

Michelle M. Dowd and Thomas Festa, eds. *Early Modern Women on the Fall: An Anthology*.

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The temptation to begin this review by interrogating the title, *Early Modern Women on the Fall*, is simply too strong to resist. Faced with these six words, readers might expect a rather narrow set of texts that debate the culpability of Adam and Eve for engendering humankind's fall into sin, along with sturdy defenses of Eve's relative innocence. Instead, they will find a generous array of poetry and prose written by seventeenth-century women that reflects on virtue and vice, good and evil, salvation and sin within the wider Christian and specifically Augustinian discourse on Creation, Fall, and redemption. Were it not for the publication benefits of a short phrase that appeals to our desire for the transgressive, this anthology might better have borrowed the capacious title of Lucy Hutchinson's book: *Order and Disorder: On the World Made and Undone*.

Hutchinson's work, which appears midway in the anthology, nicely highlights the strengths and weaknesses of this collection. A considerable strength is the editors' decision to include either complete works, here all five cantos of Hutchinson's original 1679 edition, or large selections from longer texts rather than brief excerpts that focus exclusively on Eve or the Fall. One effect of this decision is to show how, for the most part, these women writers were less concerned to defend Eve and more interested in debating larger ethical and social questions, from the education of women to the development of Christian theology and piety to the establishment of societal norms. Indeed, at times the selections make only the briefest mention of the Fall per se, with the allusion to originary sin serving mainly as the necessary backdrop for considering how best to act in an imperfect world. Furthermore, as Hutchinson's text makes clear, the Fall is never considered without reference to Creation: the basis for ethical inquiry is the hope that through right action women and men may recapture some of God's original intent for his Creation. The narrow lens of "fall," therefore, provides the editors with a mechanism that selects works that at least mention Genesis 3, but the texts themselves capture a larger conversation in which the Fall, at times, plays only a minimal role.

The anthology includes surprisingly little contextual apparatus. Since it is intended for students, the texts are modernized, but the editors' decision to foreground close reading means that there are no headnotes (only short biographies of the authors at the end of the volume) and relatively modest footnotes. Apart from a few references to Milton, there is little information on the ways in which these authors' works intersect with broader cultural concerns and texts, despite the editors' expressed concern that they not "re-segregate" women writers. Here, as elsewhere, the introduction suffers a certain disconnection from the anthologized texts themselves. Furthermore, although three foundational works are included in the appendixes — the Geneva and King James versions of Genesis 1–3 and the marriage service from the Book of Common Prayer — the marginal annotations from the Geneva Bible are unaccountably omitted, despite the fact that several of the women's texts cite or allude directly to these notes.

Nevertheless, this volume does offer teachers generous selections from eighteen authors both familiar and unfamiliar, including Lanyer, Speght, Cavendish, Philips, Makin, Astell, and Chudleigh, along with Hutchinson and others. Particularly useful are the manuscript poems of Mary Roper and Dorothy Calthorpe, which appear in print for the first time in this anthology.

Readers should beware, however, of editing problems. Transcriptions are not always accurate. For example, the marginal note Acts 2:23 on page 190 is cited as Acts 2:20, a particular nuisance since readers are encouraged in the footnotes to follow the chain of scripture by which Hutchinson reinforces her points. More worrisome is the improper stanza break at the beginning of Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (25) and the loss of her marginalia, as well as the substitution of "friend" for "fiend" at the conclusion of Sarah Fyge's *The Female Advocate* (277), an error that substantially changes the meaning of that text. In addition, marginal notes in

the original texts may or may not be included in the anthology (e.g., most, but not all, of the scriptural citations by Leigh, Speght, Clinton, and others are referenced in the footnotes, but without notice that the citations are theirs rather than those of the editors), and “complete works” may not include paratextual material such as prefaces. Numerous other small errors — incorrect STC numbers (e.g., 15527.5 rather than 15227.5 for Lanyer) and missing Wing designations, for instance — are careless mistakes and do not bolster confidence in the anthology as a whole, particularly as all the errors cited in this paragraph were discovered in about an hour of spot-checking the texts. It would therefore seem wise for teachers to check all originals and make appropriate corrections before assigning selections to students.

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