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2020

### Roaring Girls

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*CUNY City College*

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Fall 2020

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## Roaring Girls

The writings of early women can be found nearly everywhere but we have been instructed not to see them, not even to look. Once we start searching, however, the literary tradition in England starts to appear differently, with women of all classes handling the alphabet in unusual ways and imagining genres and audiences and interpretive practices from entirely new perspectives. We will explore the history of women's writing in England from the 10<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and test the premise that later writers have their origins in the works of their literary foremothers. Related ideas about how to study manuscripts, how to consider "alternative" literacies, and how to distinguish women's hands from men's will be tested too, along with the premise that all women's writing is feminist, or subversive or roars.



### Learning outcomes:

Students taking this class will:

- Read early work with patience and precision and an eye for its strangeness
- Explore internet tools for recovering, studying, and analyzing early texts
- Theorize about the origins and purposes and audiences for these early works as well as their relation to other early writings
- Develop a project which shares original and thoughtful interpretations as a way of enlarging the audience for these works

**Books:** This is an OER/ZTC course, and all course materials are either available online or will be provided by your teacher.

**Course design:** this is an upper-division elective, and students are expected to handle more challenging reading and writing assignments with patience and dedication. You should attend class faithfully, be prepared to contribute and respond to the ideas of classmates, and accustom yourself to thinking

outside the box, b/c the writers and works under review this semester don't fit into established conventions or categories. There are other ground rules: Stay on top of the readings. Contact me right away with questions or problems or concerns. *Four* absences will be allowed for any reason, but students will be dropped from the roster if they miss a fifth class. Excessive lateness counts as an absence, so give yourself enough time to print out assignments. Be in touch with a classmate if you're late or need to miss class.

*Other details:* please check email daily for late breaking bulletins and/or changes to our schedule. Writing assignments are due in class on the dates specified; no late work will be accepted. Get in the habit of starting early and forcing yourself to always hand submit something: we can work on a revision together, always mindful that perfection is pointless and sharing necessary. Make sure your writing has a clear beginning, middle, and end; that it works closely with concrete textual details; and that advances a useful, interesting claim economically, clearly, and forcefully. Your introduction should dive right into your discussion and your conclusion should unpack the discussion's larger implications, that is, the reason why your reader should care. If you need to miss class on a date when something is due, pls. email me ahead of time with your essay attached and provide a hard copy at the next class meeting. for

Details for specific assignments will follow, but all work should be typed double-spaced, titled, carefully proofread, and adhere to MLA Guidelines available at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/mla\\_style/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/mla\\_general\\_format.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_general_format.html). Please come by during office hours to discuss a draft or brainstorm; you can also email me with questions. You can also visit the Writing Center for another set of eyes and ears for your work. Appointment schedules are posted at <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/writing>.

You are free—and sometimes required this semester—to consult the work of other scholars and critics, but when you draw on the thinking, languages, or formulations of someone else, you need to cite this critic's work properly. Information about proper citation format is available at the Purdue website mentioned above. Failure to properly acknowledge the work of others is plagiarism and will be penalized accordingly. Please consult the CCNY website for the College's official policy, and also let me know if you have questions about footnoting—or about anything else on this syllabus.

I strive to make our classroom as supportive and accommodating as possible, and please always reach out to me with ideas about how I can my best to help you do your best. *The AccessAbility Center/Student Disability Services ensures equal access and full participation to all of City College's programs, services, and activities by coordinating and implementing appropriate accommodations. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations and services, please visit the office in NAC 1/218, or contact AAC/SDS via email ([disabilityservices@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@ccny.cuny.edu)), or phone (212-650-5913 or TTY/TTD 212-650-8441).*

**Grading:**

Participation (including weekly BB posts, in-class tasks, group work and other informal writing)	25%
Shorter essays	25%
In-class exams	20%
Final project	30%



## COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

### Week 1. How (differently) should we read women writers?

Th 8/27 Women's hands, papers, reading practices, motives, training, secrets. The "Digital" Cavendish" and the Anglo-Saxon poem "Wulf" hypertexts (Michael Burch, trans. [www.thehypertexts.com/Wulf%20and%20Eadwacer%20Translation.htm](http://www.thehypertexts.com/Wulf%20and%20Eadwacer%20Translation.htm))

### Week 2. What does a woman's voice sound like in an oral world? Tribal women, oral communities, & uneasy alliances

Tu 9/1 "Wulf" plus "Judith" at <https://anglosaxonpoetry.camden.rutgers.edu/wulf-and-Eadwacer/> and <https://anglosaxonpoetry.camden.rutgers.edu/judith/>

Th 9/3 "Lamentation" and other poems from *Exeter Book* <https://anglosaxonpoetry.camden.rutgers.edu/the-wifes-lament/>

### Week 3. How does writing transform women's sense of themselves as lovers, keepers of secrets, and authority figures?

Tu 9/8 The lais of Marie de France, "Bisclavret" <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/jshoaf/Marie/bisclavret.pdf> and "Yonec" <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/jshoaf/Marie/yonec.pdf>



Th 9/10 Marie de France, continued. "Lanval and "Le Fresne"  
[https://users.pfw.edu/flemingd/Prolog\\_Lanval\\_LeFresne.pdf](https://users.pfw.edu/flemingd/Prolog_Lanval_LeFresne.pdf) **Short essay #1 due**

Week 4. How do women revise, challenge, or withdraw from history?

Tu 9/15 Christine de Pisan, excerpt from *The City of Ladies*  
<https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/165pisan.html>

Th 9/17 *Ancrene Wisse* (excerpts) <http://tei.oucs.ox.ac.uk/Projects/EETS/soton/texttran.htm>

Week 5. How does writing encourage religious experiments?

Th 9/22 Julian of Norwich, chs 1-6 [http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1343-1398,\\_Julian.\\_of\\_Norwich,\\_Revelations\\_Of\\_Divine\\_Love,\\_EN.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1343-1398,_Julian._of_Norwich,_Revelations_Of_Divine_Love,_EN.pdf)  
and *The Book of Margery Kempe* (excerpts)  
<http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/kempebk.htm>,

Th 9/24 The examinations of Anne Askew. <https://www.exclassics.com/foxe/foxe209.htm>; see also "Lollardy and Gender" <https://lollardsociety.org/?p=72>. Also check out an interesting reading of Protestant Reformation produced by Catholic scholars: [www.biblicalcatholic.com/apologetics/num37.htm](http://www.biblicalcatholic.com/apologetics/num37.htm). See also <https://anne-askew.humanities.uva.nl/about/>

Week 6. Where are We so Far?

Tu 9/29 No CLASS

Th 10/1 **Exam #1**

Week 7. How does writing supply women new technologies for being with men?

10/6 Handwriting <https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/ceres/ehoc/intro.html>

10/8 Findern Manuscript <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/5748/1/Tanner15MRes.pdf>  
pay attention to poems 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26—are these women's poems? **Short essay #2 due**

Week. 8. What different shapes can writing about women's lives take? And how do we handle works that aren't written as literature? (What do we mean when we call something "literary"?)

Tu 10/13 Agnes Paston's letters at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/Paston>

Th 10/15 Bess of Hardwick's letters <https://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=200> look through this site and pick one letter to write about

Week 9. What does protest and accommodation look like on paper?

10/20 Bess of Cavendish's letters, continued

10/ 22 Moulsworth <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/moulsworth/name/name.html>

Week 10. How Do Queens imagine, expand and/or negotiate power?

10/27 Elizabeth I [www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizabib.htm](http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizabib.htm)

10/29 Mary Stuart needlework <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/prison-embroideries-mary-queen-of-scots>



Week 11. How was female agency criminalized?

- 11/3 Letters from Witch Trail of Rebecca Lemp 1590 (trans. Brian Pavlac)  
departments.kings.edu/womens\_history/witch/lemp.html
- 11/5 King James VI as witchhunter <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/king-james-vi-and-is-demonology-1597>

Week 11. Now Where are We?

- 11/10 **Exam #2**
- 11/12 Digital Cavendish introductions

Week 12. How do more everyday struggles appear alongside mythic themes in early modern ballads?

- 11/17 <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/page/heyday-of-the-broadside-ballad>  
Youtube from Bodleian: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXBUYr-4hI8>
- 11/19 Ballads about Jane Shore <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/31268/xml>. **Short essay #3 due.**

Week 13. How is Genesis rewritten to revise women's place in the world?

- 11/24 Aemilia Lanyer <https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/salve-deus-rex-iudæorum>

Week 14. How can we see Cavendish's Blazing World as Rival Utopia & Female Paradise?

- 12/1 Blazing World <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/newcastle/blazing/blazing.html>  
A plain text edition available at <https://github.com/digicavendish/plain-modernized-EEBO-TCP-MargaretCavendish/blob/master/Description%20of%20New%20World%20A53044.headed.txt> read to line 1000
- 12/3 Margaret Cavendish, finish *Blazing World* (about line 3200 or so).

Week 15. What do we want to leave for *our* readers?

- 12/8 final project



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