

un tant soit peu détachées du reste de cet ouvrage qui colle de près aux années 1920 et 1930. Les illustrations sont magnifiques, mais il aurait sans doute été utile de voir quelques annonces publicitaires tirées de magazines spécialisés ou de grands quotidiens. Enfin, mentionnons que le livre ne comprend pas de bibliographie à proprement parler. Une personne en quête de pistes de recherche dispose toutefois de notes bien étoffées.

Ces quelques commentaires n'enlèvent rien à l'excellence du travail de l'auteur. *The Spectacle of Flight* est un ouvrage important pour quiconque souhaite aller au-delà de la simple étude technique de l'aviation. Il est à espérer que le troisième et dernier volume de la trilogie ne se fera pas trop attendre.

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WRIGHT, Nancy E., Margaret W. FERGUSON, and A. R. BUCK (eds.) — *Women, Property and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. Pp. 316.

Nancy Wright, Margaret Ferguson, and A. R. Buck have brought together a group of scholars whose work challenges commonly accepted ideas about the relationship between early modern women and property. Following the footsteps of scholars such as Amy Erickson, this edited collection contrasts the legal theory and prescribed cultural norms of the time with the stories of women whose lives did not fit neatly within those boundaries. Using sources as disparate as works of literature, wills, court records, diaries, and letters, the book examines contemporary narratives written by and about early modern women.

The collected work is divided into three parts, the first examining commerce and credit, the second social reproduction and inheritance, and the third intellectual property. These categories are not rigid, and many of the chapters could fit into two or more of the parts. The editors took an interdisciplinary approach in choosing contributors, and consequently this book presents varied perspectives. The authors of the 13 chapters are made up of historians, sociologists, and legal and literary scholars, and thus the reader is treated to views of the subject seen through varied lenses. For example, while both Patricia Parker's "Temporal Gestation, Legal Contracts, and the Promissory Economies of the *Winter's Tale*" and Christine Churches' "Putting Women in Their Place: Female Litigants at Whitehaven, 1660–1760" speak to women's role in commerce and contract, the former examines the metaphors in a Shakespearean play while the latter documents the experiences of real women who turned to the legal system for assistance.

One of the most engaging qualities of this collection is the way in which many of the authors illustrate their hypotheses by using the lives of women as examples. This provides a living, breathing history far removed from dry legal theory. A most vivid illustration of a woman's proprietary interest in her body and sexuality is included in Laura Rosenthal's "The Whores Estate: Sally Salisbury, Prostitution, and Property in

Eighteenth-Century London". Sally Salisbury, when confronted with a clergyman who assumes she is woman of property, claps on to her genitals and claims them as her capital and support. Similarly, Mary Chan and Nancy Wright's "Marriage, Identity, and the Pursuit of Property in Seventeenth-Century England: The Cases of Anne Clifford and Elizabeth Wiseman" shows how family connections and a large marriage portion were used to place a "value" on women such that the women themselves were considered "commodities" in the marriage market.

Since this collection is clearly intended to represent an interdisciplinary perspective, it is somewhat disappointing that there is not a better balance among the essays included. Of the 14 authors who contribute, eight are scholars of English and present their work from that viewpoint. While the chapters written by those authors are certainly interesting and important, including so many essays from one field weakens the claim that this work is truly an interdisciplinary study.

This book is intended to demonstrate that definitions of property and women's ownership in it are malleable concepts, and thus the reader must come to each essay prepared to question his or her own preconceptions. It is not intended to be a traditional legal history in the same vein as Susan Staves's *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660–1883* and Amy Louise Erickson's *Women and Property in Early Modern England*. Those books, both significant contributions to this area of study, approach the subject using traditional definitions of real and personal property. Instead, we are asked to add new concepts to those definitions. David Lemming's essay, "Women's Property, Popular Cultures, and the Consistory Court of London in the Eighteenth Century", quite possibly the best of the collection, characterizes honour and status as a good wife and mother as the most valuable property owned by plebeian women. By examining London Consistory Court cases from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Lemming suggests that the shift from litigation dominated by sexual slander cases brought by and against lowering middling women to cases for matrimonial separation brought by wealthier litigants indicates that "the institutions, culture or law were becoming official and polit 'property', rather than the currency of Everyman and Everywoman" (p. 89). Jennifer Summit's essay, "Writing Home: Hannah Wolley, the Oxinden Letters, and Household Epistolary Practice", challenges commonly accepted definitions of property by arguing that letters themselves are not only objects, but, because they were used to structure the seventeenth-century household, produce a "rhetoric of property". By introducing these new ideas to the field, *Women, Property and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England* provides us with greater understanding of the relationship early modern women had with a wide variety of property.

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