

unfairly challenged their reputations. However, the cultural and rhetorical acceptance of such rhetorical reprisals encouraged those who had suffered such raw and crude censure to respond in kind. Consequently, this literary system for correcting ethical and social indiscretions could devolve to cycles of verbal abuse and legal charges of slander.

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Women and Curiosity in Early Modern England and France. Line Cottegnies, Sandrine Parageau, and John J. Thompson, eds. Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture 42. Leiden: Brill, 2016. xii + 254 pp. \$149.

This fascinating anthology of thirteen essays investigates for the first time the representations of female curiosity in England and France from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. It draws upon a wide range of primary sources from theology to science, and from philosophy to literature. By focusing on England and France it situates women's relations to curiosity in two interconnected intellectual traditions—England's empiricist approach to science and knowledge and French Cartesianism. This collection is part of the interdisciplinary Intersections series at Brill and will appeal to scholars working in French and English literatures, women's writing, history of philosophy and science, history of collecting, and material cultures.

As Marie-Frédérique Pellegrin points out in chapter 9, there seem to be two main types of curiosity in the early modern period: good and bad. On the one hand, the Aristotelian tradition sets great store by curiosity, as reflected in the first line of the *Metaphysics*: "All men desire naturally to know." On the other hand, the Augustinian tradition links curiosity to the concept of original sin, and it therefore stands condemned (160). As Cottegnies and Parageau posit in their introduction, in the seventeenth century Francis Bacon liberated scientific curiosity from a damning theological stigma and in so doing laid the foundation for the "culture of curiosity" that emerged in the context of experimentalism and blossomed under the influence of the Royal Society (7).

Yet this partial rehabilitation of curiosity was largely confined to male curiosity. Women (due to the persistent legacy of Eve's and Pandora's inquisitiveness) were increasingly described as prone to bad curiosity. As this anthology convincingly demonstrates, however, despite the pejorative representation of female curiosity by some thinkers in the early modern period, three categories of curious women emerged: women philosophers (Margaret Cavendish and Anne Conway, chapters 5 and 8), women writers of literary works (Lady Mary Wroth, Madeleine de Scudéry, and Susanna Centlivre, chap-

ters 4, 6, and 7), and women collectors (Jeanne Baret, Marie-Catherine Le Franc de Courtagnon, and Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, chapters 11 and 12). These chapters delineate the diverse and at times innovative ways in which early modern women contributed to the rehabilitation of female curiosity. Sarah Hutton, in chapter 8, for instance, shows how Anne Conway brings a positive perspective to curiosity by expressing in her philosophical writings an active desire to know. Although Conway never uses the term *curiosity*, her desire to know is portrayed through her methodological “habit of questioning” (158). Unlike Conway, Wroth, in her romance *Urania*, explicitly engages with the semantics of the term *curiosity* and in so doing exonerates female curiosity through “moralization and aesthetization” (see Laetitia Coussement-Boillot’s chapter 4). Adeline Gargam’s chapter 11 goes beyond the cultures of writing to investigate cultures of collecting, and explores how women such as Mme de Courtagnon used their cabinets of curiosity to accelerate the democratization of scientific and medical culture.

This anthology not only engages with women’s curiosity, but how women became the objects of men’s curiosity. In chapter 9, for example, Pellegrin demonstrates that men writing moralist literature, such as Jean de La Bruyère, considered the scholarly woman as an astonishing object who could trigger curiosity. Moreover, Susan Wiseman, in chapter 7, analyzes the interconnections between female sexuality, female monsters and wonders, and the curious male gaze. These chapters illustrate how the study of women and curiosity is also a study of men’s curiosity about women. Intriguingly, Line Cottegnies in chapter 5 argues that women such as Margaret Cavendish were acutely aware of the curiosity that they were arousing. Cottegnies suggests that Cavendish responded to her contemporaries’ taste for scandal by deliberately fashioning herself as an “object of curiosity” as each of her public appearances became a carefully controlled show, not unlike her empress’s apparitions in *The Blazing World* when the latter stages herself in pyrotechnic shows designed to impress her subjects and enemies into awe and obedience. Cottegnies’s essay highlights how a woman writer and philosopher such as Cavendish turned her “curiosity status into that of a celebrity” (104).

Although no grand narrative about the history of female curiosity can be built from the case studies considered in this collection, this anthology still makes an important contribution to the fields of women’s writing, cultural studies, and the history of epistemology.

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