master to teach 'all youth rich and poor, female amd male' who had been born in West Chiltington in Sussex. Laurence Bathurst's 1651 bequest of £150 was for the poor of the parish of Staplehurst in Kent to be taught reading and writing, together with 'instruction in their duty to God and man', an initiative which was supplemented in 1655 by a subscription which raised the sum of £40. Some few will-makers were concerned to direct their bequests to the education of girls only, though examples of this occur only towards the end of the century, as in the 1683 will of Batholomew Hickling. Part of the monies accruing from the rent of lands was to be spent on the purchase of Bibles to be distributed to the children in the area round Loughborough. The rest was to be used to found a school for 20 poor girls from the town, with a mistress who would be paid £4 per annum to

> teach and instruct said girls in learning the English alphabet of letters and the true spelling and reading of the English tongue, in good manner and behaviour, and also in the grounds and principles of Christian religion. (B. E. Elliott, *History of Loughborough College School*, 1971: 12)

For the vast majority of these schools for the poor we have no evidence of their subsequent history. Some, however, became subsumed under eighteenth-century charity school provision, and surfaced later as elementary schools in the nineteenth century. Some few survived, in different guises, even later, as in the case of the Loughborough school and that founded in the village of Madeley in Staffordshire by the will of Sir John Offley (1645) (Charlton 1999: 150–2).

The evidence for the elementary education of girls is scattered and usually lacking in detail, and in almost every case lacking (as with the academies) any serial documentation such as is available for the male-only establishments, the grammar schools and universities. Even so, it is clear that at this educational and social level, schooling was provided by both men and women founders for girls to be taught by both masters and mistresses, sometimes alongside boys and sometimes on their own, and that the overriding aim of such education was a religious one – the fostering of a God-fearing and deferential clientele.

## Accomplishments

Religious and political education were undoubtedly considered to be the most important part of the education of the younger generation – female and male – but not the whole. Young women of the upper and middle classes were expected, in addition, to acquire what were considered to be the social graces or 'accomplishments', much as Anne Murray had reported in her memoirs. Margaret Lucas, Lucy Apsley and Anne Harrison reported in similar vein.

As in the cases of these young ladies, music was a common feature in what might be called the upper-class curriculum, though none of them in their reports gives any detail as to who taught them to read music or play an instrument. The same was true of Margaret Hoby who recorded in her diary for 26 January 1600 that she 'played and sung to the alpherion [a stringed instrument] to refresh myself being dull' (Moody 1988: 56). Lady Mary Wroth, daughter of Sir Robert and Lady Barbara Sidney, niece of Philip and Mary, was brought up in a musical family. Her father was the dedicatee of Robert Jones's *First Booke of Songes or Ayres* (1600) and Robert Dowland's *A Musicall Banquet* (1610), whilst Mary herself was the dedicatee of Jones's *The Muses Gardin of Delight* (1610). In her portrait painted after her marriage to Sir Robert Wroth, she is shown standing with an archlute (a base lute with an extended, unfretted peg-box), which, if it was meant to have actual rather than symbolic significance, would certainly have required some form of tuition. Even so, no record of music tutors appears in the family papers. In her autobiography Alice Thornton, who was born in 1627, reported that among her other accomplishments her mother, Alice, was taught the 'Harpsicalls and lute', and that she herself received tuition in the lute and theorbo (a double-necked lute), this alongside a detailed religious education (Surtees Society, 62, 1875: 8). Nicholas Ferrar's nieces at Little Gidding found time from their

extensive religious exercises to engage in lute playing (T. T. Carter, *Nicholas Ferrar: His Household and Friends*, 1892: 125). The madrigalist Henry Lawes was tutor to Alice and Mary Egerton, daughters of John, Earl of Bridgewater, and dedicatees of Lawes's *Book of Ayres and Dialogues* (1653) (I. Spink, *Henry Lawes: Cavalier Song Writer*, 2000: 5, 12). Sir Edward Dering recorded in his household book for 1 June 1649: 'Paid Mr Lawes a months teaching of my wife £1 10s', Lady Mary being the dedicatee of Lawes's *Second Booke of Ayres and Dialogues* (1655) (E. Rimbault, *Notes and Queries*, 1st Ser. 1859–60: 162). The extended Kytson family of Hengrave Hall were similarly involved with musicians (Lawes, John Dowland and Henry Wilbye) who, whilst in residence at the Hall, taught the children and dedicated their works to various members (Woodfill 1953: 252ff.). The household accounts of Sir William Petre of Ingatestone Hall, Essex, have numerous entries relating to the purchase and repair of musical instruments, as well as to visits by William Byrd and to resident musicians Richard Mico and John Oker. From 1558 to 1560 a Mr 'Persey' was paid 'for teaching the gentlewomen to play on the virginalls', presumably including the daughters of the household, Dorothy, Elizabeth, Thomasine and Catherine.

It should be noted that music (as well as dancing) was not universally deemed suitable for young girls and women; in the opinion of some, such as Thomas Salter in his *Mirrhor Mete for all Matrones* (1579) and Thomas Powell in his *Tom of All Trades* (1621), it encouraged lasciviousness and other vices. Those who approved of it, on the other hand, regarded it as the epitome of harmony, as well as providing opportunity for acceptable recreation, and as Margaret Hoby found, a remedy against 'dullness'. Some found it a useful mark of marriageableness, whilst others argued that for too many this was its only justification, taking up time which would be better spent reading godly books and meditating on one's ultimate end.

During the sixteenth century some families, notably those of Thomas More, Edward Seymour and Anthony Cooke, engaged their daughters in the study of Latin and Greek. By the turn of the century, however, such a practice was going out of fashion, and in any case, it was argued, had been rendered unnecessary due to a good deal of classical literature being available in translation. In the seventeenth century modern languages, and particularly French, had become part of the curriculum for young gentlewomen, though only because it was considered fashionable to converse in French, since translators were also making romances in French available in English (Charlton 1965: 109, 208–9, 227–34).

The 'accomplishment' which was universally accepted as an integral part of a young woman's education was housewifery. Manuals on cookery, needlework, medicine and midwifery, directly addressed to women, frequently appeared in print throughout the period. For the majority of girls such skills would be learned at the elbow of their mothers, by observation as much as by precept, in the certain knowledge that they themselves would be called upon to exercise these skills in their own households. At the same time, they would be constantly enjoined in church that it was their godly duty – their 'vocation' – to 'husband' the resources which had been gathered in by

their 'better half' outside of the home. Even among the more affluent, we find an acceptance of the prescribed division of labour. Margaret Hoby's diary, for example, gives a detailed account of a woman of some substance 'busy in the kitchen . . . busy about the reckonings . . . busy preserving . . . busy in my garden all the day almost . . . all the day setting corn' and so on. Sir John Oglander acknowledged his indebtedness to his wife Frances, who 'was up every day before me, and oversaw all the outhouses; she would not trust her maids with directions, but would wet her shoes to see it done herself' (C. A. Oglander, *Nunwell Symphony*, 1945: 39). Sir Hugh Cholmley reported in similar vein about his wife Elizabeth, who 'went round her whole domain from hop-garth to hen-yard, from linen closet to larder' (Cholmley, *Memoirs*, 1870: 30). Plainly these were not simply pragmatic arrangements to meet exceptional circumstances, but in the minds of some a more reflective enactment of that principle of mutuality for which biblical texts provided a justification. For others, an informed oversight of servants was simply a matter of housekeeping economics or a reinforcement of social hierarchy.

## Women as Agents

Thus far we have considered girls and women as recipients of education provided by others, usually men. The question now has to be asked how far and in what ways did women act as agents in their own and others' education. Women's diaries provide first-hand evidence of books women actually read. Anne Venn, daughter of the regicide Colonel John Venn, kept a diary 'written in her own hand and found in her closet after her death,' in which she noted:

> I got a book called Mr Rogers Evidences and another called The Touchstone of True Grace and another called None But Christ and divers others . . . read Mr Dod upon the Commandments . . . a little book called the Marrow of Modern Divinity . . . reading some sermons of Mr Marshalls and others . . . one of Mr Burrowes books and fifty sermons of Mr Knights . . . opened Mr Burroughs book which I read many daily hours together. (Venn, *A Wise Virgins Lamp Burning*, 1658: *passim*)

In the diary of Elianor Stockton (Dr Williams' Library, Modern Ms. 24.8, fols. 20–2) is found a record of 'short sentences that I have met with in my reading', including 'Caryl on Job 30.2 . . . The Christians Daily Wake . . . The Spirits Office Towards Believers . . . Mr Crow on the Lord's Supper . . . that small piece of Mr Flavell's entitled A Token for Mourners'. The reading of Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick, included Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, the sermons and writings of Jeremy Taylor, the poems of George Herbert and Richard Baxter's *Crucifying of the World by the Cross of Christ*, her favourite book (Charlton 1999: 180–7). Lady Catherine Gell was a regular correspondent of Richard Baxter, and confessed to him in one of her letters 'many a time

I goe about my house among my servants when I had rather locke myself in a roome alone amongst my books. For meditation I never knew it my duty till I had read your *Saints Rest*, and then setting on it I found it very hard' (Keeble and Nuttall 1991, I: 249). Meditation in the privacy of their own closet was a further practice which enabled women to educate their minds and their emotions, Baxter's *Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650 and many editions) being one of the most popular among many expositions of the practice (Charlton 1999: 171–7).

Mary Rich was not the only reader of George Herbert's religious poetry, which was published posthumously in 1633 as *The Temple. Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations*. Susanna Howard, Countess of Suffolk, died in 1649. In the funeral sermon preached by Edward Rainbowe, Bishop of Carlisle, he referred to her reading of

> divine poetry, in which kind she took excessive delight to be conversant in Mr Herbert's *Temple*, in which she found out such fit and significant elegancies that when she read or repeated them it was hard to determine whether the author or she made the sense, such innumerable descants would she make upon every single expression there. . . . Begin a religious ode of Mr Herbert's which she had read and she would ordinarily repeat the rest without sticking or missing'. (*A Sermon Preached at the Interring . . . of Susanna, Countess of Suffolk . . .* , 1649: 12–13)

Lady Mary Wharton died in 1674. In her funeral sermon reference was made to her wide reading of godly authors, including 'Mr Herbert's verses which she could repeat without book' (P. Watkinson, *Mary's Choice . . .* , 1674: 34). Mary Rich produced for George, Earl of Berkeley, at his request, a set of 'Rules for Holy Living', in which she urged him to 'remember that Mr Herbert in his excellent poem says "Game [i.e. gaming] is a civil gunpowder in peace / Blowing up houses with their whole increase"' (*Church Porch*, stanza 34) (C. Fell Smith, *Mary Rich Countess of Warwick*, 1901: 184). Berkeley himself (mis)quotes (from heart presumably) stanza 55 of the poem in his *Historical Applications and Occasional Meditations* (1666: 17), adding a couplet of his own which has distinct echoes of the opening stanza of Herbert's 'Constancie'.

Of course, women read other literature than godly books. If she could read at all, it seems, Sir Thomas Overbury's 'Chambermaid' would read romances: 'she reads Greene's works over and over, but is so carried away with the *Mirrour of Knighthood* that she is many times resolved to run out of herself and become a Ladie Errant' (*Characters*, 1614; in *The Overburian Characters*, ed. W. J. Paylor, Oxford, 1936: 43). But the chambermaid's mistress, too, was not averse to such reading. Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, complained

> The truth is, the chief study of our sex is romances, wherein reading, they fall in love with the feigned carpet-knights with whom their thoughts secretly commit adultery, and in their conversation and manner, or forms or phrases of speech, they imitate Romancy Ladies. (*Sociable Letters*, 1664: 39)

Mary Rich acknowledged that until she was married (1641) she spent her 'precious time in nothing else but reading romances and in reading and seeing plays' (T. C. Croker, ed., *Autobiography of Mary Countess of Warwick*, 1848: 21). Lady Elizabeth Delaval blamed her governess for encouraging her in such reading matter, concluding, when she came to write her memoirs, 'Thus vainely passed the blossom time of my life which should have been spent in laying a good foundation of what is to be learned in such books as teach us heavenly wisdom' (Surtees Society, 190, 1978: 32). Two kinds of 'romance' are being referred to here, one which might be termed the 'chivalric' romance and which included works such as *Morte d'Arthure*, *Amadis de Gaule*, *The Mirrour of Knighthood* and the long-popular tales of Robin Hood, the other being the new generation of romance, originating in France in the mid-seventeenth century and quickly being translated into English – the 'Cassander, the Great Cyrus, Cleopatra and Astrea' which Elizabeth Delaval had read. It should be said that men, too, read these works, Francis Kirkman, for example, who later translated part of *Amadis* and other romances, recollecting with pleasure his reading of them in his youth, when he 'wished myself squire to one of these knights'. John Milton, Richard Baxter and John Bunyan were not alone in regretting the time they 'wasted' in reading such literature (Charlton 1987: 467–9). Its existence, and the constant stream of criticism directed towards it and its authors, should serve to remind us that 'education' took place as much outside the classroom as in it, and it is, at the very least, a moot point (then as now) as to which kind of education, formal or informal, is the more influential in the upbringing or 'formation' (in the French sense of the term) of young and adult alike. As Sir Philip Sidney acknowledged in his *Apologie for Poetrie* (1595):

> Truely, I have known men, that even with reading *Amadis de Gaule* (which God knoweth wanteth much of a perfect poesie) have found their harts moved to the exercise of courtesie, liberalitie and especially courage. (Sig. E4 verso, F1 recto)

The same was true of the theatre-going public (as also, in the sixteenth century at least, of the open-air performing of the mystery plays), when the cathartic effect of vicarious humour and bawdy as well as adultery, murder and illicit passion, gave the wider audience a sense of sharing a range of basic emotions not only with their peers but also with their 'betters'.

If women were active in the process of self-education, so too did they contribute in no small measure as agents in the education of others. A first contribution to the education of those who could read only their native tongue would be the translations that women made of works in foreign languages. An early example would be Margaret Beaufort's translation of Book II of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitatio Christi*, which was published in 1504, and Margaret Roper's *Treatise upon the Pater Noster* (1525), which she translated from the Latin of Erasmus. As well as translating the French of Du Plessis Mornay and Robert Garnier and the Italian of Petrarch, Lady Mary Sidney completed her brother Philip's translation of the *Psalmes of David* from the Latin of

the Vulgate. Ann (Prowse) Lok (or Locke) published her *Markes of the Children of God and Their Comforts in Afflictions* from the French of Jean Taffin in 1590, by which time she had married her second husband, Edward Dering. In her Epistle Dedicatorie she gave a detailed account of her purpose in the undertaking:

> First to admonish some . . . that they learne to applie unto themselves whatsoever they hear or reade of the triall of God his children. . . . Secondlie, to awake others abounding both in knowledge and other graces who notwithstanding Satan . . . hath so rockt asleepe that they seem almost . . . to have forgotten both themselves, their holy calling and profession. Last of all to comfort another sorte, whom it hath pleased God so to press down with sorrowes they can scarce receive the words of any comfort.

Elizabeth Cary, the Catholic Lady Falkland, was briefer but equally forthright when, in her translation *The Reply of the Most Illustrious Cardinall Perron to the Answeare of the Most Excellent King of Greate Britaine, the First Tome* (1630), she insisted

> I will not make use of that worn-out form of saying, I printed it against my will, moved by the importunity of friends; I was moved to it by my belief that it might make those English that understand not French, whereof there are many, even in our universities, read Perron. (*To the Reader*, sig. A2 verso)

– and, of course, to consider his religious arguments. When Margaret Tyler translated from the Spanish her *Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood* in 1578, on the other hand, she was more concerned to justify her intrusion into what was considered to be a male preserve.

By far the most important part played by women as agents in the education of others in the early modern period was their contribution to the education of their own children, which I have dealt with at length elsewhere (Charlton 1999: ch. 7). We have already noted here a kind of surrogate mothering in the practice of sending girls away from home to live with another family. When Bridget Plantagenet was sent, aged about 7, to the household of Sir Anthony and Lady Jane Windsor, Sir Anthony wrote to her father in 1538: 'she is very spare and hath need of cherishing, and she shall lack nothing in learning or otherwise that my wife can do for her' (M. Saint Clare Byrne, ed., *The Lisle Letters*, 1981: V, 219–20). Despite the stereotypical picture of the all-powerful husband and often possibly harsh patriarch, there was in the early modern period a common acceptance of the prime role of the mother as an agent in the education of her children, a role which continued well beyond the period of early infancy.

In the family setting direct attention was paid to the view that 'religious education' consisted not simply of 'religious knowledge' – of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the contents of the Bible – but also of everyday behaviour, the Christian virtues which were expressed in the multitude of conduct books

and 'Advices', and which were to be the immediate end-product of all public and private worship, prayer, reading and exhortation. Example, therefore, was considered to be a prime motivator in familial education. As R[oger] C[arr] put it, 'verbal instruction without example of good deedes is dead doctrine' (*A Godly Form of Householde Governement*, 1598: 260). William Gouge likewise insisted that 'Example is a real instruction and addeth a sharp edge to admonition' (*Of Domesticall Dueties*, 1600: 542). Parents' example was thus crucial in the formation of their children, though that provided by their servants was almost always cited as something to be shunned. Grace Mildmay, for example, reported that she had been warned by her parents to avoid the serving men of the household, 'whose ribald talk and idle gestures and evil suggestions were dangerous to our chaste ears and eyes to hear and behold' (Pollock 1993: 46). Elizabeth Walker was quick to see the danger, her husband recalling that she would 'strictly charge the servants not to teach her children foolish stories or teach them idle songs, which might tincture their fancies with vain or hurtful imaginations (A. Walker, *The Holy Life of Elizabeth Walker*, 1690: 90). As we have seen already, wives also paid attention to educating their servants in the Christian virtues (Charlton 1999: 234–7).

Of course, precept figured equally with example in mothers' efforts to educate their children. Advice books such as Dorothy Leigh's *The Mothers Blessing* (1616), Elizabeth Jocelin's *A Mothers Legacie to her Unborne Child* (1624) and Elizabeth Richardson's *A Ladies Legacy to her Daughters* (1645) figured largely in the advice literature of the period. When Lucy Hutchinson produced a more organized text in her *Principles of Christian Religion*, which she addressed to her newly married daughter Barbara, she started with a disclaimer:

> You may perhaps, when you have read these common principles and grounds which I have collected for you, thinke that I might have spard my payns and sent you a twopennie catechize which contains the substance of all this.

But she was convinced that this would not suffice:

> You will find it my duty [she continued] to exhort and admonish you according to the talent entrusted with me, and to watch over your soul, though now under another's authority . . . and advize you to exercise youre owne knowledge therein by instructing your children and servants. (5–7, 90–1; the text was not published until 1817)

In keeping with her last comment, her advice was thoroughly orthodox, as was that of Lady Anne Halkett in her *Instructions for Youth*, 'for the use of those young noblemen and gentlemen' whose education was committed to her. Letters from mothers to their children often included similar advice, alongside the usual news of family illness and good health and considerate enquiries about the health and behaviour of the recipient (Charlton 1999: 234–7).