Edited by
JOHN LEE

A Handbook of
English Renaissance Literary Studies

WILEY Blackwell

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Introduction

John Lee

The disciplinary area covered by Renaissance studies is of a size and variety to inspire wonder, or bafflement, or both. This *Handbook* offers an enabling map of that critical landscape, and aims to be a good guide to some of the most admirable and significant work that is currently taking place. That "some" is a significant qualification; given the size and variety of the area, and the constraints of space even within a relatively substantial volume such as this, the map offered must be selectively representative. This one is drawn up around a founding belief in the benefit to the disciplinary area of its engagement with theory.

"Engagement" is an important word in this context. It is tempting to talk of the "impact" of theory but that would, at this point in time, mislead. Theory, in one form or another, has always been with us. Looking to the classical past there is, most famously, Aristotle's *Poetics* (350 BCE) and Horace's *Ars Poetica* (10 BCE). In the period covered by this *Handbook*, that is the English Renaissance, or the Early Modern period (the first term tending to look at the period in terms of what shaped it, the second in terms of what it went on to shape), a recent *selection* of English literary criticism between 1530 and 1650 runs to over 600 densely printed pages, and contains many theoretical accounts of literature, its nature, kinds, and functions (Vickers 1999). But when "high" theory arrived in the 1970s (or thereabouts, such dates being always subject to challenge), it was both unusually systematic and unusually, by that time, extra-disciplinary. Large changes, fundamentally reshaping the disciplinary area, were brought about as theoretical approaches were applied to the objects of study, which were then usually literary texts; and as those approaches were systematic and largely novel, those applying them tended to form identifiable groups. "Impact" was sought; and gained; debate grew polemical and confrontational (Bergonzi 1991); commentators spoke of "theory wars" and novelists fictionalized them (Lodge 1975; 1984; 1988).

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Many of those changes are discussed within the *Handbook*'s chapters. In the last 20 years or so, however, the situation has become less antagonistic and less clear-cut. There are many reasons for that; one of the most significant is that the objects of study have, so to speak, answered back. In the earlier years of high theory, it sometimes seemed as if the objects of study were there to prove the validity of the theory; a deconstructivist reading, for example, might prove in text after text the nature, and slipperiness, of linguistic meaning, with little respect to how one text might differ from another, or what it aimed to do, and how well it did it, let alone what was thought to be the significance of the achieved end. But more recently, a kind of dialectical process between theory and the objects of study has been allowed to take place, as critics have sought better to fit theory to the objects of their study. This process might be imagined in quasi-scientific terms, as a sequence of practical observations by which an initial hypothesis is refined to give improved predictive validity or understanding of the object of study. "Engagements," though, seems a more helpful and accurate depiction of these interactions. For they are essentially *ad hoc* and local: literary critics, unsatisfied, say, with their current understandings of parts of texts, try out one or a number of different theoretical approaches; or they look to see what happens if they combine theoretical approaches, perhaps to understand better the questions that the texts seem to be asking them; or perhaps they look to find ways by which to make the texts more responsive to the questions they believe should matter at this moment. If that all sounds rather unsystematic and messy, and rather self-interested, this need not necessarily be a problem; what justifies such engagements is the richness of the accounts given of the objects of study or the questions under consideration. And it seems to me we are lucky to be working and reading at a time of increasingly rich accounts, largely thanks to such theoretically-informed engagements.

Recent years, then, have seen the fragmentation of systematic theories, and the growth of theoretically informed competencies for different areas of study. The representative map of the disciplinary area offered in this *Handbook* has been drawn up to give a sense of some of the richest of those engagements. These have been divided into three parts: engagements that deal with the conditions of subjectivity; those that deal with some aspect of place, space, or form; and those that deal with Renaissance and Early Modern practices and theories. These divisions are partly a matter of convenience, but that they *are* convenient is a function of what remains the largest impact of the period of high theory within the disciplinary area: the questioning of the nature and centrality of the human subject. The chapters within Part I: "Conditions of Subjectivity" consider various ways of approaching what is seen to constitute a person or a fictional agent; those within Part II: "Places, Spaces, and Forms" consider a person's or agent's interrelationship with his or her physical, intellectual, and artistic habitations; and those within Part III: "Practices and Theories" consider what it is that persons and fictional agents do, and how they picture to themselves and others what it is they do. The *Handbook* is fundamentally shaped by the impact of high theory, as it marks out a new stage in the disciplinary area's responses to it.

I

Within the three parts, each chapter looks not to give a historical survey of the presence of theory in its particular area of interest, but rather to describe the theoretical authorities that shape its own approach and, at the same time, to demonstrate the benefits such a theoretically informed competency may bring – by advancing new arguments on issues of particular current significance, or by directing our attention to new areas of and for research, or by suggesting theoretical issues that may face us in the future. Catherine Bates's chapter opens the volume with a discussion of gender studies, and what it owes to feminist theory. At the same time, she focuses on the "distinctly uncomfortable" (22) position gender studies finds itself in, as its largely deconstructivist mode of inquiry threatens to imperil its ability to contribute meaningfully to the feminist project of recovering an explicitly female history of experience. To Bates it seems that gender studies may have to abandon the notion of gender, as a category of stable meaning, and explore instead scenes of "radical gender incoherence" (25). James Bromley, in the following chapter, considers recent debates about the role of utopianism within queer theory. He cautions against what seems to him the unjustified optimism of some critical readings of texts of the period; trying to challenge the foundational role of heterosexual desire, he notes, is particularly difficult as it challenges "the legibility of the self" (36). The period's sexual heteronormativity is disappointing to Bromley as it is seen to champion a politics opposed to his own; yet he stresses the political usefulness of the personal experience of disappointment if one wants to bring about change.

Both Bates and Bromley are happy with the "promiscuous mingling" (40) of ethical and political praxes, and regard their sharp sense of embeddedness in the ideological discourses they present as a "major asset in their analysis and understanding of the past" (17). David Schalkwyk, by contrast, is not happy to "risk anachronism" (31) in his dealings with the past. His chapter on service is a historically informed attempt to recognize properly the importance of the concept and practicalities of service in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and yet it is not historicist, but conceptual in its approach; celebrating literature's ability to deal with the complex relationships among service, desire, love and reciprocity, he refuses to see these relationships as "examples of historical causality" or "the repositories of hierarchies of power" (103). Instead he looks at how differently each play handles the imbrication of social relations of service with the erotic relations of service found in the courtly love tradition. Such a resistance to historicist paradigms is also to be found in my own chapter on agency and choice, which turns to some recent philosophers of ethics to suggest why it is that dramatic literature, as a mode, thinks so well and compellingly, even compulsively, about the multi-dimensional nature of personhood in its own particular terms. For Simon Ryle, drawing on both post-structuralist and Renaissance theories of mimesis, there is something, or rather some lack, in the nature of Shakespearean dramatic representation itself which describes the "structure of desire" (91) and which, in its monstrous incommensurability, anticipates modernity. Julian Yates's chapter on objects and things sees matters, and

matter, rather differently; he invites the reader to consider not only how objects resist any easy narrative of the sovereignty of the subject (or the subject's depiction of the object), but also to what extent it is those very objects that call us into being as subjects. Matters and matter become complicatedly bound up with time and place and person, to the extent we may wish to ask questions of poetry such as "what" and "when" is a poem.

One related development of this literary-critical turn to *things* – perhaps the most influential of the last two decades – has been the emergence of the importance of the human body as a subject in its own right. William Slights, generously appreciative of that transformative critical work, resists a post-modern and totalizing current within it which takes an "*all* wholes barred" (121) position in celebrating the fragmentary and discontinuous nature of the body. Instead, he points out the degree to which Renaissance literature speaks a coherent language of embodiment, in which "terrifyingly raw encounters with the flesh" (124) are frequent and meaningful occurrences. A more cooked set of encounters is discussed in Jean Feerick's chapter on race and colonization. She insists on the dissonance between biological, and more recently genetic, modern ideologies of race and the early modern equivalent, the notion of bloodline. In the early modern culture of blood, all bodies were seen to need the intervention of culture to be properly ordered, and so were neither innately "superior" or "inferior," but rather mutable, and often rather troublingly so.

Religion, in its very various forms and practices, provides the groundwork on and through which much of the thinking of the period takes place. Recent years have seen a resurgence of critical interest in the nature and forms of the relationship between the secular and sacred. Julia Lupton, in her consideration of this religious turn, suggests how we might "creatively combine historical and philosophical analysis in order to approach drama as a resource for living" (71). At the risk of seeming paradoxical, she argues for the usefulness of considering Shakespeare as a post-secular thinker, both to contemporary pedagogical and contemporary political engagements. That risk-taking allows her to write illuminatingly about the female protagonists of Shakespeare's late romances. Marina and Imogen, she argues, may usefully be seen as "post-secular saints," drawing on religious discourses to create new shared spaces displaying "environmental attunement" via various kinds of "cosmopolitan translation" (79).

Such shared spaces may be particularly necessary in the religiously and politically diverse world of today, if the kind of liberal and pluralistic culture envisaged by Isaiah Berlin ([1947–1990] 1990) as a best defense against the various authoritarian "utopias" of the mid-twentieth century, whether communist, fascist or Maoist, is to be sustained. And while it is an optimistic reading, and not one advanced by any of the contributors here, the variety within Renaissance Studies, which the representative nature of this *Handbook* showcases, might itself be seen to manifest its own kind of shared space. On the one hand, the chapters can be quite different from one another, not only in the nature of their theoretical engagements, or their subject matter, but also in their style. On the other, there are often, especially in terms of theoretical engagements, substantial overlaps or communalities between chapters;

and, to complicate matters, it is often in those communalities that some of the most fundamental disagreements are manifested.

Whatever the cultural importance of such an academic space may be, it is in its demonstration of just such a mix of diversity and communality that the *Handbook* hopes to be most enabling. That Renaissance Studies are no one thing, but rather a wide variety of practices, and values, and aims, many of which are opposed the one to the other, is seen here in terms of opportunity: Renaissance Studies are "catholic" in one of that word's older modern senses, that is "having sympathies with, embracing, all" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, sense 3b). Readers of this volume, particularly undergraduates and postgraduates, should find examples enough to refine their sense of what kind of critics they would like to be, and what kind they would not want to be, and why.

In my experience, that is a key, and difficult, question for those setting out within the disciplinary area; and the question of "why" is a particularly important aspect of that process of identity formation. While the authors of the *Handbook*'s chapters do not make great claims for the cultural importance of their work, each has a clear sense of the importance of what they do, and of why their chosen approach matters; and though that importance is often modestly argued for (if argued for at all), such explicit or implicit claims to importance should not be downplayed. Critical practice should matter to the critics; it is, after all, a substantial, and sometimes consuming, part of their lives. For some of the *Handbook*'s authors, that importance is quite personal, and remains largely a scholarly matter within the academic community. For others, that importance is explicitly public and political, and they see their practice as making a direct contribution to the improvement of the society in which they, and others, live. In the case of both groups, these chapters show how their engagements with theory have enriched their professional and personal lives and also, if to a lesser and less obvious extent, how it has enriched the places and cultures in which that critical practice takes place.

What such a pluralism of practices and aims also means, of course, is that a handbook of critical theory is not going to be anything like, say, a handbook of bicycle maintenance; it is not going to provide a "how to" guide to particular critical ends; or at least it will not if it wishes to reflect its disciplinary area, rather than to promote a critical or theoretical project. As Francis Bacon warned in "Of Studies," the opening chapter of the first edition of his *Essays* ([1597] 1996): "Crafty men contemn [studies], simple men admire them, wise men use them. For they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation" ([1597] 1999, 134).

II

In my earlier brief comments on Lupton's chapter, I mentioned the particular objects of critical attention – Shakespeare's late romances – in the context of which her theoretical engagements occur. Lupton's chapter is not unusual in that; most chapters

contain new readings. In "Conditions of Subjectivity," these readings are largely of texts. So, for example, Bromley looks at Lady Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory* (c.1620); Feerick at Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1609) and *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1633); myself and Ryle at Shakespeare's *1 Henry 4* and *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*, respectively; Schalkwyk at Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613–14), Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622), and Ford's *Tis Pity She's a Whore* (c.1630); Slights at Jonson's *Sejanus* (1604); and Yates at Donne's "The Relique" (1633). This is, in other words, a *Handbook* of critical theory in practice, and its implicit thesis is that critical and theoretical interests are, in the end, indivisible. That I am not generally mentioning the objects of that practice here is simply owing to the constraints of space. And, for the same reason, the particular theoretical authorities that the authors discuss and cite go unmentioned. Lupton alone, for example, discusses Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Talal Asad and Rosi Braidotti. The *Handbook*, then, offers essays that readers of Jonson, say, or Habermas, will want to consult. To facilitate this, the index lists both authors and works, and critical authorities and theoretical concepts.

Part II, "Places, Spaces, and Forms," opens with David Baker's chapter on the market. Drawing on new economic criticism, Baker notes that the shortage of cash available in England around 1600 challenges Marx's timeline of the arrival of the "cash nexus." Instead, Baker argues, credit remained king, and in place of a single cash market, there were a number of socially mediated markets, equally but differently devilish to the old cash-based market. One, presumably more godly place of economic transaction was Norwich Cathedral, where rent was paid and the genuineness of coins tested. Anne Myers, writing on the church, seeks to enlarge our appreciation of just how complex and meaningful a space it was for those in and around it, and to move our attention from the focus on theological controversy. The Cathedral is read as a site of "ever-accruing collections of personal and communal stories" (208).

Turning to the Court, Lauren Shohet sees courtly literature as both celebratory of, and offering challenges to, sovereign authority: power both appears to flow outward from the center and to be granted from the margin. The kinds and forms of fictive ambiguity which lie at the heart of such complicated presentational dances are seen to give rise to a particular kind of elusive literary aesthetic, whose influence permeated the literary culture of the age more generally. The "eccentric" (255) orbits of influence that Shohet traces for the Court have something in common with Ian Munro's sense of the competing epistemologies of space at work in the accounting for and presenting of London. Beginning by juxtaposing nomadic and political understandings of the city, he shows at the end of his chapter how the theatre might almost found itself on the movement between the two mutually antagonist epistemological strategies, and in so doing capture aspects of a distinctly fluid, and non-rational, set of urban experiences. Expanding geographically to the level of the nation, Willy Maley identifies an exemplary case study of the "protean" nature of the polemic of Archipelagic identity politics at a key moment in the creation of the multi-national British state. He argues for its importance to all students of the early

modern period, sketching out in particular what it has to say to Cultural Materialist, New Historicist, Deconstructive, Postcolonial, and Animal Studies critics – an importance that is particularly acute, perhaps, to readers from those countries (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales), as the multi-national British state goes about the business of redefining itself.

Bruce Boehrer's chapter on nature and the non-human is equally explicitly engaged with present politics. It considers the relationship of early modern green sensibility both to modern ecolgical anxieties and to current attempts in the sociology of science to rethink our relationship with those conjoined twins, technology and politics. Early modern habits of mind, largely religious and anthropocentric, are seen to bear responsibility for aspects of our ecological crisis, but also as shaping and helping our attempts to reset our relationship with the natural world. For Benedict Robinson, Romance itself is a "technology" through which a culture imagines and re-imagines its forms of affective sociability. Within such a sociological approach to literature, the genre, until recently unfashionable, emerges as central to the notion of fictiveness itself. Robinson suggests that the fully fictive worlds of Romance thrive in an early modern period distinguished by imperial expansiveness and growing cross-cultural contacts.

Sociability is often, by contrast, in very short supply within the objects of attention in household studies. Mary Trull looks at some of the ways in which the ideal patriarchal households of early modern domestic theory are challenged by their theatrical depictions. Whether comic or tragic in outcome, social spaces are seen – as they are represented – to be created largely through conflict, and are far more diverse than is generally allowed. As Tolstoy said, "Happy families are all alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" ([1878] 1901). Such a diffusion of ruling authority and creation of a new space of crisis is examined on a far larger scale by Joanna Picciotto, in her discussion of the consequences of the communication revolution taking place in the period. This revolution led to a redistribution of intellectual authority to a previously unseen degree. Examining the use of the metaphor of "the commonwealth of learning," Picciotto argues that this can be usefully analyzed in terms of the "public sphere" – a relatively recent concept coined to describe a cultural phenomenon seen to have emerged in the very late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Picciotto sees the usefulness of such a seemingly anachronistic term to speak to the radical and revolutionary potential that lies ready to be activated within tradition, and which gives tradition its liveliness and relevance. Cultural foundations, it would seem, hold up, until they throw down.

III

In many of these chapters, the groundbreaking and clear critical narratives with which new areas of disciplinary activity are opened up by new theoretical engagements, or new applications of theory, are later seen to become more diffuse and

nuanced, as they themselves become subject to critique and objection, and better register the complexity of the objects of their study. This often involves a greater recognition of the dynamic interconnections, both among and between objects of study and areas of critical activity – what might be seen in Deleuze's and Guattari's terms ([1980] 1988) as the rhizomatic nature both of study and the objects of study within the disciplinary area. The *Handbook* provides good evidence of this: to read a number of chapters is to begin to get a sense of the rather strange and subterranean ways in which different authors share interests, work in discrete but parallel ways, and influence one another.

In Part III, "Practices and Theories," such movements can be seen particularly in aspects of the chapters' relationships with chapters from Part I. "Agency and choice" might be read alongside the chapter on authorship, though in Jane Griffiths's chapter the notion of a "paradoxical" self-authorizing poetic independence arises not through dramatic play but through the play of ludic and multiple textual (and marginal) personae. Or as companion to "religion and the religious turn" there is Timothy Rosendale's chapter on devotion, which finds in the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer a shared space of negotiated and dialectical submission. When Joshua Eckhardt argues that the publication of a sonnet is a complicatedly social act, a product not just of stationers and printers, but of those collectors who copied it into their manuscript collections, one can see the presence and pressure of many of Julian Yates's concerns in "objects and things." The situation is similar in Mary Lund's chapter on reading, in which she looks at the methods and purposes of seventeenth-century reading, and suggests a slight move away from the dominant materialist paradigm of the study of the physical nature and circulation of books, by arguing for the imaginative and compositorial importance of the figure of the author as reader.

In both Eckhardt's and Lund's chapters, the social and multiple nature of the acts of reading and publication is central, an emphasis that may also be seen in Howard Marchitello's consideration of the ways in which science studies, and its understanding of both literature and science as social forms of knowledge-producing activity, have reshaped contemporary critical practice by reshaping our understanding of the relationship between early modern science and early modern poetry. The relationship between literary, visual, and the cosmetic arts is of concern to Patricia Phillippy, who draws on second-generation feminist art theory to explore ways in which the early modern English "beauty industry" granted to women, within a performative understanding of identity, a right to self-determination, and a sense of the feminine as constructed not by nature, but by productive act. Angus Vine looks at the recent interest in the relationship between literature and space, the so-called "spatial turn," and argues for the particular importance of chorography, with its "distinctive narrative style" placing historical events on a geographical axis (415), to the imagination and politics of the age. Nicholas Popper's chapter enlarges on the ever-increasing importance and number of historical narratives,

seeing the sixteenth century, in its literature and politics, being reshaped by a "rage for history" (380), which produced new patterns of causation and made the past ever more pertinent and politically authoritative within English culture as it looked to deal with present and future concerns.

That these chapters are all, to greater and lesser extents, multi- and interdisciplinary is a rather self-evident observation. What is of more interest is the variety and interest of the transfers that go on as one matter is modeled in terms of another. Not, of course, that such transferring across domains is either novel or distinctive of critical practice. In her chapter on the rhetorics of similitude, Judith Anderson explores the centrality of metaphor to both allegory and analogy. Her explication of its early modern theory and practice shows how it is a trope of constructive change in setting up new ways of seeing (and so of doing) and also how it is characterized, among other qualities, by its respect for difference and avoidance of any "false assertion of identity"; metaphor and its rhetorics emerge as a very delicately poised perceptual balancing act (291). Books may be seen in similar terms. Helen Smith leads us through the many places of book production the better to understand the complicated imaginative acts behind books' physical embodiment (or, perhaps, to grasp more fully their liveliness, their embookment). The book, with its own shaping structures and disciplines, becomes itself an experimental and cognitive resource. The object is seen once again to integrate and reshape the subjects who use it. One might ask of the book what Montaigne ([1580] 1963) famously asked of his cat: "When I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me?" (331). Or note his belief, in a later chapter of the *Essays*, that he had "no more made my book than my book has made me, a book consubstantial with its author" – and note also the religious resonance of that "consubstantial," pointing as it does towards the intermingling of the spiritual with the material ([1580] 1963, 504).

IV

Above all, this is a volume that hopes to be useful. Putting aside the cornucopia of marvelous single-authored volumes that awaits those interested in Renaissance studies, this is the volume I would most like my students to read, cover to cover, to give them a better sense of the kinds of academic work being done at the moment, and what work they might choose to do, and the forms and variety of knowledge and practice that would then be expected of them, and where they might find further resources towards a better understanding of that knowledge and those practices. To that end the authors have been asked to be generous in their citations and to provide, at the close of each chapter, a selection of the five texts they would recommend to be read next.

There have been few such handbooks in the past. Or, to look at that another way, there have been plenty, but they have nearly all tended to take Shakespeare's works as their sole or central object of study. If one elaborated the metaphor of the volume as map offered at the start of this introduction, and saw the volume as a map of England, Shakespeare might be seen as London, and James I's worry, voiced in a 1616 speech, that soon "England will only be London", might be seen to be well on the way to having come to pass (Heal 1990, 119). However, such a Shakespearean London is, in fact, only one part, if by far the largest single part, of a much greater whole. And, of course, if one was going to elaborate the map in such a way, it would have to include Ireland, Scotland and Wales, continental Europe, Asia, the Americas and beyond. This volume leads the reader into that larger archipelagic and European intellectual country, with its own towns and landscapes, in the knowledge that this is where most of those engaged in Renaissance studies do their research. Shakespeare remains, but as a proportionate presence within the volume, reflecting the actual practice of the daily business of the discipline, as opposed to the commercial viability of its various parts.

The constraints of size have meant, of course, that choices have had to be made; in one sense, a simple expansion would have allowed the volume to have been more thoroughly representative. It would have been desirable to have had individual chapters on, for example, writing, law, the Islamic world, high theory and criticism as an area in itself, the impact of cognitive studies, and so on. But it is of the nature of handbooks to be selective. As Willy Maley teasingly reminds us in his chapter, handbooks, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, are books "small enough to be easily portable and intended to be kept close to hand." The present volume already pushes the definition of "portability" hard. The *OED*'s definition goes on to note that handbooks are especially books "of religious instruction." Concerning that aspect of the definition this handbook is more equivocal. Readers may note that more dates, of persons and their works, are provided than is usual. In part this is simply another effort to be of use to the reader, but it is also helpful in the way in which it draws attention to what an interestingly multilayered and multitemporal, and challenging, text an academic essay may be, a richness and difficulty into which academic writing is often led by the multilayered and multitemporal nature of the cultural objects of study. Dates of first publication in languages other than English (distinguished from the dates of publication in English) are also given. Again, this is thought to be both useful, and helpful in drawing attention to the European and increasingly global nature of Renaissance Studies. Such details, in a way, represent one aspect of a theoretical engagement handled in the volume's chapters; if one asks the when and what of poems, might it not also help to keep those questions in sight in our academic writing, in asking the when and what of our present practice? Such questions, given their complex and sometimes incompatible answers, militate against notions of instruction.

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Part I
Conditions of Subjectivity

1

Gender

Catherine Bates

If it was customary even 30 years ago to describe the topic of women and the English Renaissance as "gargantuan" (Woodbridge 1984, 1), then the size into which it has since grown can only defy hyperbole. Indeed, questions of the historical, cultural, and literary role that women played in the period – and the issues of gender politics, and sexuality to which these gave rise – have had a directive, defining, and arguably field-shaping impact on the discipline. It was the women's movement, of course, and academic feminism of the 1960s and 1970s in particular, that brought the question of gender in Renaissance literature fully out of the closet and positioned it center stage (Greer 1970; Millet 1971; Mitchell 1971; Moi 1985). Since then, the un-self-consciousness with which an earlier critic such as C. S. Lewis could present the literature of the English Renaissance as an almost entirely male preserve – of the 150 authors he listed, 149 were male (Lewis 1954) – has come to stand as a cautionary marker of the distance traveled, never to return. Indeed, it has become something of a rhetorical gesture to cite such older readings – in which Renaissance literature was presented as the depiction of some kind of universal human experience, addressed to and appreciated by a readership blithely generalized as "we" – in order to "measure the full distance" between a world view in which gender was effectively rendered invisible and "the one we inhabit today" (Garner and Sprengnether 1996, 4). This way of looking, in which gender has come to assume its central position in determining questions of canon-formation and the interpretation of literary texts, has depended in large part on the immense work of recovery – undertaken by generations of critics and still, of course, ongoing – by which material written by women hitherto "lost" or considered unworthy of attention has been brought back into view and, by means of scholarly editions, anthologies, and archival resources, made widely accessible (Bogin 1976; Greer 1989; Stevenson and Davidson 2001;

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Pulter [1645–1665?] 2014).[1] Since much of this material previously existed only in manuscript, its availability has also contributed significantly to the new bibliography and its important re-negotiation of the relation between manuscript and print in the early modern period, one effect being to revise the very notion of what a "text" might be said to constitute in the first place (e.g. Heale 2012). At the same time, the introduction of material such as recipes, prescriptions, health manuals, commonplace books, letters, translations, personal memoirs, diaries, and religious confessions – alongside what might be identified as more traditionally "literary" material – has, in re-balancing the canon, altered it beyond recognition (Graham *et al.* 1989; Masson and Vaughan 1974; Spurling 1986; Herbert [c.1588–1600] 1998; Moody 1998). The process of recovery, moreover, has extended to the inclusion not only of women as writers but, as part of the larger imperative of establishing a corrective women's history, to the study of women as readers (e.g., Lucas 1989; Hackett 2000), as playgoers (e.g., Findlay 1999), and as the addressees of and respondents to a culture whose models and prescriptions they may have received and been shaped by but did not necessarily absorb passively or adopt without challenge.

That it was feminism that first put gender decisively at the center of critical attention brought with it, in turn, the necessity for certain accommodations and adjustments. One example that might be cited was the need to balance the importance of extending the canon by including more female writers within it against the competing view that the "author" as such was well and truly dead or at best existed only as a disembodied "author function" (Barthes [1967] 1977; Foucault [1969] 1977). "[O]ne effect of the project to revalorize women's writing and to reclaim forgotten or neglected texts," writes Kate Chedgzoy, "has been a reaffirmation – against the grain, as several feminists have noted, of some influential strands of literary theory – of the significance of the author as subject of her own writing" (Chedgzoy, Hansen, and Trill 1996, 1). That is to say, there is a (fundamentally political) decision to be made if not traded between any skepticism that might be harbored toward the notion of an autonomous, sovereign, self-identical, and ontologically stable author, on the one hand, and the merits of celebrating women writers whose previous invisibility or relegation to the margins testified to nothing so clearly as a repressive regime of silence and subordination, on the other. I use this as an example because the issue has been a critical one in feminist studies of gender in the early modern period, where scruples about methodological practice registered from early on. While the hugely important work of recovery serves to restore women to their rightful place in history and to give a voice to what has been silenced for centuries, it can also run the risk (if they are left unexamined) of perpetuating certain assumptions about authorship – notions of autonomy, ownership, privilege, mastery, agency, authority – that had led to canon-formation of the most traditional and institutionalized kind in the first place (Ezell 1993). As Danielle Clarke articulates the dilemma, "[*e*]*ither* women can be situated as historical subjects, *or* we interrogate gender in such a way as to negate not only the specificity of the female subject, but its very possibility" (Clarke and Clarke 2000, 10). The aim of much feminist criticism concerned with issues of gender in the Renaissance has thus been to find a