Images of Women in Renaissance Literature: A Selected Bibliography of Scholarship

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Alessandra Comini, June Blum, Ann Sutherland Harris, Linda Nochlin and June Wayne. Further information about the activities of the Women's Caucus for Art may be obtained from the membership secretary, Johnnie Johnson, 1837 S. Halstead, Chicago, IL 60608. Dues are $7 for regular membership; $3 for unemployed, part-time or student; $15 for an institutional membership. The newsletter requires no subscription other than membership. The second edition of Women's Studies in Art and Art History by Lola B. Gellman is available for $2 from Ms. Gellman, 14 Lakeside Dr., New Rochelle, NY 10801. Slides of Works by Women Artists: A Sourcebook is available from the compiler: Mary Garrard, 7010 Arrow Dr., Falls Church, VA 22042. A bibliography of women's studies in art is available for $75 from DeRenne Coerr, 479 34th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94121.

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Images of Women in Renaissance Literature: A Selected Bibliography of Scholarship

This bibliography offers a representative selection of scholarship on the image of woman in English literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As one would expect, a large percentage of the items listed here were published in the last five or six years, but a surprising number of significant, detailed studies of woman's place in Renaissance society were written in the early decades of this century. Moreover, the 17 studies that I have listed from the 1940s and 1950s are among the most valuable of the items that appear here—both in their scholarly concern for facts and in their imaginative application of those facts to literary problems. Much remains to be done, of course, but it is both reassuring and exciting to see how many fine scholars and critics have been working with the difficult problems that these cross-disciplinary studies present.

Even in 1976, however, too many students and teachers are under the misapprehension that there were no interesting woman authors in sixteenth- or seventeenth-century England. Just the opposite is true. Although their literary merits have yet to be fully evaluated, there are a great number of woman translators, poets, prose writers and playwrights to be studied. Among them are Jane Anger, Anne Finch, Margaret Cavendish, Mary Sidney, Susannah Centlivre, Alice Thornton, Anne Hutchinson, Dorothy Osborne and Katherine Philips. Few of their works are currently in print, and most anthologies of Renaissance literature (including Hershel Baker's new 962-page text, The Later Renaissance in England (Boston, 1975) omit them altogether. One can, however, find works by Renaissance women in the following anthologies: By a Woman Writt: Literature from Six Centuries by and about Women, ed. Joan Goulianos (Baltimore, 1973); Poets of the 17th Century, Vol. 2, ed. John Broadbent (New York, 1974); and The World Split Open: Four Centuries of Woman Poets in England and America, ed. Louise Bernikow (New York, 1974).

In addition, Mary R. Mahl and Helene Koon have recently edited a collection of poetry and prose by medieval, Renaissance and eighteenth-century Englishwomen. Entitled The Female Spectator: English Women Writers before 1800 (Bloomington, Indiana, and Old Westbury, New York, 1977), this volume includes works by ten Renaissance women: Queen Elizabeth I, Elizabeth Grymeston, Amelie Lanier, Bathsua Makin, Katherine Philips, and others.

The first section below lists the five studies of classical and medieval literature that I should be most likely to recommend to a student interested in literary backgrounds to Renaissance works. The three bibliographies in that section will direct readers to other books and articles treating women in early literatures. The section on "Historical Perspectives on the Renaissance" lists works in which Renaissance thought is discussed in the context of the history of ideas in Western Europe. The last section treats the Renaissance itself, concentrating—as Renaissance scholars usually do—on the works of Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton. The list is selective, and I should be glad to provide further suggestions to anyone interested in more primary or secondary sources.

CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL STUDIES

Literature


Ferrante, Joan M. Woman as Image in Medieval Literature from the Twelfth Century to Dante (New York, 1975).


Bibliographies


THE RENAISSANCE

Intellectual and Social Backgrounds


Cannon, Mary Agnes. *The Education of Woman During the Renaissance* (Washington, 1912).


---. *Tudor Women: Commoners and Queens* (Ames, Iowa, 1975). On the "many-sided participation of women in English life about 1485 to 1603."


Non-Shakespearean Drama


Shakespeare


